The right in Latin America in the era of the 'pink tide': towards democratic consolidation?[1]

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Abstract

Much has been written on the turn to the left in Latin America, while work on the right has been sparse, and most of that party focused. Taking a novel political sociology approach, targeting civil society and political actors, and placing findings in wider contexts of hegemony, democratization and globalization this article seeks to help remedy this situation. Using 63 interviews on state-market relations and class, gender and race inequalities in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela, findings show a strong emphasis on poverty relief and commitment to democratic institutionalism. Nevertheless, these are tempered with pro-market ideological rigidities and a negation of structural inequalities, signalling possible negative impacts in terms of consensus

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building and democratization. Outcomes will depend on hegemonic struggles within the right, and at a national and global, particularly North Atlantic, level.

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Introduction

Most current analysis on Latin American politics has been directed at examining the shift to the left in the region. Yet the Latin American right has also been quite active in recent years. Both Colombia, in 2010, and Mexico, in 2012, opted for continuity electing centre-right presidents to replace right incumbents; peaceful, constitutional successions from left presidents to right presidencies took place in Panama (2009) and Chile (2010); unconstitutional or questionably constitutional successions took place against left presidents in Honduras (July, 2009) and Paraguay (June, 2012) respectively; there were also attempted coups against left presidents in Venezuela (April, 2002) and possibly in Ecuador (October 2010); and, for a number of years (2006-9) the right in Bolivia staged an open revolt against left-President Evo Morales. The sheer number of these events and the variety of power strategies used alert us to the continued importance of monitoring the right in the region.

The turn to the left in Latin America is generally seen as a result of counter-movements by subordinate sectors to the implementation of waves of neoliberal structural adjustment policies in the preceding two decades, often, although not always, by centre- or centre-right governments[2]. This signals that majorities in Latin America have limits as to how far neoliberalization of the economy and society can go before resistance sets in, raising problems for those who support such an ideological perspective. How can such groups respond, on a discursive, policy and strategic level, to this rejection of increased marketization by Latin Americans? And what impact will such responses have for prospects for democracy in the region, particularly taking into

[2] See for example Silva, 2009

consideration that, as we have seen, the temptation to use extra-constitutional means to achieve power is still present? Both these observations suggest an urgent need to examine the proposals of the Latin American right in reaction to the region's left turn, in order to draw out the reasons for such disparities and so help us assess the prospects for democratization in the region.

Historically analysis has been scarce on the Latin American right, with most studies focussing on party-politics (Middlebrook, 2000), while others seek to take a broader approach (Chalmers et al. 1992) and more recent studies continuing in both these veins[3]. This article seeks to contribute to this debate in a distinct manner by using a political sociology approach, concentrating more broadly on civil society as well as on parties. The article hence presents findings from a range of interviews held with conservative and liberal "free market" supporters, on the key issues of state/market relations and class, race and gender inequalities. It also provides a comparative dimension, presenting data from four countries in the region – two with right-governments – Chile and Colombia, and two on the centre-left or left - Argentina and Venezuela, in an attempt to provide more generalizable data. Furthermore, it places those findings within a theoretical framework derived from a critical reading of democratization, interpreting it as an open-ended hegemonic struggle taking place within the wider context of globalization. In this way it aims to provide a holistic and novel contribution to the debate on the nature, aims and strategies of the contemporary Latin American right.

[3] For example Luna and Rovira Kaltwasser (2011) take a more party focused approach while Dominguez et al. (2011) take a broader more general outlook of the phenomenon. Bowen (2011) recommends a more holistic multi-dimensional approach but does not apply it.

In this light, it has five main findings. First, it finds evidence of shifts to more centrist positions with regard to state intervention in terms of poverty relief, hence indicating possible moves towards a consensus on basic social provision between left and right. Second, it finds that nevertheless, these proposals are bound by ideological rigidities in favour of the supremacy of the market, over the state, as the key distributive instrument for wealth and key social services. As such the market is prioritized over social provision, with the potential to block the depth and stability of any consensus found. Third, respondents almost unanimously reject the possibility of structural inequalities on a class, race or gender basis affecting market participation of these groups, risking further blockage of possible consensus. Fourth, generally speaking there is a discursive commitment to continued democratic institutionalism in all countries, but that this could be compromised due to dichotomies between social and market prioritization. Fifth, and finally while resolutions to such dichotomies are conditioned by local and national contexts, such resolutions will also, however, depend greatly on global events, particularly in the North Atlantic region.

The paper has four parts. The first part will provide a theoretical framework, setting out a general definition of the right, based on Bobbio (1996) and Noël and Thérien (2008), before going on to discuss the nature of the right in Latin America providing three possible typologies for its characterization. It will then discuss democratization theory and place previous discussions within that framework, closing with an explanation of the study's methodological framework. The second part will outline findings from each country before examining in more detail similarities and differences within and between all four cases. A third part will assess prospects for democracy in the light of findings, while the conclusion will briefly summarize findings and make recommendations for future research.

The right in theory and in context

This study has been developed within a theoretical framework consisting of four main elements. First, the left/right cleavage is envisaged as a dyad which is constantly evolving but which is consistently centred on issues of equality (Bobbio, 1996). In this light this study adopts Ronald Inglehart's formulation that the core meaning of the left/right distinction "is whether one supports or opposes social change in an egalitarian direction" (cited in Noël and Thérien, 2009: 10), with the left being historically more in favour of such change while the right less. Second, the left and right are recognized as being indicative of a class based hegemonic struggle between what Nef and Reiter (2009: 27) call the "'haves" and "have-nots" (have-more and have-less)". Third, this struggle takes place within wider struggles of democratization and de-democratization, "the expansion and contraction of popular rule" (ibid.: 3). Fourth, these processes of democratization and de-democratization are seen from a long-term perspective, as non-teleological and as such not resulting in a final end state such as 'democracy'.[4]

