

Development before Democracy: Inter-American Relations in the long 1950s

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Abstract

Even though Latin American diplomats had been central actors in the debate surrounding human rights in the nascent years of the United Nations, the predominant preoccupation in the 1950s centred on development. Latin American politicians generally framed development as “social progress,” arguing that political and civil rights were meaningless unless basic needs were met. Nonetheless, this decidedly materialist approach to human rights is complicated when considering how, within months of each other in 1959, both the Inter-American Development Bank and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights were founded. Looking at debates in the Organization of American States (OAS), this paper relates the fundamentally uneasy relationship between human rights and development in the inter-American system in the 1950s and early 60s. .

Keywords: Democracy, Latin America, Inter-American Commission of Human Rights

1. Introduction

In the first report of the Panel of Nine on the Alliance for Progress, chairperson Raúl Saéz of Chile warned: “The Alliance, like all revolutionary movements...cannot be expressed simply through general concepts of freedom and representative democracy’, because these democratic ideals were “too far removed from the needs of the impoverished masses in most of the countries of the hemisphere to suffice of themselves” (“Document 17” 1).[1] But how could democratic governments address demands by the masses for economic progress and political participation in a climate of political polarisation and economic turmoil? The answer to this, according to Saéz, was development. Saéz was by no means a radical, but his opinion reflected a widespread conviction in Latin America that development framed as “social progress” had to become the priority. Without meeting basic needs, Latin American politicians argued, political and civil rights were meaningless.

Long before the right to development was formalised in 1986 with the United Nations’ *Declaration on the Right to Development*,

debates on the difficult relationship between the two concepts of development and democracy raged in the 1950s. In many ways, the 1950s are the “forgotten decade” in the crisis-driven narrative of Cold War Latin America (Grandin 426).[2] This might seem surprising, as the 1950s in Latin America were a pivotal decade in inter-American relations and in institutionalising development and human rights in the inter-American system. By the end of the decade, with the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Santiago Declaration that bolstered democracy in the region, and the establishment of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, perceptible advances had been made, marking a peak of inter-American cooperation.

However, during the 1950s and 1960s there was a decided tension between the demands of development and democracy. For many Latin American societies, the 1950s were the first democratic decade. While most had experienced a short period of democratisation in the years from 1944 to 1949, they soon reverted to more authoritarian forms of rule (Bethell and Roxborough 328). By the mid-1950s, a second wave of democratisation again elevated

the question of democracy and development to the top of the inter-American agenda. As the Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek highlighted, democratic governments in Latin America faced a formidable challenge as demands for economic progress and political participation put a severe strain on these young democracies. Complicating the picture further were the policies of the United States, which viewed social progressive governments with decidedly mistrustful eyes. The 1954 CIA intervention in Guatemala was a reminder of what could happen if perceived US interests were threatened.

Opposition to change and reform also came from within, as reactionary forces and authoritarian regimes in the hemisphere resisted and actively fought a change to the status quo. Crucially, this did not entail refuting democratic principles or reneging on human rights per se, as even the most repressive regime would not dare to oppose these principles outright, but the authoritarian regimes did attempt to stem the tide of democratic, reformist movements. And when the opportunity arose, they did not hesitate to deploy military intervention, often under the smokescreen of bringing political stability and with US acquiescence.

In light of severe financial shortages, vulnerable economies, and fragile democracies, the feasibility of simultaneously guaranteeing democracy and human rights was not just a philosophical discussion but an acute political question. Far from exhibiting a universal understanding, debates highlighted distinct political priorities and reflected different interpretations. By the early 1960s, many Latin American policy-makers started to prioritise development over democracy. Acknowledging the difficulties of representative democracy, they argued that without meeting basic needs, democracy was not meaningful. The downgrading of democracy was also driven by socialist and communist groups, whose political priority was the wholesale overhaul of the political system rather than its reform, and authoritarian forces that wanted to eschew debates on democracy altogether.

By the mid-1960s, democracy was in retreat in Latin America, alongside human rights.

Tracing the ebb and flow of these debates in inter-American relations, the contribution of this article is twofold. First, it would like to redirect the focus to the long 1950s, lasting approximately from 1955 to 1962, from the second wave of democratisation to the exclusion of Cuba. The second aim is to rethink human rights periodisation and the paradigm of the 1970s as the human rights decade. In Latin America, the 1950s and early 1960s were crucial moments, whereas the 1970s were a time of retrogression of human rights. Drawing from “inter-American history” (Kaltmeier, Langley) and the “ideational turn” of international relations (Blyth, Tannenwald), what I would like to propose is therefore a more fragmented history of human rights regarding Latin America that includes continuities as well as disconnections and thus diverges from global human rights narratives at crucial junctions.

Although there is an ever-growing body of literature on human rights and Latin America, most of its focus tends to be on the 1970s as the so-called “human rights decade.” This emphasis is problematic, because it in many ways reflects a Western bias, emphasising the codification of international norms on the global stage, when Latin American human rights violations provoked transnational solidarity. [3] Moreover, when looking at Latin America this account seems flawed. As human rights scholars have underscored, stories of human rights are not ones of linear progression, nor does the focus on the 1970s necessarily reflect developments in Latin America or the Global South more generally. [4] Equally problematic is the accompanying rhetoric of a human rights “breakthrough” during the 1970s. Latin American human rights history combines progress and retrogression, and a more fragmented history might bring this to light. Indeed, human rights and development have a much longer trajectory, dating back to the 1930s (Engstrom 454-502). And even though both the literature on Latin American as well as on human rights history mostly skims over the 1950s as “the forgotten decade”, these were pivotal years in inter-American relations, when norms were established and institutions founded. [5]

Likewise, human rights and development coexisted - at times uneasily - in Latin American politics from the beginning. This, as Mark Philip

Bradley rightly argues, is because social and economic rights, on the one hand, and political and civil rights on the other were “considered coeval in the 1940s” and the later division into distinct fields was very much a product of the Cold War and was particularly prevalent in Europe (Bradley 221). In sum, Latin American human rights debates predated the 1970s, they were not rooted in the international post-war system, as often purported, and they were intimately connected with the question of “social progress”.

