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**THE RADICAL LEFT IN GOVERNMENT: DEEPENING AND
CONSTRAINING DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA AND BOLIVIA**

*LA IZQUIERDA RADICAL EN EL PODER: PROFUNDIZACIÓN Y RESTRICCIÓN
DE LA DEMOCRACIA EN VENEZUELA Y BOLIVIA*

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the radical left in government in Latin America, particular in Venezuela and Bolivia, and to what extent the achieved political and socio-economic policies accomplished by the governments have contributed to deepening democracy, either related to the concept of liberal democracy or participatory democracy. It is argued that democracy both has been weakening and deepening. On the one hand, democracy has been weakening, to some extent, if we measure democracy as equivalent to liberal democratic institutions such as elections, political freedoms and accountability, particular in the case of Venezuela. However, on the other hand, it can be argued that new participatory dimensions have increased, resulting in deepening of democracy, for example as in Bolivia. Still, all radical left administrations are facing several obstacles to overcome in order to deepen democracy, both when it comes to develop democratic institutions in accordance with the liberal as well as the participatory traditions.

Keywords: Liberal Democracy; Participatory Democracy; Left; Bolivia; Venezuela

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es explorar las acciones de política pública de los gobiernos de izquierda radical en América Latina, especialmente en Venezuela y Bolivia, así como en qué medida dichas políticas implementadas en materia socio-económica y política han contribuido a la democratización, ya sea relacionada con el concepto de la democracia liberal o participativa. En el presente artículo se argumenta que la democracia se ha debilitado y profundizado a la vez; por un lado, la democracia se ha ido debilitando, hasta cierto punto, si medimos la democracia como en relación a las instituciones democráticas liberales, las elecciones, libertades políticas y rendición de cuentas, en particular en el caso de Venezuela. Sin embargo, por otro lado, se puede argumentar que las nuevas dimensiones de participación han aumentado, lo que resulta en la profundización de la democracia, como en Bolivia, por ejemplo. Sin embargo, todos los gobiernos de izquierda radical se enfrentan a numerosos obstáculos para profundizar la democracia, tanto para desarrollar las instituciones democráticas de conformidad tanto desde la tradición participativa como liberal.

Palabras clave: Democracia Liberal; Democracia Participativa; Izquierda; Bolivia; Venezuela.

THE RADICAL LEFT IN GOVERNMENT: DEEPENING AND CONSTRAINING DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA AND BOLIVIA

Introdução.-

By 2009, as many as fourteen presidencies (see table in this article) are occupied by the left. In Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, and El Salvador, the reformist and social-democratic presidents have attempted to carry out liberal democracy, with modest social and economic reforms. These reforms are seen as moderate in the sense that they have not challenged the global political or economic order of today – liberal democracy and market economy – although some attempts to modify the neoliberal economy, especially on issues related to free trade and privatization, have taken place.

However, in other Latin American countries – such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua – the presidents have been much more radical, challenging or trying to challenge the political, social, and global economic order (Katz 2007; Walker 2008; Moreno-Brid and Paunovic 2008). These are considered radical for several reasons: One is the radical socioeconomic agenda and how democracy is understood as a concept; in reality, it is the ambition to deepen democracy through peoples' participation in the political and socio-economic spheres. This stands in sharp contrast to the liberal representative democratic tradition and its focus on elections, political rights and vertical and horizontal accountability (see Lipset 1959; Dahl 1971; Diamond 1996). Another reason is that the left, during presidential terms, through party agendas or other means such as public speeches, have opposed the ideas behind free trade as well as the supranational organizations behind the market-based policies. Moreover, these radical presidencies attempt to challenge the domestic elites who support the ideas of electoral democracy and global free market economy (see Middlebrook 2000). Still in reality, the left regimes have not accomplished as much as one would expect in practice when it comes to income redistribution – with a few exceptions such as Venezuela and Bolivia (see Cornia 2010).

However, much of previous research on the Latin American left have focused on issues such the definition of the left and what types of the left that exist, i.e. populist, participatory, radical, social-democratic or the nationalist left (e.g. Castañeda 1993; Roberts 1998; Katz 2007; Walker 2008; Moreno-Brid, and Paunovic 2008); the left wave as a phenomenon (Cleary 2006; Castañeda, and Morales 2008), the leadership related to populism (e.g. Motta 2011), different topics and cases related to the left (e.g. Cameron and Sharpe 2010); and a few have begun to focus on the outcome of the policies or discuss it in relation to democracy (e.g. Ellner 2010; Kohl 2010). But analyzes about the left's ambition to deepen democracy, and the outcome of this process, remains relatively underexplored. This article has its main focus on this issue.