Conceptually, the study takes a political sociology perspective, guided by Faulks's (2000) interpretation of that discipline as "the study of the interdependent power relationship between the state and civil society" (ibid.: 2), which seeks to "move beyond the observable outcomes of competition between political actors…[in order to highlight] the structural constraints that shape the distribution of resources" (ibid.: 14). This perspective, however, is further augmented by an international political economy approach as the study's concern is not just around inequalities at the national level, but how these are interlinked into wider processes of globalization. Globalization is characterized following Robinson (2003: 6) by "the rise of transnational capital and by

[4] For more details see Cannon and Hume, 2012 and Cannon and Kirby, 2012.

the supersession of the nation-state as the organizing principle of the capitalist system" in order to unify "the world into a single mode of production and a single global system" (ibid.: 13). In Latin America, this involves a transition from nationally organized economies and polities to a "full neoliberal opening to the global economy", the "ascendance of new transnational classes", and the replacement of "authoritarian systems by polyarchic political systems" (ibid.: 61). Yet this is regarded as an on-going open-ended process equally subject to hegemonic struggles.

Characterizations of the Latin American right are taken from an historical, a political and a conjunctural perspective. On an historical level, Cannon (2011) argues that the Latin American right is influenced by three elements. First, it is drawn from an elite which is ethnically largely of European extraction, and culturally of North Atlantic orientation, with a class/race based rejection of the Indigenous and African traditions, further crossed with a patriarchal view on women's roles in Latin American societies. Second, ideologically this elite is characterized by a hierarchized world view, Catholic in its inspiration, but mediated and modernized by positivistic science-based rationality which spring from and reinforces 'North Atlantic' cultural biases. Finally, politically the right is divided between conservative, liberal and fascist tendencies which historically have resulted in the outright abandonment of classic liberalism in favour of authoritarianism (Boron, 1992).

In an interview for this study, Boron elaborates on this last point in more detail[5], which can be taken as a second, political classification, and hence is worth quoting in full:

[5] Interview with Atilio Borón, 21 November, 2011, Buenos Aires. Author's translation.

> Liberals are those who believe in individual liberties, and in the sanctity of property, but who will not tolerate a military dictatorship which practices a type of genocide of the poor. Conservatives can be people who on the one hand will defend private property from the most individualist, most selfish conception but at the same time be against any advances in culture, profoundly religious, intolerant and nationalist. There are those [among them] who are more liberal, with a less nationalist attitude, less pro-religion, more open to dialogue and with a better acceptance of democracy. Finally there are fascists, who believe in the violent demobilization of popular sectors, to finish with the threat of communism, which appears everywhere in the vision they hold of the world….But these distinctions are blurred….because they vary in time. Some people have become more fascist in time, and others have had a different evolution. One cannot establish essentialisms: "this is such a thing in essence". It depends also on the evolution of the class struggle; all this modifies the strategy of the right.

Hence, while there are differences in terms of outlook and strategy with regard to each of these types, especially the fascist tendency *vis á vis* liberals and conservatives, all are agreed on the sanctity of private property and the supremacy of the market and all are subject to modifications, within the context of hegemonic struggle on a global, national and local, including group level.

Finally, conjuncturally, in the current context of 'pink tide' Latin America, Zibechi (2008) argues that the impact on the right has been twofold. First a resurgent left has succeeded in placing the social, if not exactly inequality, at the core of political debate, hence laying down a challenge to the right. Second, this in turn has caused, the emergence of three types of right. First, in the cases of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, there is a right in crisis as it sees itself being challenged by powerful social movements in alliance with popular governments against the right's traditional core constituency. In these cases, the traditional right has been thrown into disarray and replaced by figures from civil society, including from the media, sometimes recurring to extra-constitutional means to gain power. Second, in the Southern Cone, the right has been

supplanted by a left-of-centre embracing seemingly successful development strategies, and as a result finds difficulty in contesting left parties in government, but remains within constitutional structures in its quest for power as it does not see its essential interests threatened. Third, and finally, in two emblematic cases, Colombia and Mexico, the right puts liberalism under question, while maintaining its hold on power, as at least parts of it embrace pacts with the Armed Forces, security forces and/or paramilitaries in US sponsored wars against drug cartels and/or insurgent groups, destroying in the process the social basis of the left's possibilities for a counter-hegemonic challenge. These three rights are furthermore developing within a continent wide ideological offensive being carried out through civil society and led by international organizations with links to local right entities.

Yet this characterisation masks nuances in terms of the actual extent of neoliberal dominance in the region. First, many development regimes in left-led Latin American states are being referred to as post-neoliberal due to their hybrid political economies (Grugel and Rigirozzi, 2012), with no fixed development model having emerged (Silva, 2009: 280). Further, an ongoing University of Salamanca study on parliamentary elites (Alcántara Saéz, 2006) finds that there is debate on these key issues not only between left and right but also *within* both in the search for a new consensus.

Methodologically the study takes the Gramscian view that ideology and policy at party and government level emerge dialectically from the above described class stratified civil and political societies in the context of hegemonic struggle (Gramsci, 1971). In the case of the right the study identifies civil society as being dominated by elites, using Gibson's (1992), concepts of "core constituency" and "non-core constituencies". Core constituencies are "those sectors of society that are most important to [a party's] political agenda and resources" and non-core constituencies are

other groups whose support is garnered in the "quest to build an electoral majority" (ibid: 28). Hence, the study's aim is to gain an in-depth, qualitative insight into thinking among the Latin American right's "core constituency", on central ideologically defining issues namely, state/market balance and class, ethnic and gender inequalities. Taking Gramsci's recognition of civil society as a key area for the spread of ideas, liberal think tanks, the media, elite private universities, peak productive and business organizations, and conservative, business oriented religious organizations were targeted as well as right/centre-right party deputies and members and academic experts knowledgeable of local politics. Methodology used is entirely qualitative, based on a triangulated strategy of sixty-three in-depth semi-structured interviews, contextualized by inter-disciplinary critical readings drawn from political science, history and sociology.