Development and democracy are intimately interlinked, as forming part of the first and third wave or generation of human rights. Human rights theory broadly distinguishes between three types or generations of human rights, which is reflected in two separate international agreements, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. The term generations indicates the evolution of human rights thought since the 1940s. The first generation of rights, as promulgated in the *American Declaration of Rights* as well as the *Universal Declaration of Rights*, encompasses political and civil liberties. These are also known as negative rights, because governments have to refrain from violating this complex of rights (Wiarda 123, Dykmann 170-71). In contrast, second-generation rights – social, cultural, and economic rights – are corporate rights, which can be subsumed under the umbrella term positive rights, because governments have the obligation to grant and secure them, as in the case of welfare provisions. Lastly, the third generation, the most recently developed group of rights, unites collective rights of self-determination, the right to development, and environmental rights, amongst others. However, human rights scholars have questioned this division. As Steven B. Jensen pointed out in a recent review: “the Cold War narrative of the West promoting civil and political rights and the communist East promoting economic and social rights is misleading, if not an outright manipulated account” (N.p.).

The complex of social and economic rights plays a special role in Latin American political thought, and therefore also in national and

regional politics. While clearly interdependent, the two human rights complexes are in constant tension with each other. This is why Greg Grandin posits a distinction between US and Latin American political thought regarding the perception of civic rights. By contrasting a Latin America sovereignty-social rights complex with an interventionist-individual rights complex dominant in the US, he argues that there is a fundamental difference in the understanding of concepts such as democracy (Grandin 426-45). Whereas the emphasis in Latin America is more on collective rights and sovereignty, in the US individual rights are central and considered sacrosanct. In a similar vein, Paolo Carozza has argued for a Latin American tradition of human rights that places a special emphasis on social rights (281-313). However, as Carozza was quick to point out, this was not because of Marxist or socialist ideology but rooted in Latin American legal heritage, ranging from Catholic intellectual traditions to the Mexican revolution.

While Grandin’s contention may seem a rather sweeping generalisation, he correctly identifies the tensions between political rights, which includes democracy, and social and economic rights, often framed as “social progress.” This is why development and human rights are more closely interconnected in Latin America than in a much more libertarian system such as the United States. Latin Americans have consistently pushed for an elevation of social and economic rights, both in the international as well as the inter-American system, and have often been successful in this endeavour. The reason for this, according to Mary Ann Glendon, is that Latin American legal traditions resonate with non-Western views of law and thus connect it to the Global South (Glendon 27-40).

2. Development and Democracy in the Inter-American System

Development and economic cooperation have been a central tenet of US-Latin American relations since the 1930s. [6] During the 1930s and 1940s, a range of populist governments implemented economic programmes, which can largely be summarised as import-substitution

policies. Their policy experiences were then theorised in the 1950s by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). In the 1960s, the struggle for development moved to the global stage and led to the creation of institutions such as the UNCTAD and the establishment of the Group of 77. [7]

Latin American economies were hit hard by the Depression. This experience drove their interest in finding development strategies for Latin America and “to build a new pattern of international financial relations” that reflected their preference for state-led development (Helleiner 2) The war years were thus marked by close relations between Latin America and the US in the Pan American Union. At the 1939 Panama Conference, shortly after the outbreak of World War II in Europe, the American republics convened to discuss their stance on neutrality and hemispheric security measures. The Panama Conference is well-known for its Declaration of Panama, which created a security belt beyond both coasts of the hemisphere to counter European and Japanese threats. Lesser known is the fact that the conference was also an important event for decisions on economic cooperation and development. The American republics jointly decided to create the Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee (FEAC). Consisting of an economic expert from each of the twenty-one member states, its goal was to promote inter-American economic integration. In June 1940, the FEAC established the Inter-American Development Commission (IADC) to promote economic diversification and Latin American development more generally. It was also the FEAC that suggested the creation of an Inter-American Bank to provide capital and funds for development projects and drafted a convention the same year. However, the bank was never established, as it failed to gain sufficient ratifications and most notably approval from US Congress.

At the 1941 Rio Conference, the Inter-American Juridical Committee was instructed to draw up plans for a post-war order. The *Preliminary Recommendations on Postwar Problems* published in February 1943 offers an insight into the Latin American vision of the post-

war order. Significantly, a considerable portion of it was dedicated to social and economic questions. At the 1945 Chapultepec Conference, Latin American delegations again addressed economic development, and, as a result, a separate economic conference was scheduled for June 15, 1945. However, this was postponed, at the insistence of the US government, first due to the creation of the post-war inter-American system in 1947/48, and then shelved altogether. The promised economic conference would take place more than a decade later in 1957, which is why historian Stephen Rabe has termed it the “elusive conference” (“Elusive Conference” 279-294).

The birth of the post-war inter-American system again raised the twin challenges of democracy and development. Human rights were inscribed in the Organization of American States (OAS) Charter and in the 1948 *American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Men* that actually preceded the Universal Declaration and was thus the world’s first international human rights declaration. Both Johannes Morsink and Mary Ann Glendon have pointed to the significant Latin American influence on international treaties on human rights at the drafting of the UN Charter in San Francisco, and in particular the Universal Declaration of 1948. As Morsink recounts, Latin American notions of social justice found their way into the Universal Declaration. The reason for this were two drafts that the Panamanian and Chilean delegations submitted, one originally assembled by the American Law Institute, and the other an earlier draft of the *American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Men* that had been commissioned by the Inter-American conference in Chapultepec in 1945 (Morsink).