The aim of this article is to explore the radical left in Latin America, particular in Venezuela and Bolivia, and discusses to what extent the achieved political and socio-economic policies have contributed to deepening democracy, either related to the concept of liberal democracy or participatory democracy. It is argued that democracy both has been weakening and deepening. On the one hand, democracy has been weakening, to some extent, if we measure democracy as equivalent to liberal democratic institutions such as elections, political freedoms and accountability, particular in the case of Venezuela. However, on the other hand, it can be argued that new participatory dimensions have increased, resulting in deepening of democracy, for example as in Bolivia. Still, all radical left administrations are facing several obstacles to overcome in order to

deepen democracy, both when it comes to develop democratic institutions in accordance with the liberal as well as the participatory traditions.

The Left and Deepening Democracy

During most part of the 20th century the left played an anonymous role in Latin America. In most countries the left was not allowed to participate in elections, and if they participated, frauds were most likely to happen. Rather than playing a significant political role the left's different guerilla movements, established in almost every country, became the dominant path of the radical left. However, the Latin American left has always been divided and split into different parties, factions or groups. In particular, its relation to democracy has historically been problematic. As we know, before the Cold War ended, the left interpreted democracy as a mean, for the elite and external powers, to subordinate the people. Instead, and particularly during the 1950 to 1970s, the left emphasized socio-economic development and national independence, rather than the struggle for democratic development. A few exceptions were the social-democrats in Costa Rica, Venezuela, the Chilean left during Allende, and a few intellectuals (Castañeda 1993:327), who accepted representative democracy and market economy.

For most part, however, of the left, the debate was largely confined to how to best translate Marxism-Leninism to Latin American conditions (López Castellanos 2001). For most left parties the ideological orientation and the concept of class were key concepts. But after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the ideology of Communism; the left became ideologically exhausted. The immediate consequences resulted in the gradual decline of Marxism-Leninism, the Marxist utopia and serious doubts about the entire idea of social revolution. In the 1990s, only a few organizations, parties and left leaders maintained close ties to the idea of a violent social revolution (Brown 1996). As a result of these events, in an era of globalization and neo-liberal policies, the left had difficulties redefining its role in society. However, the left did not only have to deal with its internal failure as a socialistic project, it also had to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism in an era when military dictatorships had been replaced by democratically elected governments. After the transition to democracy in the 1980s, most of the democratically elected administrations became right-wing or conservative. This was changed in the late 1990s, as the left was suddenly confronted with the task of finding an alternative to the economic neoliberal model and how to deepen democracy in Latin America. Although it lacked a clear and unitary path toward this aim, the legacy of violent revolution, class and strictly ideological orientation were vanished and the ballot box enabled a wave of successful elections.

This left wave began in 1998 (see Schamis 2006; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Baker and Greene 2011) with Hugo Chávez's populist leftist victory by an overwhelming majority in Venezuela. Chávez's victory was followed by Chile in 1999, when the moderate socialist Ricardo Lagos was elected president; Lagos represented the center-left coalition, la Concertación, that had ruled Chile since the return of democratic rule in 1990 with two Christian democratic presidents. It was followed by leftist winners in additional twelve countries, and the trend might have witnessed the beginning of the end with the victory of the right-wing candidate in the Chilean presidential election, in early 2010. The electoral victories of the left moved on to Brazil, where Luis Inácio 'Lula' da Silva, the former metalworker union leader and the leader of Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, the Worker's Party) was installed as the new president in 2003 (and was re-elected in 2006); and to Ecuador, where the military officer Lucio Gutierrez won the presidency on a populist platform, with the support of indigenous people in 2003; to Argentina, where Néstor Kirchner won

the presidential election in 2003, representing the left-wing Perionist party and alliance, Frente para la Victoria. Alluding to this wave of electoral leftist successes, Hugo Chávez, during an unannounced appearance to the 2003 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, called attention to the ‘the birth of a new left’ in Latin America.

During 2004 to 2006, the left wave continued with the victories of a presidential candidate from the Frente Amplios in Uruguay, the indigenous Evo Morales and his radical agenda in Bolivia, the socialist Michelle Bachelet’s success in Chile, the Partido Liberacion, member of the international group of Social Democrats’, reclaiming of the presidency in Costa Rica, and the re-election of former president Alan García in Peru representing the third way social-democratic, Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana. Also, in 2006, the former revolutionary Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega won the presidential race in Nicaragua, and Rafael Correa’s Alianza Patria Altiva I Soberana (PAIS) won the presidency in Ecuador. In the late 2007, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner won the presidential election in Argentina representing the Frente para la Victoria through the Plural Consensus alliance, and the social-democrat Álvaro Colom won the run-off election for president in Guatemala. In 2008 the leftist Fernando Lugo won the election in Paraguay, and in 2009 the former guerilla movement Frente Farabundo Martí para Liberación Nacional (FMLN) won the presidential election in El Salvador, with a moderate candidate. In late 2009, in Brazil, the left managed to get Dilma Rouseff elected as the first female president of the country, and the Frente Amplios won another presidential election in Uruguay. In Peru, the left managed to maintain in power, when the somewhat both radical and moderate Ollanta Humala won the run-off election against the daughter of the former dictator Fujimori, Keiko Fujimori. Finally, in 2012 Hugo Chávez once more was re-elected as president of Venezuela.