State-Market Relations and Class, Gender and Ethnic inequalities

Introduction:

As stated in the previous section the four countries selected have governments on the left – Argentina and Venezuela, and on the right – Chile and Colombia. Within these there are a number of preliminary observations to take into account to help understand findings further. In Argentina, first, it is important to note that, in the words of analyst Atilio Borón, "the expression 'the right' has very negative connotations" associated with the dictatorship of the 1970s/80s and the human rights abuses perpetrated by the security forces during that era[6]. Furthermore, much of the political space is taken up by Peronism, in which both left and right have strong factions. Indeed it was the Peronists, under Carlos Saúl Menem, who implemented one of the most radical neoliberal programmes in the 1990s. Hence, it is unsurprising that most people interviewed, chose

[6] Interview with Atilio Borón, 21 November, 2011, Buenos Aires. Author's translation

to identify themselves ideologically as centre or centre right, differentiating themselves from the right, seen as being much more radical, not just in terms of human rights abuses and the type of ardent nationalism which led to the Falklands War (1982), but also in terms of radical liberalism, or neoliberalism. Second, subjects interviewed had negative views of the governments of the late Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) and of the present government of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) (2007-present), accusing them of authoritarianism, especially with regard to freedom of the press, arbitrariness in its decision-making, due to its "populist" nature, expressed as much through discourse as through social policy, and even as supporters of "terrorism" by some of those involved with the previous military dictatorship. Third, some subjects questioned the left-wing credentials of their social and economic policies. One right wing deputy pointed to contradictions between discourse and actions, displaying a "statist" discourse but in effect failing to pursue nationalizations, more progressive taxation system, or a stronger health service[7]. In effect the accusation is that CFK is not fulfilling Peronism's main programmatic and ideological banner – social justice – despite discourse to the contrary.

In Venezuela, similar, if not more extreme criticisms were prevalent with respect to the government of President Hugo Chávez (1999-present). These criticisms can be summarized in political, social, and economic terms. Politically, the opposition accuses the Chávez government of authoritarianism, to the extent that his government is in fact a "castro-communist" regime with totalitarian intentions. Economically, it is seen as

[7] Interview with national Congress right-party deputy, Buenos Aires, 23 November, 2011. Note the interview was held before the Argentine government's expropriation of YPF, the country's privatized oil company, from Spanish oil company Repsol in April, 2012.

inept allegedly leading to investment flight, shortages of basic goods, threats to private property, including expropriation, and general economic crisis. Socially, the government is accused of wasting resources, principally the oil rent, on marginally effective social programmes in an attempt to shore up popular support.

Since President Chávez was first elected in 1998, the Venezuelan opposition has tried civil disobedience, mass demonstrations, a coup, strikes/lock-outs and a recall referendum to remove him from office. None of it has worked. Since losing the 2006 recall referendum against Chávez's mandate, the opposition has concentrated primarily on the electoral route and has sought a united political and discursive front through the MUD – the Democratic Unity Coalition (Mesa de Unidad Democrática). The MUD portrays itself as centre or indeed centre-left and has a wide variety of groups and parties from left to right as members. As a result in Venezuela we did not target right wing groups *per se*, but rather looked to engage with groups close to the MUD. Nevertheless, findings on key issues express broad similarities with those in other countries.

In Chile, it is important to draw attention to two important issues, which distinguish it from Argentina and Venezuela. First, as noted Chile has a right wing government since 2010, led by businessman Sebastian Piñera from the National Renovation party (Renovación Nacional – RN) in alliance with the UDI (Unión Democrata Independiente – Independent Democratic Union) and coming to power after 20 years of centre-left Concertación governments, that is since the return of democracy in 1990. Second, since 2006 the country has experienced one of the greatest popular mobilizations since the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), with students consistently protesting in favour of free, state provided education. Both these facts colour many of the replies given by subjects in interviews. It is also interesting to

note that unlike in Argentina (or to an extent Venezuela), subjects have little problem assuming their ideological position as right-wing.

In Colombia, all discussion was framed by the over-riding issue of the country's long-running armed conflict with the FARC guerrillas, which is a key defining factor for explaining factional divisions, strategies, organizational expressions and even core constituencies in the right in particular. Nevertheless, this definitional role for the armed conflict is intimately bound with wider discussions about how best to achieve economic objectives. Hence, the solution to the armed conflict, the needs of capital and the prospects for social justice are almost indistinguishable in right discourse emerging from interviews.

Further, it is important to note that in Colombia, unlike in the other cases, the right (and the left) has both legal and illegal groups. These two expressions of the right are not mutually exclusive, however, with degrees of contact between them being noted. Such contacts spring in part from differences among the legal right on how best to defeat armed groups, primarily the FARC, and so achieve economic objectives. The legal right then can further be divided between what we can call "institutionalist" and "flexible" strategic currents. The first advocates a stricter respect for institutions and constitutional norms, while the latter sees these more as barriers to effective solutions to armed conflict. These distinct positions are politically defined less by parties than by personalities. Hence the institutionalist wing is led by sitting President Juan Manuel Santos while the "flexible" wing by ex-President Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010), the first generally supported by Bogota- based, urban, transnationalized, business elites aiming at positioning Colombia within the globalized economy, the latter regional and rural based, representing more traditional economic sectors, mostly landowners and associated industries.

Despite such differences, however, what is most remarkable in terms of findings on the issues of state/market relations and inequalities is the level of ideological coherence across each of the four cases, as can be seen in the brief summaries of findings below.