Development found its inscription into inter-American principles in the OAS Charter in Art.3 on “social justice and social security” and “economic cooperation”, as well as Chapter VII on “Integral Development”. In 1948, American states also signed the *Inter-American Charter of Social Guarantees*, which focused on labour laws and the question of social justice, as well as the *Economic Agreement of Bogotá* of 1948. However, by 1948, the window of opportunity had closed and even though all of the American states signed it, only three ended up ratifying it. In

the end, changes within Latin American countries effectively curtailed endeavours to consolidate both human rights and development regimes, as most countries reverted to authoritarianism.

During the founding years of the post-war inter-American system, US political and security concerns dominated debates, but Latin American politicians had gradually been pressing to reframe the OAS as a forum for economic and development issues. While OAS debates on development were stalling in the early 1950s, an institution of the United Nations stepped into the breach in advocating for development: the Economic Commission for Latin American (or Spanish CEPAL). Originally created in 1948 as a temporary agency, its aim was to study and draw up economic policy prescriptions. CEPAL collaborated extensively both with Latin American governments and the OAS during the 1950s, most notably at the Conference of American Minister of Finance or Economy at Rio (Quitandinha) in late 1954.[8] For the conference, OAS had charged CEPAL with producing a set of studies on a regional financial institution, a regional common market, and a broader study on international cooperation in Latin American development to serve as a basis for their discussions.[9] However, US officials, who were critical of CEPAL economists and what they perceived as “state socialism,” proved recalcitrant.[10] Without US support and, crucially, funding, many of the development goals and plans were again put on hold.

By the mid-1950s, a decade had passed and the hoped-for economic progress after World War II had not materialised. While in the United States and Western Europe welfare states had been established, Latin American countries lagged far behind, with the possible exception of Uruguay. In this light, development seemed even more urgent. The second wave of democratisation that Latin America experienced from the mid-1950s onwards further drove debates on development and human rights. While authoritarian governments could simply suppress opposition and thus social demands, democratically elected governments had no such option. Especially given the expansion of voting rights — most Latin America countries had granted women the right to vote by the 1940s—

political and economic demands soared and democratic governments had to find ways to address these demands.

In 1948, when they signed the *American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man*, the American states decided not to make it binding or to create an inter-American mechanism to enforce these rights (Goldman 860). However, the second wave of democratisation from the mid-50s onwards elevated democracy to the top of the inter-American agenda. Despite widespread infractions of human rights in the Americas, few governments dared to refute democratic principles outright, as even the most authoritarian regimes wanted to give themselves at least the semblance of legal authority.

3. Democracy First? The Caribbean Challenge

By the end of the 1950s, calls for reform within the OAS were rife. In the second wave of *apertura*, Latin American societies experienced a democratic opening. In the neighbouring island of Cuba, Fidel Castro successfully achieved a revolution in early 1959, overthrowing another dictator, Batista, who had stayed in power through fraudulent elections and repression. The winds of change severely rattled dictatorships in Central America and the Caribbean and led them to hold an even firmer grip on power. This potent antagonism meant that the Caribbean became the battleground for debates on human rights during the late 1950s in the inter-American system.

The drive for democracy was a wider societal phenomenon, backed by non-governmental institutions. One such example was the *Inter-American Association of Democracy and Freedom* (IADF), founded at the *First Inter-American Conference for Democracy and Freedom* held in May 1950 in Havana, Cuba, and organised by the Latin American section of the International League for the Rights of Man. The IADF included illustrious members such as José Figueres (Costa Rica), Luis Muñoz Marín (Puerto Rico), Carlos Andrés Pérez (Venezuela), Eduardo Frei (Chile), Salvador Allende (Chile), and Juan Bosch (Dominican Republic), who would significantly influence

Latin American politics over the next two decades. Likewise, cultural front organisations, such as the CIA-financed Congress for Cultural Freedom, sponsored cultural exchange as well as a democratic agenda (Iber).

Within the OAS, the Venezuelan President Rómulo Betancourt spearheaded a coalition of Latin American progressive leaders, demanding that representative democracy and respect for fundamental rights should become membership criteria for the OAS. Moreover, Betancourt called for the exclusion of any states from the OAS whose governments had not been freely elected. The so-called Betancourt Doctrine probably dated back to the Venezuela *trienio*, the short democratic phase between 1945 and 1949, when Betancourt was President of a revolutionary government. The Eisenhower government watched these developments with increasing alarm, profoundly worried by what they perceived as an advance of communist forces in the hemisphere. In order to placate democratic governments, the Eisenhower administration announced a new policy towards Latin America, encapsulated in the statement by then-Vice-President Richard Nixon that the US should give “a formal handshake for dictators; an *embraso (sic!)* for leaders in freedom” (Rabe, *Road to OPEC* 136). [11]

At his inaugural address to the Second Congress of the Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom in 1960, Betancourt suggested imposing collective sanctions in the form of non-recognition of authoritarian regimes and ultimately the breaking of diplomatic relations with them. “It is not enough to say that democratic governments should give one another a hug and give dictators a handshake,” he admonished, in a direct jab at Vice-President Nixon (qtd in Atkins 39). “What is necessary is to eradicate from the American juridical community dictatorships, because it is hypocritical to be raising banners against European totalitarianism while sitting at the same discussion table with people of the American totalitarianism”, he angrily continued (*ibid*).