Table: Latin America’s left presidencies, 1998-2012

Year	Country	President	Party/Party Coalition	Direction in office
1999-	Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	Movimiento Quinta República/Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela	Radical
2000-2006	Chile	Ricardo Lagos	Partido Socialista (PS)	Moderate
2003-2010	Brazil	Lula da Silva	Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)	Moderate
2003-2007	Argentina	Néstor Kirchner	Frente para la Victoria	Moderate
2004-2009	Panama	Martín E. Torrijos	Partido Revolucionario Democrático, (PRD)	Moderate
2005-2010	Uruguay	Tabaré Vázquez	Frente Amplios	Moderate
2006-	Bolivia	Evo Morales	Movimiento al socialism	Radical
2006-2010	Costa Rica	Óscar Arias Sánchez	Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN)	Moderate

2006-2010	Chile	Michelle Bachelet	Partido Socialista (PS)	Moderate
2006-2011	Peru	Alan Garcia	Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA)	Moderate
2006-	Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN)	Radical
2007-	Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	Frente para la Victoria (FPL)	Moderate
2007-	Ecuador	Rafael Correa	Alianza Patria Altiva I Soberana (PAIS)	Radical
2008-2012	Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	Concertación Nacional (CN)	Moderate
2008-	Guatemala	Álvaro Colom	Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNA)	Moderate
2009-	El Salvador	Mauricio Funes	Frente Farabundo Martí para Liberación Nacional (FMLN)	Moderate
2010-	Uruguay	José Mujica	Frente Amplios	Moderate
2010-	Costa Rica	Laura Chinchilla Miranda	Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN)	Moderate
2011-	Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)	Moderate
2011-	Peru	Ollanta Humala	Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP)	Moderate

These victories, taken together, represent a monumental trend that has not been matched historically (see Cleary 2006:35). However, this wave, of course, cannot be seen as uniformed left, nor a united left. Among the literature the categorizations of the left have included several acronyms such as moderate left, reformist left, social-democrats, socialists, left-wing populism, leftist neopopulism, the participatory left, the radical left, the petro-left, and the nationalist left. However, this article moves beyond the multiplicity of conceptualizations toward two broad categories that encompass distinct tendencies in terms of the party's view of democracy, economy and socio-economic reforms (see Roberts 1998: 18-19; Castañeda 1993; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Walker 2008). The two categories used are the radical left and the social-democratic left. Following Ardití (2008) the categorizations are constructed as the left has manifested itself in different cases through party programs, speeches or in other actions or policies in government or in opposition.

The first is the radical left, a broad category, in which the left in all cases challenges liberal democracy and the hegemony of market economic policies, i.e. neoliberalism in the 1990s-2000s, but still supports the idea about institutional democracy with elections and other political rights. However, above all, the radical left has always been struggling for state-intervention in the economic sector, social reforms, and redistribution of wealth to the masses. This radical left is today represented by the primary and dominated left parties in for example Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia (see table), though the left in office in Brazil for example seems to be more moderate and social-democratic. These parties' platforms and policies carried out in office, or proposals in opposition, have similarities with Salvador Allende's presidency in Chile (1970-73), and the left-coalition in Guatemala during the radical democratic period (1944-54), but has also some parallels to traditional European social democratic socio-economic policies, advocating an active and strong state to promote social and economic development.

The radical left has, at least, three different tendencies, which sometimes exist in the same party, but sometimes only one at the time. The first is populism meaning that the radical left quite often adheres to a populist agenda with drastic socio-economic reforms and re-distribution of land that is attractive to the broad masses of workers and indigenous people, but not seen by many others as possible to achieve in reality (see March 2007; Walker 2008). According to Walker (2008:9) the resurgence of this contemporary popular left largely depends on the collapse of the old political institutions as well as new social demands from young people, workers and indigenous people. The broad left movement behind Chávez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia are two good examples. Allende's Unidad Popular that aimed to carry out drastic socio-economic reforms also fits into this tendency as well as the ruling coalition during the radical president Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala (1951-54).