Argentina:

State-market relations and socio-economic inequality

Responses were unclear as to what should be the ideal balance between state and market, beyond generalizations. It was generally felt that the Argentine state was much too interventionist, and that instead it should be a "neutral" referee between competing private interests, with an efficient justice system central to this role, ensuring respect for the law and for contracts, that is judicial security (*seguridad juridica*) for the private sector. Socially, there was a consensus regarding the obligation of the state to guarantee access to health, education, justice and security (all of these coincidentally guaranteed by the National Constitution). Further, those close to the Catholic Church show belief in a moral duty to combat poverty. Yet it was generally agreed that the state should only "rescue" those who are vulnerable or those unable to succeed in the market, and such support should be conditional on a return to self-dependence as soon as possible. When questioned, however, if taxes should be raised in order to improve state social services and so reduce inequality, interviewees almost unanimously were against such a proposal, arguing that the tax burden was already very high in Argentina. Rather than higher taxes, what is needed is improved administration and implementation of public spending – which according to some should be reduced. Hence the state already has the means to effect redistributive measures, the problem is the wasting of such resources, and the chief recommended remedy is more efficient management of these resources.

Further, interview subjects see personal progress as something which derives from natural talents and personal efforts, and that Argentina is a country where there is sufficient social mobility to reward such talents. What is needed is not new taxation or more state intervention but increased and improved employment opportunities to facilitate such rewards. In general, respondents are in favour of social programmes to help the poor, but not to the extent that they encourage a situation of dependency amongst those who receive them. A recurrent fear is that beneficiaries do not want to work and prefer to take advantage of such programmes, sometimes taking advantage of several of these so as to avoid working. Moreover, many interviewees believed that these programmes were essentially clientelistic in nature, in favour of particular political parties. Hence in making such comments, the popular sectors of Argentine society, or at least sections of them, are implicitly receiving a double criticism from respondents. On the one hand those availing of government social programmes are seen as capable of deceiving the state by accruing benefits in order to avoid working, while on the other hand they themselves are open to deception by governing parties disbursing such benefits in order to get elected. Despite this, however, almost all those interviewed insisted that such social programmes should be tightly focussed on specific needy or vulnerable sectors, in order to ensure that those who are capable of work, do work.

Attitudes to ethnic and gender inequalities

In contrast, few were concerned with problems of ethnicity in Argentina, most claiming that it was not a problem due to Argentina being a country of immigrants. By that respondents meant those who came primarily from Italy and Spain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and their descendants, not the more recent waves of immigrants from nearby Andean states such as Peru and Bolivia. As a result of the earlier waves of European immigration, Argentina is seen as a relatively ethnically

homogenous country. This immigration is referred to in mythical terms, in the sense that European immigrants – parents or grand-parents no doubt of many of the interview subjects - arrived with little in terms of material goods or money and made good of themselves through their own efforts and hard work. Those that did not achieve this were thought not to have done so due to their own inabilities or lack of effort, tying in to earlier discourses about the vagrant poor, and further justifying the lack of necessity for state intervention to mitigate social and ethnic inequalities. Poverty and inequality hence are perceived by some subjects as personal choices and not as the result of structural imbalances in Argentinean society and economy.

Three positions regarding the role of women in society, particularly with regard to care of children and the elderly emerged in interviews. First, a strictly liberal position emerged whereby it was a simple choice for a woman whether she wanted to work or to dedicate her time to her family. The weight of tradition, the existence of *machismo*, and economic considerations are excluded from this account. A second position, however, does take these factors into account, and argues for more state provision of nurseries and playschools, and even extended paternity leave, alongside existing maternity leave rights, in order to allow women to effectively make that choice. A third, very minority tendency argues that the natural role of women is to care for others, due to her greater emotional sensibility. This last point, expressed by very few interviewees, ties into more widespread views on the nature and purpose of marriage in the context of the debate on same-sex marriage, legalized in Argentina in 2010. Most interviewees expressed the view that marriage can only be between a man and a woman, primarily in order to procreate and raise children, hence declaring their opposition to this law, which was therefore seen as *contranatura*. It was notable that this opinion was generalized between liberals and more traditional conservatives, hence questioning the degree to which such

analytical divisions are valid. A general picture emerges of the need for state and society to maintain the "well formed" family (*familia bien constituida*) as an essential social value.

In this respect, education emerges recurrently as an essential tool for the preservation of moral values as well as an aid to material advancement: to preserve family values, to respect social rules and institutions, to resist "populist" tendencies (meaning manipulation by politicians), to promote cultures of caring for the less vulnerable, and to inculcate cultures of work and facilitate access to work, and hence social mobility, amongst other benefits. Education is hence seen as the most effective social mechanism to achieve greater equality in all aspects of the term, and public education specifically was seen as the ideal agent for such promotion, but never to the extent of restricting availability or access to private education, the existence of which went entirely unquestioned.

Chile:

State-market relations and socio-economic inequality

Questions on state/market relations and socio-economic inequality elicited two types of responses from those interviewed. First, a technocratic and economic tendency, found primarily among representatives of liberal think-tanks and political party deputies, identifies the market as the main redistributive agent with the state assuming a subsidiary role. State activity is directed at those sectors where the market is incapable of generating wealth and general participation in market activity. In general therefore, state intervention is discouraged, and state efficiency is seen as the main mechanism to ensure more equal distribution of wealth. This latter aim is achieved through better targeting of state services and resources towards those most in need, in education,

training and generation of employment, rather than the provision of universalized programmes. Efficiency and quality are better assured, it is argued, through monitoring and evaluation of such programmes. Some further see state roles in correcting market rigidities, acting as regulator and arbiter, in order to optimize growth, which, according to one economist interviewed[8], is the best means to improve income, enhance social mobility and hence reduce inequality.

A second tendency, broadly in agreement with the first, nevertheless levels a certain critique at abuses which may emerge from this free-market, socio-economic model. This tendency points to the need for political and economic power and the elites in general to demonstrate greater ethical responsibility towards the poor. This tendency is found among some representatives of productive organizations, party linked foundations and socially oriented NGOs with links to business. The aim here is to ameliorate the worst excesses of the neoliberal model, providing it with greater legitimacy among lower social sectors.

In general regarding state-market balance, while all feel it is necessary to achieve equilibrium between the two, when pressed on providing responses to conflicts between social and economic demands, few go beyond offering existing institutions as a means to respond to them. Education, an issue which emerged repeatedly in interviews, is a case in point. Education has been a key area of conflict in Chile for years, as students repeatedly protest energetically in favour of more comprehensive state coverage and free tuition to university level[9]. While most of those interviewed welcomed the debate, and while funding for poorer families was recognized as an issue

[8] Interview with economist in private university, Santiago, 6 December, 2011.