In February 1959, progressive Latin American leaders signed the *Democratic Declaration of Caracas*. Initiated by the head of Betancourt’s *Acción Democrática* party, signatories included

Raúl Roa, Minister of the State of Cuba, José Figueres, ex-President of Costa Rica, and liberal newspaper editors of various countries. Governor Muñoz Marín of Puerto Rico joined the call for democratic action and an end to dictatorship in the Caribbean. The Declaration listed the governments of the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Paraguay as dictatorships, asked for their exclusion from the OAS, and called for a united and free Latin America, as well as a democratic inter-Americanism. [12]

One of the figureheads to chastise dictatorships was Castroite Cuba, which wholeheartedly backed the Venezuelan initiative, even threatening to withdraw from the OAS should dictatorships not be excluded. At the first meeting of the OAS Council in March 1959, the new Cuban representative, Raúl Roa, spoke of the profound distrust the Cuban government and people had in the effectiveness of the OAS, “which had stood idly by when Batista was trampling on the rights of Cubans”. [13] This move emboldened revolutionary and democratic forces in the Caribbean, but it also provoked a backlash by dictatorships in the region who, fearing popular dissent, strengthened their anti-communist networks. Some of the targeted dictatorships, “banana republics” as some would call them disdainfully, had been US stalwarts and long-time dependable allies (Slater 174). Robert J. Redington, the officer in charge of OAS delegation matters in the State Department, strongly opposed the punishment of non-democratic governments, arguing that there was “no provision in the OAS Charter for the expulsion of member states”. Furthermore, he caustically added, neither was there a “provision or feasible method for qualifying governments as between democratic and dictatorial nor for enforcing the protection of human rights”. [14] One man’s democracy was another’s dictatorship, Redington seemed to imply. In 1962, when Cuba was excluded from the inter-American system, the lack of legal provisions did not prove a stumbling block.

The democratic deficit and outright human rights violations prevalent all over Latin America were soon addressed in the OAS, where civilian governments argued that without a democratic opening, economic and social development

could not progress. At the Fifth Meeting of Foreign Ministers in August 1959, in Santiago de Chile, these debates assumed centre stage. Although the meeting had been called originally to discuss the “situation in the Caribbean,” namely the repercussions of the Cuban revolution, it was quickly redirected to target authoritarian regimes in the hemisphere. Despite resistance, Latin American progressive leaders pushed ahead as they had already identified their prime target: General Trujillo, whose authoritarian rule of the Dominican Republic for more than thirty years personified dictatorships in the region. The Trujillo regime was also singled out because it was one of the most notorious regimes in Latin America, making political enemies right, left and centre, eventually even among US policymakers in Washington D.C.. “The Department of State increasingly viewed the Dominican tyrant as an embarrassment, an awkward inheritance from an earlier time, now lingering too long and imperilling the future and willingly preparing the way for Castroism,” Under-Secretary of State Douglas Dillon elaborated in August 1959 (qtd. in Kumar 144). There was widespread fear in Latin America and the United States that repression and poverty would provide a fertile breeding ground for socialist and communist ideology, as had been the case in Cuba.

The Venezuelan Foreign Minister reminded his peers that the “democratic surge” was a historic moment to “strengthen everything that serves the purpose of making human rights be respected” (Medina Quiroga 68). In debates on how to react to authoritarian regimes, OAS members were divided. While some, with the Trujillo regime at the forefront, decried this as infringing upon the sacred rule of non-intervention, Raúl Roa, the Cuban Foreign Minister, warned that a “narrow” interpretation of non-intervention only served to shield dictators.

To this, the US Secretary of State Christian Herter replied that “to weaken the principle of non-intervention and of collective security in an effort to promote democracy ... is a self-defeating exercise” (qtd. in Gleijeses, *Dominican Crisis* 32-33). In a position paper, the Acting Director of the Office of Inter-American Regional Political Affairs, John C. Dreier, recommended influencing inter-American members “to work out a moderately

progressive posture” in order to avoid a “serious division between those governments which pose as champions of democracy and those which are labelled as reactionary or dictatorial” [15] Overall, he strongly objected to the Betancourt Doctrine, as “the sanction for violation of human rights or for failing to have the required degree of representative democracy ... would be to ‘black ball’ the particular State,” a procedure that is known today as naming-and-shaming. [16]

Despite opposition by the Eisenhower administration, the Foreign Ministers decided to establish an Inter-American Human Rights Commission. Dreier cautioned that the committee violated the principle of sovereignty and rejected the idea that American states would pass judgement on “whether states or their governments are ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ ‘democratic’ or ‘undemocratic,’ ‘respectors’ or ‘disrespectors’ of human rights.” [17] The US administration should make clear that it is not prepared “to enter into any international convention for the guarantee of human rights or the establishment of a court to enforce such a convention,” he counselled. [18] Yet, when it came to Cuba, the Eisenhower government knew exactly in which camp it fell. In the end, the US delegation agreed to go along, because of Latin American enthusiasm and because they realised the potential of the Commission as a possible instrument to counter Cuba in the hemisphere.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was created on the basis of the 1948 *American Declaration of the Rights of Men* and installed officially in 1960 as one of the Special Agencies and Commissions of the OAS. Based in Washington D.C. at OAS headquarters, it consisted of seven members elected by the Council of the OAS and originally had a limited mandate and status. This would change with the 1967 reform of the OAS that established a more independent and potent human rights system and strengthened the Commission, which would play an important role during the 1970s and 1980s.