[9] See for example Jara Reyes 2012

needing addressing, the existing, mostly privatised, educational model was deemed to be more than fit for purpose by most interviewees. Rather than being revised in line with student demands, most interviewees argued that it should instead be perfected through greater monitoring and evaluation to help improve quality. Hence, interviewees emphasized the advantage of the existing neoliberalized model of educational provision, and the subsidiary role of the state, despite the fact that most Chileans were found in surveys, to be in agreement with student demands and expressed low levels of confidence in institutions (Lagos 2011).

Attitudes to ethnic and gender inequalities

In response to questions regarding recognition of the rights of vulnerable minorities, two points stand out. First, the majority of those interviewed insist that minorities can find sufficient protection from existing legislation and that under no circumstances is additional legislation, in the form of state intervention to favour minority groups, necessary. In other words, recognition of minority rights is only conceivable in juridical terms, and as individuals, not groups. Hence, there is a rejection of measures such as gender quotas, special regimes for ethnic minorities, or indeed same-sex marriage.

Moreover, in terms of social mobility all are agreed that this is, with perhaps some minor difficulties, accessible to all. One interviewee maintained that as there was a strong, firm set of institutions governing the country, concentration of power in few hands was sufficiently guarded against. Hence few thought of Chile as an elitist society, and that due to its strong institutions there is a constant circulation of power. In sum, interviewees believe that existing institutions and institutional arrangements guarantee

against concentration of power and work in favour of social mobility, and hence do not require any major changes, again contradicting popular impressions[10].

Similar arguments emerge in questions regarding care for children and the elderly and the role of women with respect to these issues. While interviewees make some limited suggestions, such as the existing requirement that large firms provide crèche facilities, the offer of financial incentives to business and flexibility for workers in respect of their work timetable, few offer more global or universal proposals nor suggest a greater state role in the provision of care facilities. In essence, there is no sense that this is a particularly urgent problem or one that requires greater consideration, despite it being, for example, a possible barrier to greater female participation in the workforce as suggested by interviewers.

Colombia:

State-market relations and socio-economic inequality

In Colombia strong levels of agreement emerge on the issue of state/market relations, despite the divisions in the right alluded to in the introduction to this section. For most subjects interviewed, the role of the state is to promote the best conditions for market activity, either through public investment in services or in terms of regulation, and preferably in alliance with the private sector. Indeed, such a conception of state-market relations is so deeply engrained in public discourse that it is almost marginal to political electoral competition, including on the left. There may be, at the very least, more social democratic readings of this conception, in the sense that the market be subject to greater degrees of regulation than currently exist, but these are very weak and marginalized.

[10] See Lagos, 2011.

One subject observed that while the 1991 Constitution invokes rights to health, education and housing, most governments of whatever political stripe have "adopted market-based approaches to attempt to fulfill these constitutional provisions"[11]. Furthermore, most respondents exclude the possibility of tax rises to fund such constitutionally mandated social provisions, though some would countenance such rises to support state activity in support of the market. In other words, tax rises may be possible but only in terms of achieving economic rewards, not to further more equitable wealth distribution.

Attitudes to ethnic and gender inequalities

Equality is conceived in a purely abstract, juridical sense as it impacts exclusively on the individual. Most reject the notion therefore that women or ethnic or sexual minorities as distinct groups are disadvantaged or discriminated against, believing instead that social mobility is an individual choice and perfectly achievable by all who choose to pursue it. Nevertheless some suggested that if they choose not to pursue it, this may be due to particular characteristics of their group, hence in part contradicting their thesis on the non-existence of groups. One respondent for example doubted the wisdom of provisions in the 1991 Constitution granting land reserves for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, as these territories are not "for sitting, contemplating the sunset"[12]. Similarly, many voiced doubts at the wisdom of land distribution programmes for displaced peasants proposed by President Santos, due to the perceived inability of peasants to exploit the land to its full potential. The inference is that these

[11] Interview with director of research centre, state university Bogota, February 1st, 2012.

[12] Interview with Director, peak productive organization, Bogota, 26 January, 2012.

populations are incapable, due to their very natures, to use these lands effectively, lands which are thus "lost to the economy".

Such conceptions are echoed in what would be considered more technocratic respondents. Constitutional provisions protecting minority rights open up, according to one respondent, the possibility of an "ethnodemocracy" on a par with Bolivia led by current (Indigenous) president Evo Morales[13], while another voiced fears of a "dictatorship of minorities" developing[14]. Indeed such views are silenced, according to some respondents, both due to officially sanctioned "political correctness" and to a "leftist" media, leaving the right "cornered" (*arrinconada*) and with little freedom of expression[15]. Yet members of the same group, amongst others, do not hesitate to brand those individuals and groups, such as NGOs, in favour of minority or socio-economic rights and/or for a negotiated solution to the armed conflict as "leftists", discursively linking these with the guerrilla, whose only objective is to provoke violence, instability and disorder. In sum, generally speaking a concept of group rights are comprehensively rejected on economic, cultural and political grounds, in favour of an individualized conception of rights, usually linked to an economic rather than social or cultural rationale. Moreover, to argue otherwise is to be tolerant of criminality and violence while being intolerant of right-wing common sense.

Venezuela:

State-market relations

[13] Interview with Academic, Bogota, 23, January, 2012.

[14] Interview with Director of think-tank, Bogota, 23 January, 2012.

[15] Focus group with members of intellectual and discussion group linked to Conservative Party, Bogota, 19 January, 2012.