In the Final Act of the meeting, the Declaration of Santiago, OAS members reaffirmed their commitment to representative democracy and warned that “the existence of anti-democratic regimes constitutes a violation of the principles”

of the OAS. [19] The OAS continued to observe the situation in the Dominican Republic and commissioned two reports of the Inter-American Peace Committee in April and June 1960, which painted a devastating picture of the internal situation in the Dominican Republic. [20]

The situation escalated when Trujillo embarked on a personal vendetta against President Betancourt. While the OAS deliberated, Trujillo not only mounted a political campaign against Betancourt but was also implicated in an assassination plot, which left Betancourt severely injured. [21] The Venezuelan government promptly requested a Meeting of Consultation and an OAS investigation into the affair. The report of August 8, drafted by delegates from Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, and the United States, confirmed the allegations, and set in motion the procedure to convene the Sixth Meeting of Consultation in San José, Costa Rica, under the Rio Treaty. By a unanimous vote of 19 to 0 the OAS condemned the Trujillo government and declared it guilty of intervention and aggression. [22] In accordance with the Rio Treaty's articles 6 and 8 it asked all member states to break diplomatic relations and interrupt economic trade "beginning with the immediate suspension of trade and implements of war of every kind." [23] By August 26, the United States and all Latin American countries had severed diplomatic ties. Incensed at what he considered a betrayal by the Eisenhower administration, Trujillo hit out at Washington and particularly Thomas Mann, one of the architects of the Eisenhower Latin American policy. "It is well known that Señor Mann has diabolical intentions and is effeminate, like Betancourt," he vented in anger and accused Mann of bribing the OAS into breaking relations with the Dominican Republic (qtd. in McPherson 123).

The Sixth Meeting of Consultation also charged a committee with observing the situation in the Dominican Republic. [24] This sent a message that Trujillo could not simply ride out the situation. The political ostracism, together with the damaging economic sanctions, put the Trujillo regime under immense strain. [25] By 1961, Trujillo had become such a liability that some of his closest confidantes decided to remove him. On May 30, 1961, Trujillo's car

was stopped on an empty highway and his body riddled with bullets. As a reaction, the OAS sent a special OAS subcommittee to Santo Domingo for another evaluation, finally concluding that the Dominican Republic was "no longer a danger to the peace and security of the Americas" (Atkins 146).

The OAS penalised the Trujillo government not just because of its anti-democratic nature or its human rights violations, but because it had violated the principle of non-interference: a sacrosanct inter-American principle. Were the former the case, many Latin American countries, some of them close allies of the United States, would have been equally guilty. Crucially, the Eisenhower administration went along because it hoped that by championing representative democracy and human rights it could lay the groundwork for OAS actions against the Castro regime (Gleijeses, *Dominican Crisis* 134). In fact, this was the theme of the Seventh Meeting of Consultation that met only a week later. Although the Declaration of San José energetically condemned Sino-Soviet communism, it conspicuously failed to mention Cuba by name. Notwithstanding, Secretary of State Herter interpreted the declaration as a "clear indictment" of the Castro government. However, Latin American viewpoints differed. In order to clarify their position, the Mexican delegation even included a statement explicitly affirming that "this is a resolution of general character ... that in no way ... is a condemnation or a threat against Cuba." [26]

Whatever the reasons behind OAS decisions, the Declarations of Santiago and the collective sanctions against the Dominican Republic represented a pledge to uphold democratic values and as such pinpointed the changing nature of values in the OAS and, crucially, of the principle of non-intervention. It unmistakably signalled to Latin American countries that a failure to abide by democratic rules could be penalised. Indeed, if the OAS had implemented the Betancourt Doctrine, few governments would have been able to remain in the OAS. However, this promising process soon stalled and democracy as an inter-American principle did not consolidate. The Cuban Revolution and subsequent radicalisation meant that democracy

as a central tenet was soon superseded by development. Simultaneously, the Eisenhower government, searching for a way to dodge the tricky question of democracy, instead chose to promote development.

4. Development before Democracy

In 1958, the Brazilian Kubitschek government, inspired by the economic ideas of CEPAL, proposed a hemispheric development programme: Operation Pan America. [27] Arguing that underdevelopment was a threat to democratic institutions, Kubitschek attempted to convince the Eisenhower administration that providing development aid would help in fighting communism. As Brazilian Foreign Minister Francisco Negrão de Lima urged at the First Informal Reunion of Foreign Ministers that had been called in to discuss Operation Pan America, Latin American politicians could only convince their voters of “the superiority of the Western concept of democracy” if they simultaneously provided alleviation of economic hardships. [28]

At a speech at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, on October 29, 1958, Kubitschek cautioned that there could not be “a conscience of civil liberties ... when the subsistence itself is threatened” by poverty. Key principles of non-intervention and sovereignty could only function if the basic needs of people were met. Yet, fulfilling these popular needs proved difficult. When in 1959 the Brazilian government broke off negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, it did so by stating that the politics of austerity that the IMF had prescribed was tantamount to political instability. Angered when compared to Argentina, which had implemented IMF recommendations, Kubitschek pointed out that Argentine President Arturo Frondizi had only been able to push through punitive economic reforms with the support of the military and under a “state of siege.” In a democratic system, he cautioned, it would inevitably lead to strikes and violence. Ultimately, he charged, the Eisenhower administration wanted to push through their economic agenda, even though this endangered the fragile democracies in Brazil and Latin America more generally. [29]

After long and arduous negotiations, Brazilian efforts culminated in the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank in 1959. The Inter-American Development Bank was unique in that it reflected Latin American values and political needs. It not only funded infrastructure projects and offered technical assistance, but also had a specific focus on social projects in fields such as housing, sanitation, and education, which generally do not attract private capital. What also set it apart from other development banks was that it had a focus on smaller and less-developed countries (Tussie).

Even though there had been perceptible changes in Eisenhower’s Latin American policy in 1958, most notably the announcement of a Social Progress Trust Fund of \$500 million, the Cuban revolution and its Latin American appeal placed an aid programme at the top of the political agenda. Although at first only expressing moderate socialist convictions, from late 1960 onwards Castro began to side openly with communist ideology and to form close ties with the Soviet Union. This process of radicalisation provided the impetus for the State Department to revisit the idea of a financial programme for Latin America.