Economically, MUD policies aim to develop what subjects referred to as a "productive economy", as opposed to the existing oil-based rentier economy. This will be achieved by pursuing a double strategy of, on the one hand, using oil rents to stimulate the private sector within the country, while on the other simultaneously opening up the Venezuelan economy to private investment, both foreign and national. Increased business activity, employment, and tax revenues will lessen the burden of poverty, while increasing non-oil income and lessening state dependence on oil for revenue. State functions will be slimmed down, from the current perceived high levels of interventionism, to that of arbiter, overseer and regulator, seeking to create the conditions necessary for the flourishing of the market, while providing infrastructure and basic public services – "a strong but restricted state" in the words of one interview subject[16].

This will be achieved in a gradual, pragmatic manner avoiding any sudden rupture with the existing order. PDVSA, the all-important state oil company, will not be privatized, but will be subject to market disciplines. It will also become "autonomous", meaning not dependent on the government or ministries as is the case now. Further, oil production will increase, as opposed to current government policy limiting production to encourage higher prices. Hence we could term opposition economic policy as *gradual pragmatic productivism*. Economic growth is what will stimulate social well-being, as the twin track strategy of fostering the domestic private sector and liberalizing the economy to domestic and foreign investment, in potential areas such as agriculture, tourism and oil derivatives, will, it is claimed, create more businesses and more employment. State investment must stimulate private production – not replace it. As one subject put it, state policy must aim to "produce producers" within a competitive

[16] Interview with think-tank director, Caracas, 8 February, 2012.

environment, “formalizing” the informal sector, transforming them into “entrepreneurs” in order “to create a country of entrepreneurs”[17].

Attitudes to socio-economic, ethnic and gender inequalities

Socially, there was little recognition of class, gender or race inequalities on the part of respondents as of any concern or urgency. These rather were often regarded as non-existent or as demagogic tactics on the part of President Chávez to maintain power. Most subjects did emphasize, however, the need for a strong, vigorous social policy to combat poverty (which those interviewed seemed to equate with inequality). Generally speaking interviewees agreed that social policy needed to be focused on the poorest, be non-assistentialist, and oriented at creating opportunities to achieve employment, in order, ultimately, to foster individual autonomy (whereas under Chávez, according to one subject, “the poor are servants”[18]). While this task was seen to be primarily that of the state, some suggested that this could be in partnership with the private sector. This was seen both in terms of employment creation, which was almost unanimously envisaged as emerging from that sector, and in terms of social responsibility and a “genuinely” ethical capitalism[19].

Education and health services should be of the best quality, delivered in a non-partisan manner, funded primarily by the oil rent, but subject to competition from the private sector, especially in education. The existing social programmes installed by the Chávez government will be continued, but tied to other services, “professionalized” and

[17] Ibid.

[18] Interview with Academic, Caracas, 23 February, 2012.

[19] Interview with Journalist and Philosopher, Caracas, 13 February, 2012.

integrated into the pertinent ministries and their existing service provision. The overall aim, however, is to break a perceived dependence on the state by individuals, which seemed to be identified, in this sense at least, as common in popular sectors. One interviewee indeed alleged, echoing similar comments in Argentina, that some families abused social programmes, living exclusively on a number of subsidies[20]. The ideal rather, according to another interviewee is to provide a "lifebelt to the poor", but striving to achieve a situation whereby "there would be no need for social services"[21]. Hence, one could summarize opposition social policy as *social market* policy in the sense that social services are provided in function of people's participation in the labour market, which is the ideal path to achieve individual autonomy.

Comparative discussion

In the introduction to this paper, three characterizations of the Latin American Right were offered: historical, political and conjunctural. Does evidence above support or contradict these characterizations? And what impact may they have on prospects for democratization in the region?

Ideologically, there is a firm consensus around the subsidiarity of the state to the market. The state's role is to provide order, both in a security and in a juridical sense, to support the development of private enterprise, with infrastructural development, tax breaks and other incentives mentioned, to collaborate where possible with the private sector in the development of such infrastructure, and to act as arbiter and regulator so as to ensure market efficiency. State intervention in the economy – and indeed society -

[20] Interview with Director of productive association, Caracas, 7 February, 2012.

[21] Interview with senior opposition politician, 28 February, 2012.

must be kept to a minimum, if it should exist at all, indeed the state should regard the economy as the preserve of the private sector and ensure its continuance. Further, the state should ensure provision of basic public services – primarily health and education – although not necessarily *by* the state. Moreover, these services are viewed not in terms of lessening inequality, nor less as universal rights, but rather in terms of facilitating individuals to participate in the market, with employment, in the private sector preferably, seen as the main gateway to achieving this. This viewpoint hence is in line with orthodox neoliberal policies as promulgated by international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, as well as Europe and the United States (Silva, 2009: 39).

Views on inequalities of class, race or gender are for the most part unacknowledged in all four countries, with instead an emphasis on the individual, who with the right guidance, support and personal effort and regardless of race, class or gender, can participate in national life and achieve success to any level. However, most international agencies would accept that there are structural impediments to such participation with regards to class, ethnic origins or gender, particularly the latter two hence here there is less agreement between interviewees and such organizations. In part this difference can be explained by indications among interviewees of stereotyped images of the popular classes in general and ethnic minorities in particular. Some respondents, as we have seen, expressed the opinion that indolence among these groups may be due to negative influences of their particular class background or ethnicity. In short, such identities are on the one hand not considered by the market as hindrances, but can hinder the individual in his or her intent to participate in the market. Exceptions here are women, who rather, according to some, may choose not to participate in the market in order to devote her time to her family. Yet again, however, this is sometimes

ascribed to her essential nature, as innately caring and nurturing and not simply to her individual choice. From such characterizations emanate calls for efficient policing of supposed welfare abuses by individuals and families in such sectors, and effective designs of social policy to encourage, incentivize and even force market participation. Meanwhile, education, especially in Argentina, is identified as a key to ensure that an equally supposed innate entrepreneurialism predominates in the popular imagination. Such opinions would thus indicate the use of interlinked class and race based prejudices on the part of the Latin American right to justify and perpetuate inequality (Miles and Brown, 2003), but with a positivist inspired belief in education as the comprehensive remedy to eradicate such negative traits from the popular sectors.

With regard to Borón's conservative/liberal/fascist distinctions among the Latin American right, evidence can be detected to support this thesis, although perhaps the word "fascist" may be an over-statement. There is evidence of conservative/liberal distinctions over "value issues" to do primarily with the family – e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage etc. Yet in essence this is found to be more apparent than real. As there is a generalized rejection of the existence of inequalities, including gender inequality, there is in effect little moral conviction behind liberal concepts of gender equality, held for example by some more technocratic subjects. Furthermore, as women are poorly represented in most of the organizations targeted, this would lessen debate on these issues within these organizations. Finally, of the few women presented for interview[22] these expressed conflicting, usually conservative views. In essence, if the market is the great leveller, then it takes precedence over all other issues and considerations.

[22] In total only 13 of the 63 people presented for interview were female.

More radical elements, bordering on quasi-fascism can also be detected. In Colombia radical viewpoints with regard to the left from some respondents, can have lethal consequences, as the many assassinations in Colombia of trade unionists, human rights advocates and community organizers testify[23]. In Argentina as noted above, some respondents linked to the military dictatorship, claimed both Nestor and Cristina Kirchner supported "terrorists" in their attempts to prosecute human rights abuses. In Venezuela, some minority voices advocated the total dismantling of the Bolivarian state apparatus through the dissolution of the existing Constitution and the privatization of state enterprises, including the national oil company PDVSA. To date such attitudes culminated in many, sometimes violent, extra-constitutional strategies to overthrow Bolivarian democracy, and exclude its leaders from power (Dominguez, 2011).

In each country contradictory opinions emerged over a variety of issues. One important area was the extent of state involvement in social provision. In Argentina and Venezuela, for example, most respondents voiced strong support for state provided education and health services. Yet simultaneously no one questioned the continued existence of private education and indeed in Venezuela this was positively encouraged. The extent of educational provision was also under dispute by students and other sectors in Chile, yet here few of those interviewed expressed doubts about the structure of the current mixed system. Similarly, differences too were detected as to the desired extent of state welfare provision. To what extent should it be provided, and how far should market excesses and instabilities be constrained by the state? One answer voiced in Chile and Venezuela, is self-restraint on the part of capital, through corporate social

[23] See for example the 2011 Human Rights Report for Colombia by Amnesty International. Available from: http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/colombia/report-2011. Accessed: 30 April, 2012.

responsibility programmes and the application of a more "ethical" capitalism. Nevertheless this could only ever be entirely voluntary and never imposed by the state. Frequently cited in all four cases was the maxim "as much market as possible and as little state as necessary", yet the very imprecision of this formula denotes the necessity for a certain strain of pragmatism in deciding this balance which can cause friction among the right in moments of stress (such as in Chile or Colombia).

These observations support the thesis that there is a constant dialogue taking place between more conservative and more liberal elements within the right, yet with a low level but ever present "straining at the leash" by more radical, fascistic elements. To sum up, as Borón points out, while there is a generalized agreement of objectives, there are moderate and more radical versions of the extent to which these objectives can feasibly be materialized and about the correct strategies to realize them, whether by persuasion and negotiation or by imposition and even violence. The degrees to which these prevail depend on the national context and the extent of perceived threat to overall objectives at particular conjunctures – in other words "the class struggle".

If we take a simple scale of low, to moderate, to high perceived threats, and we measure these in terms of perceived levels of institutionality and radicalness of the left in each country we can see that this perception of threat varies from country to country. In Argentina there was dissatisfaction in terms of the CFK government, particularly its supposed arbitrary and authoritarian nature, yet there was less disquiet on threats to the vital interests of capital, particularly to property or taxes as the government of CFK was not perceived as particularly left-wing. This however, should not be equated with complacency, as an arbitrary and authoritarian government, in a poorly institutionalized state, is also an unpredictable one. In Argentina therefore we could qualify perceived

threats from the left – that is the government of CFK - by the right as moderate, very tentatively perhaps bordering on high.

In Chile, on the other hand, there was a low perceived level of threat. Despite twenty years of centre-left government, ten years of which were led by Socialist Party presidents (Lagos, 2000-2006; Bachelet, 2006-2010), there was a generalized satisfaction with the efficacy of existing institutionality to deal with most social challenges in an efficient manner. Further, one respondent admitted that the *Concertación* was practically centre-right in its ideological orientation[24], indicating low perceptions of threat to the existing neoliberal model operating in that country.

In Colombia signals were mixed. On the one hand, a general satisfaction was transmitted with regard to the current government of Juan Manuel Santos, although some quarters were wary regarding certain aspects of his approach. General satisfaction too was conveyed in terms of existing institutionality, although yet again some expressed dissatisfaction with its perceived tendency to act in favour of minorities and "leftists", including seeing it as an obstruction to the effective resolution of the armed conflict. The existence of armed left-wing guerrillas, however, was generally viewed as a high level threat and as commented earlier, those who expressed critiques of existing power relations and/or pacification strategies were equally regarded by some as such, despite the fact that in general few on the legal left were seen to question the neoliberal model. Hence while on the one hand the hegemony of right wing ideology transmitted security to respondents, such security was seen as under severe and constant threat by the armed conflict, the guerrilla, and their suspected civilian "fellow travellers" on the left. Even the media, despite, or perhaps because of the coincidence of "media, political

[24] Interview with opposition deputy, Valparaiso, 20 December, 2012.

and economic power" in Colombia (Bonilla and Narvaéz Montaya, 2008: 95) was considered suspect by some. Possible openings towards these latter groups, particularly the guerrillas, on the part of government were viewed by many with suspicion if not hostility. Hence we could qualify perceived risk levels for the right in Colombia as high to moderate despite the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism and the presence of a right wing government in power.