In March 1961, the newly inaugurated President Kennedy announced the Alliance for Progress, in which he proposed “to complete the revolution of the Americas.” Modelled after the Marshall Plan for Europe, the Alliance for Progress was meant to “show to future generations that in the same way as the Marshall Plan built a wall that halted the inroads of communism, the Alliance should prevent the downtrodden populations of Latin America from plunging into chaos.” [30] To set a positive tone and underscore the multilateral character of the initiative, the Alliance was discussed and formally announced at a meeting of the inter-American Economic and Social Council in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961. With the ratification of the Charter of Punta del Este, the American states established an “Alliance for Progress within the Framework of Operation Pan America.” [31]

At the top of the Alliance’s political agenda was the fight against communism and prevention of a communist takeover within Latin America. In January 1962, the time had come to move

against the Castro regime. At the request of the Colombian government, the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics assembled in Punta del Este under the Rio Treaty “to consider the threats to the peace and to the political independence of the American states that might arise from the intervention of extracontinental powers directed toward breaking American solidarity.” [32]

The Kennedy government charged the Castro regime with having “brought the entire hemisphere into the front line of the struggle between communism and democracy.” [33] This came, of course, after Fidel Castro’s declaration in December 1961 that he was a Marxist-Leninist and had been all of his life, sending shockwaves through the continent. Early in the conference, therefore, a rift materialised between political hardliners under US leadership, including most Central American and Caribbean nations, and those favouring a softer conciliatory approach towards Cuba, including the most populous and influential Latin American countries, amongst them Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. The first group included right-wing military dictatorships, but also moderate right-wing democratic governments from Colombia and Venezuela. [34]

Latin American political leaders were all too aware that the quality of democracy in region was inadequate and rationalised that this was the main reason for the appeal of communist ideology, echoing the rationale of Operation Pan America. “Because we have not been able to overcome a state of underdevelopment quickly; because we have failed to establish a socially balanced reality, we are confronted with serious threats” the Chilean Foreign Minister lamented. [35] Many Latin American leaders stressed democracy as an ongoing process, thus providing one explanation for the shortcomings in establishing stable governments. They pointed to social and economic underdevelopment as the dominant reason for the slow progress. “Our peoples aspire to democracy,” the Brazilian Foreign Minister San Tiago Dantas explained, “but have not been successful in establishing it in a stable or durable form, due to the intervention of social and economic causes, which frequently expose us to political crises, and often to state-of-emergency regimes.” [36] Yet another group

of countries emphasised the need for both social and democratic reforms, and that economic progress was crucial for the success of either type. As the delegate from Ecuador aptly stated, “[w]e need to continue to accelerate economic and social reform, but at the same time, we need to give political freedom to our people, in order that they can express, through an electoral system, popular will.” [37]

Delegates consequently identified the key criterion for democracy in the OAS as the implementation of free and fair elections, as discussed in resolution number four of the Punta del Este Charter. Despite the rhetoric of democracy throughout the meeting, the resolution itself displayed no more than a modest concern for representative government and elections, stipulating “that the governments of American states...hold free elections.” [38] In part, this reflected the (really-existing) state of democracy in Latin America, where only half of the governments could claim to be, even superficially, democratic.

The debates on democracy also raised questions about the meaning and definition of human rights. In a lengthy speech, the Cuban President and OAS representative Osvaldo Dórticos defended Cuba’s right to follow its own political path. Some groups in Latin America not only wanted to “prevent the propagation of international communism in this hemisphere, but simply to put a stop to national liberation or anti-imperialist movements among many peoples of Latin America,” he charged. “It is easy to call for human rights,” Dórticos argued, but “what is not everywhere present in our hemisphere, is the real, material, objective, specific exercise of those human rights.” [39] This “specific exercise” of human rights tied in with the bigger struggle of Latin America regarding human rights: the question of social rights. Cuban rhetoric resonated with Latin American elites. In underdeveloped societies, providing citizens solely with freedoms was considered insufficient; rather, access to basic rights such as education, health, and livelihood had to be guaranteed. These emerging discussions set in motion a process that eventually culminated in the creation of a hemispheric human rights regime in the 1970s.

Washington, simply put, was in a poor position to lecture Latin America on human rights when at the same time it refused considerable portions of its society basic rights and treated them as second-class citizens. The State Department was aware of this dilemma, especially in the African context. As stated in a report of September 1961: "Our greatest liability is our failure to live up to some of our ideals. [We must] move more quickly to solve our problem of according dignity and equal opportunity to our own African-descended population." (qtd. in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions* 6). A civil rights movement for US citizens of Hispanic origin, the Chicano Movement, was gaining strength in the United States, decrying discrimination and marginalisation. The state of race relations in the United States was scrutinised and viewed critically in Latin America. This was not surprising when taking into account that the vast majority of the Latin American population, with the notable exception of its elites, was of mixed origin.

In the end, the United States was successful in excluding the government of Cuba, but it only mustered the necessary votes with the help of authoritarian regimes. The majority of at least nominally democratic governments proved recalcitrant. [40] A communist Cuba had no place in the inter-American system, the OAS decided, and the final act explained that the "destruction of democratic institutions and the establishment of totalitarian dictatorships at the service of extracontinental powers" warranted the exclusion. "With the pretext of defending popular interests, freedom is suppressed, democratic institutions are destroyed, human rights are violated and the individual is subjected to materialistic ways of life imposed by the dictatorship of a single party," it continued ("Eight Meeting of Consultation" 5). Cuba had violated inter-American principles and, crucially, democratic norms (ibid). In sum, Cuba was charged with violating the democratic rules it had so arduously defended two years earlier.

By equating communism with the "destruction of democracy" and, in reverse, anti-communism with democracy, the US government and many right-wing regimes seized upon the opportunity to brand any communist or leftist government as undemocratic. Democracy thus became a code

word to move against Latin American left-wing groups and governments. No other institution embodied this better than the IACHR. It targeted Cuba exclusively in its first years, with reports in 1962, 1963, and 1967. [41] In 1965 and 1966 the Dominican Republic appeared on the radar of the IACHR, but in this case the reports were utilised to legitimise the US intervention in 1965.

Yet the Alliance for Progress soon ran into trouble. Within a year, the Panel of Nine had to acknowledge difficulties in the implementation and outreach of the programme. Projects failed, progress proved slow or elusive, and Latin American disenchantment soon grew. In the end, the underlying paradigm that economic growth would provide political stability proved erroneous, as illustrated by the coming to power of a wave of dictatorships throughout Latin America during the following decade. Even though the Alliance alleviated poverty and enabled growth, it ultimately did not achieve its ambitious goals. In light of both Cuban radicalisation and US radicalisation regarding Cuba, security imperatives soon became paramount and Washington abandoned democracy as a dominant foreign policy goal, a core value of both Operation Pan America and the Alliance for Progress.

There has been a long-standing dispute in scholarship over whether or not there was a genuine effort by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to further democracy in the region. Scholars such as Thomas Field Jr. have argued that the Kennedy government and its "Alliance for Progress" fueled authoritarianism and ultimately laid the foundation for military dictatorship in Bolivia. Others, such as Philip E. Muehlenbeck and Robert B. Rakove, have forwarded a more nuanced critique claiming that the Kennedy administration sought to nurture nationalist, anti-communist regimes with democratic tendencies in the Third World. Yet the key word here seems to be anti-communism. As Stephen Rabe has convincingly argued, for Washington democracy came a distant second to anti-communism in its search for strategic partners within the hemisphere (*The Killing Zone*).

5. Conclusion: Development without Democracy

The 1950s continue to be the “forgotten decade” of inter-American history, overshadowed by the more tumultuous 1960s. However, visible progress in Latin America concerning democracy was achieved during this period, as witnessed by the second wave of *apertura*, as well as the exclusion of the Dominican Republic from the OAS. The Venezuelan Betancourt government even went so far as to suggest that all dictatorships be excluded from the inter-American system and, in turn, was met by stiff resistance from the Eisenhower administration. Likewise, with the establishment of the, albeit weak, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the OAS made good on the promise of the OAS Charter to strengthen human rights. Yet the authoritarian rollback that started in Argentina in 1962 and continued in Brazil in 1964 soon showed that this was just a brief moment that would not last. In many ways, therefore, the rise of dictatorships from the mid-1960s onwards unmade much of the progress achieved.

Debates on democracy and development during the long 1950s, however, are crucial to understanding the historical trajectory of human rights debates because they provided the foundation on which debates and experiences of the 1970s built upon. In many ways, this story of the emergence of a regional human rights regime with local specificities does not fit into the narrative of global human rights. Part of the reason for this is the overemphasis on the 1970s as the pivotal decade in human rights historiography. This is problematic for two reasons. On the one hand, the focus on the 1970s as the decade of “breakthrough” or “human rights revolution” carries the implicit, possibly unintended, message that human rights won out and that they are now universally accepted and guaranteed. Yet this is blatantly not true for Latin America and the Global South more generally. On the other hand, a vision of human rights that is often narrowly focused on safeguarding the political rights of the individual versus the state illuminates just one part of the story of human rights in the region. Indeed, a more holistic picture shows that in many Latin

American societies, human rights campaigns were ultimately unsuccessful. This is not to reject the truly inspiring scholarship or the contention that the 1970s were a crucial decade but to argue for a more fragmented history of human rights in and for Latin America and to write a more complicated picture of the OAS and human rights: a story of both successes and failures that is not linear.

This mixed result was for a range of interlinked reasons. Development appealed to democratic and authoritarian regimes of the political Left and Right alike, while the question of democracy turned out to be a much thornier issue. There was a broad consensus that Latin American countries desperately needed to develop and development offered them a narrative to rally around. Crucially, development could be framed in ways that were limited to technocratic debates and to economic growth that ultimately allowed governments to eschew more fundamental questions of distributive justice and human rights.

Additionally, the successful conflation of democracy with anti-communism meant that calls for more democracy could be used as a convenient weapon to wield against communist or social influences, whereas the notorious military dictatorships in South America or authoritarian regimes in Central America were not targeted. Even within the left-wing spectrum, a certain impatience with or even disdain for formal democracy of a liberal-capitalist kind —inspired by socialist ideology and the rise of guerrilla movements— led to the embrace of a radical notion of democracy and violent struggle.

In an ironic twist of fate, development without democracy became the prevalent model in Latin America. With the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, Washington again embraced right-wing dictatorships, which simply suppressed demands for social reform and change by the masses. Under the rubric of the Mann Doctrine, the United States would no longer oppose military coups and instead would recognise any government in effective control, which was paramount to the renunciation of representative democracy as a foreign policy goal. While the Alliance for Progress continued and, with it, the development projects, Johnson supported the

Brazilian coup in 1964 and intervened directly in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

The social democratic governments that had flown the banner for development and their project of social democracy had failed, brought down by military coups. On the radical Left as well as the authoritarian Right, development was advanced while human rights and political participation were curtailed. In Brazil, the military dictatorship continued with a developmental programme that had been stripped down to a technocratic vision. Likewise, in Cuba, arguably the most radical developmentalist government, democracy and human rights were subordinated to a very restrictive definition of the revolution along the lines of the famous dictum “within the revolution everything; against the revolution, nothing” that left little room for dissidence.

Notes

[1] The Committee of Nine, short for the Panel of Experts to the inter-American Economic and Social Council, was installed to advise OAS members on the implementation of individual Alliance for Progress projects, as well as to evaluate the progress made.

[2] See also: Gilbert and Spenser (eds.), *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*.