Finally in Venezuela, the right and the opposition in general view the government of President Hugo Chávez as a high level threat to their essential interests. Indeed Venezuela was repeatedly cited in all countries as a worst case scenario, particularly in Colombia. Currently a predominantly institutionalist, electoral and pan-opposition strategy is hegemonic, but a dramatic loss in the October, 2012 elections may well throw that strategy into disarray, risking a possible return to previous un-constitutional strategies.

Hence to sum up interviews provide evidence to confirm the North Atlancticist biases of right wing elites, tinged by historically conditioned class, racial and gender biases, and professing various degrees of conservative, liberal and fascist tendencies. These, however, vary from person to person, organization to organization and country to country depending on the extent of the threat felt by these to the existence of capital and to the possibilities of installing, securing and/or maintaining a neoliberal socio-economic model. As we have seen this threat varies depending on national conjunctural contexts and these and their responses can change over time, hence disproving the rationale behind Zibechi's (2008) taxonomy although not entirely its analysis.

One other element of Zibechi's analysis requires further discussion, however. Zibechi (2008) maintains that the different rights in Latin America operate within a

wider context of a Gramscian international "war of manoeuvre" led by international public and private agencies, citing the activities of the Spanish Popular party's FAES think tank in the region as an example. This study found evidence, unsystematized at the moment, of such activity from three main countries in each of the case countries. First, mentions were made of links to the Spanish Popular party, including its think – tank Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies (Fundación para el Analísis y los Estudios Sociales/ FAES), by for example the PRO party in Argentina, and a Conservative Party-linked youth group in Colombia amongst others. Second, a few organizations mentioned links to the US Democratic and Republican parties, such as Sumaté in Venezuela[25]. Third, links with the German Christian Democrat Party (CDU) and that country's liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) were found through their respective foundations, the Konrad Adenauer and the Friedrich Naumann *Stiftungen*. The CDU linked organization for example provides funds to Sumaté in Venezuela and Fundación Libertad in Chile among others. Friedrich Naumann Stiftung provides funding for the Liberal Network in Latin America (RELIAL, Red Liberal de America Latina) which groups a number of leading liberal think-tanks in the region. This would suggest coordination between local agencies, primarily political parties and think tanks, and such international agencies to further a transnational globalization project as envisaged by Robinson (2003).

Implications for democracy and democratization

Analysing these findings with reference to the theoretical framework guiding this study outlined above, a number of observations can be made. First, there is evidence of a shift

[25] See also Golinger 2007 on US funding, especially from the bi-partisan National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and USAid, the US development agency.

towards a consensus on social issues, which could be seen as a response to left emphasis on social issues, hence supporting Bobbio's thesis on the left/right cleavage being seen as a dyad (Bobbio, 1996). Second, this shift emerges as a concern for alleviating the worst aspects of poverty, yet as noted above, this is highly qualified, both in terms of limitations placed on it by insistence on the subsidarity of the state, and in terms of questioning the depths of motivation to participate in the market on the part of different groups identified. This in turn is indicative of struggles of a class, race and gender nature, which nonetheless are denied by subjects, itself a class position.

Third, such struggles have implications for democratization and de-democratization. While the predominance of constitutional strategies in Argentina and Chile show a commitment to democratic institutionalism, especially in Chile, this must be placed in the context of the perceived low- to medium evaluations of threats from the left. Yet it could be said that total confidence in democratic institutionality was to be found only in Chile with lower evaluations in Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela and evidence of extra-institutional strategies in the latter two. Fourth, the almost unanimous support for market supremacy as the best way to ensure social mobility and resource distribution, despite evidence that this increases inequality[26]; the insistence on qualified, as opposed to universal social provision; the negation of structural disadvantage on the basis of class, ethnic and gender; and, indeed the expression of prejudice along these lines by some, all point to a possible process of limited democratization or indeed de-democratization, in the wider substantive sense of the term.

Finally, the coherence between expressed policy ideas within and between each country, despite divisions over tactics, reflects similar dynamics in developed countries,

[26] See for example ILO, 2008.

particularly the United States and Europe. This, and some evidence of direct links, including financing of some organizations contacted, provides support for the need to place such analysis within the wider perspective of globalization. As a result, while outcomes will very much depend on internal national dynamics, these are also influenced by such international links. Democratization prospects therefore could depend on how the economic and social crises will be dealt with in the US and Europe, as the implementation of more draconian, neoliberal policies in these countries could reinforce such attitudes among the right in Latin America, due to its North Atlanticist outlook and connections.

Conclusion

This article aimed to throw qualitative, empirical light on thinking among right-wing circles in "pink tide" Latin America, on the themes of state/market relations and class, gender and ethnic inequalities. It found that there is a general commitment to poverty alleviation but this is qualified by unquestioning support for market supremacy and a generalized negation of inequalities of whatever type. It finds a mixed picture in terms of democratization, with a relative commitment to democratic institutionalism but little commitment to more substantive forms of democracy. Further, the hegemony of democratic institutionalism among the right could be jeopardized by a persistent radical strain, in the case of threat levels from the left being perceived as increasing, presenting dilemmas in terms of deepening substantive democracy, particularly in terms of wealth re-distribution. Finally, it also notes the existence of international links between right-wing organizations in Latin America and such groups in Europe and the United States, hence underlining the importance of a global as well as a national context in the formulation of policy platforms and proposals by the right in Latin America.

In general, findings point to the need for continued monitoring of the right in the region, despite current left-wing hegemony. In particular three areas are suggested where further research could be conducted. First, the study points to difficulties in distinguishing between the right and elites. Generalized taxonomies of the right have been offered but these, of course, remain just that, generalized as elite members sometimes have leftist attitudes and affiliations. There is a need, hence, to tease out further the relation between elites and the right, pinpointing tensions between the two. Second, the study also indicates the porousness of boundaries between civil society, including market actors, politics and the state. More research needs to be done on how the interaction between these three affects ideological formation and resulting policy and strategic choices. Third, and in a related manner, more research would be useful in particular on the relationship between think-tanks and political parties, the inter-relation between these on a national, regional and international basis, and its impact on right ideology, policy and strategy in the region.

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