[3] In *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision of Human Rights*, Elizabeth Borgwardt describes human rights as a counter-narrative that both predated and outlasted Cold War periodisation. By contrast, Samuel Moyn argues that only in the 1970s did the human rights ideal, as we know it, evolve, due to the collapse and failure of alternative political visions. He thus rejects the notion that there has been a continuous development of human rights since the 1940s, and argues that these ideals differ sharply from the human rights ideas of the 1970s. See: Moyn, *Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, and Eckel and (eds.), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*.

[4] See: Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*. For a different periodisation and the role of the British Caribbean states in framing human rights in the United Nations, see: Jensen, *The Making of International Human rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Construction of Global Values*.

[5] As a case in point, Cecilia Medina Quiroga starts in the 1960s and Klaas Dykmann begins in 1970. See: Medina Quiroga, *The Battle of Human Rights. Gross: Systematic Violations and the Inter-American System*; cf. Dykmann, *Philanthropic Endeavours or the Exploitation of an Ideal: The Human Rights Policy of the Organization of American States in Latin America*.

[6] For Latin American ideas of underdevelopment in an

international context, see: Sánchez Román, “Discovering Underdevelopment: Argentina and Double Taxation at the League of Nations.” Also Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil*.

[7] I disagree with Escobar here who dismisses the work of the ECLA as not radical enough. By arguing for a dependency framework, he commits the same mistake of those he criticises: diminishing Latin American agency. See: Arturo Escobar, 80-82.

[8] Whereas Brazilians speak of the Quitandinha conference, in the United States it is mostly referred to as the Rio Economic Conference.

[9] CEPAL, ‘A cooperação internacional na política de desenvolvimento latino-americana (1954): I. Informe preliminar da Secretaria Executiva da Comissão Econômica para a América Latina; II. Recomendações e exposição de motivos da Junta Preparatória designada pela Secretaria Executiva da Comissão Econômica para a América Latina’, E/CN.12/358, Oct. 1954. CEPAL, ‘Textos preparados para a reunião de ministros da Fazenda na IV sessão extraordinária do Conselho Interamericano Econômico e Social da OEA, realizada no Rio de Janeiro em novembro de 1954’, 1954.

[10] See: “Document 236. Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Holland, to the Under Secretary of State, Hoover,” Washington, 29 March 1955.

[11] Nixon of course meant abrazo, Spanish for “embrace,” but his ignorance highlights the fraught US-Latin American relations under Eisenhower.

[12] See: “Background Paper Prepared by the Officer in Charge of U.S. OAS Delegation Matters (Redington),” of August 7, 1959.

[13] *ibid.*

[14] *ibid.*

[15] See: “Document 86. Position Paper by the Acting Director of Inter-American Regional Political Affairs, Dreier,” of August 6, 1959.”

[16] *ibid.*

[17] *ibid.*

[18] *ibid.*

[19] See the Declaration of Santiago, August 1959, “Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers. Final Act.”

[20] The April report on the “Relationship Between Violations of Human Rights or the Nonexistence of Representative Democracy and the Political Tensions That Affect the Peace of the Hemisphere” was a more general report on the problems of human rights, whereas the June report dealt with the situation in the Dominican Republic exclusively. OEA CIP-40-60, 7 June 1960.

[21] This personal animosity by Trujillo actually dated back to the 1940s and was part of a bigger antagonism between reformist and counter-revolutionary networks.

See: Moulton, "Building their own Cold War in their own Backyard: the Transnational, International Conflicts in the Greater Caribbean Basin, 1944-54."

[22] Venezuela and the Dominican Republic were not allowed to vote under Rio Treaty rules.

[23] See: "Sixth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs Serving as Organ of Consultation in Application of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance. Final Act."

[24] Resolution I, OEA/Ser.C/II.6.

[25] In March 1961, at the request of President Kennedy, Congress slashed the Dominican sugar quota.

[26] See: "Seventh Meeting of Consultation Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Final Act."

[27] See: Long, *Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence*; Weis, *Cold War Warriors and Coup d'État: Brazilian-American Relations, 1945-64*, and Weis, "The Twilight of Pan-Americanism: The Alliance for Progress, Neo-Colonialism, and Non-Alignment in Brazil, 1961-64"; and Araujo Gomes, *Programação econômica e a operação pan-americana*.

[28] See: "First Informal Reunion of Foreign Ministers."

[29] See: "Document 270. Telegram from the Embassy in Brazil to the Department of State," of June 9, 1958.

[30] John F. Kennedy, "Preliminary Formulations of the Alliance for Progress". Address given at a White House Reception for Latin American Diplomats and Members of Congress in March 13, 1961.

[31] There are two conferences that took place in Punta del Este in 1961 and 1962. The first is the above-mentioned meeting of the Economic and Social Council in August 1961 and the latter is the meeting of Foreign Ministers in January and February 1962.

[32] The Rio Treaty, short for the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, was a hemispheric defense pact.

[33] Statement of the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, quoted in "Third session of the General Commission," 25 January 1962, Doc.35.

[34] At the beginning of the conference, the United States could count on the votes of Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela. Haiti and Uruguay had not made up their mind at this point.

[35] Statement of the Chilean Foreign Minister, Carlos Martínez Sotomayor, OEA/Ser.F/II.8 Doc.16.

[36] Statement of the Brazilian Foreign Minister, San Tiago Dantas, OEA/Ser.F/II.8 Doc.32.

[37] Statement of the Foreign Minister of Ecuador, Francisco Acosta Yépez, OEA/Ser.F/II.8 Doc. 17.

[38] Resolution IV, OEA/Ser C.II/8.

[39] Statement of Cuban President, Dórticos, OEA/Ser.F/II.8 Doc. 47.

[40] The final vote to exclude was won by 14 votes, the bare required two-thirds majority, with Cuba rejecting it and Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia abstaining.

[41] All of the reports in the 1960s concerned Caribbean countries. Next to Cuba, the Dominican Republic in 1965 and 1966, and Haiti in 1969.

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