The second is participation, in which the left advocate people's participation, i.e. participatory democracy, particular with emphasize to get people engaged at local level and in the socio-economic spheres (see for example Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). This idea stands opposed to the idea of representative liberal democracy, though it is still within the framework of institutional democracy. In particular, the Worker's party in Brazil stands behind this idea, but it also has some features in most of the other cases, such as in Venezuela and Bolivia. In Venezuela this process has been initiated from above after the left under Chávez has won several elections during the last decade, while in Bolivia the left was mobilized long before Morales was elected as president in 2005. The idea of participation was also a key character of Unidad Popular, the coalition behind Salvador Allende's presidency (1970-73). The Allende government was about to launch a new constitution, emphasizing participatory democracy in Chile, almost similar to the case of both Venezuela and Bolivia in the 2000s, but the military coup in 1973 prevented such development.

The third tendency is that the radical left quite often has traditional linkages to the ideology of Marxism and to other Marxist parties around the world. Two good examples are the former guerilla groups in Nicaragua and El Salvador, which still have a major internal debate about their Marxist in heritage. Also the contemporary left in Venezuela and Bolivia has connections to the communist left, and in the case of president Allende, the communists was actually a part of the ruling coalition. This was also the case for the Árbenz government in Guatemala. However, as has been stated the radical left has not *per se* be seen as one single and united political force in Latin America, with

exactly the same political agenda all over the region. But the radical left has been and still is united in a broader sense, mainly because it has always been challenging the liberal doctrines of democratic institutions and market-driven economic policies (neoliberalism in the 1980-1990s) trying to address much more of state-led economic policies, social reforms, and redistribution of wealth from rich to poor people, however, still accepting the rule of institutional democracy.

The second category is the left-of-centre's social democrats. Though the social democratic parties stand for a number of different political agendas all over the world, still, they have all belonged and still do belong to the international socialist and social democratic party group. In Latin America, the third way social-democrats have also adhered to policies of developing liberal democracy, market economy and maintaining most of the characters of their predecessors' neoliberal economic policies from the 1990s, though some modification have taken place. These modern Social Democrats – “La Tercera Via” (see for example Carazo 2000) - tend to stand for reformism and pragmatism, having eliminated former vocabulary such as “class struggle” and “socialism”. This tendency follows the route of Anthony Giddens' (1994) analysis of third way of social democracy, standing to the right of the radical left in the global era. In theory, this implies a modern stance on issues related to globalization, economic integration and the free market. In reality, however, it means acceptance of the neoliberal economic world order, but also encompasses ideas such as protection of the weak, social justice, rights with obligations, and cosmopolitan pluralism. Of course there exist differences and some of the social democratic parties are today still much more ideological oriented (Chile), elite-oriented (Costa Rica), or is seen as united force of catch-all left groups (Uruguay, Argentina) or is just as a pragmatic party to the left distinguished from the radical left and the right (Peru). Finally, a third main category could be the orthodox left-wing Communist parties (in Chile for example), who plays a minor role in a few countries, but they are no longer any major force against either the right or the left in today's democratized Latin America.

The question is, however, what it means when we are talking about the left's ambition to deepen democracy. In a broader spectrum, in situating the conceptualization of the Latin American, one finds right-wing parties, commercial groups, military forces and the U.S. administration at one end, which adhere to an elite electoral democracy and a neoliberal economic system (McSherry 1998). Related to this departure, deepening democracy means more democracy than before (i.e. in this article, compared to before the left came to power) or more democracy beyond electoral democracy (i.e. if one discusses democratic development after the first free and fair elections). At the opposite end of the spectrum one finds the radical, participatory left with an anti-capitalistic agenda. In between these two extremes lies the Christian democrats and the social democratic left—i.e., the “left-of-centre”, which promotes liberal democracy (see Roberts 1998; Lievesley 1999). Liberal democracy as well as participatory democracy means more democracy in contrast to electoral democracy, with its focus on free and fair elections, in which the competition to win elections is the main thing. Democracy is deepened, at least theoretically, in both these routes. It is deepened in a liberal democracy, because it means more civil and political right for the people and a more well-functioning democracy, including aspects of vertical and horizontal accountability (Dahl 1971; Diamond 1996). It is deepened in a participatory democracy, because it means more possibility for people to actively participate in political decision-making, particular at local grassroots-level and on issues related to daily-life socio-economic issues (Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). However, the question now with the radical left regimes' ambition to establish and develop participatory elements of democracy is to what extent democracy has deepened during the radical left's presidency, or if the left's policies rather has constrained democracy in the 2000s. We start with the case of Venezuela.

The case of Venezuela (1998-)

No matter what one thinks about the Chávez's government, the "Chavismo" (Ellner 2010), the "Bolivarian socialist revolution" (see Hawkins 2010; McCoy 2010), or "Twenty-first-century-socialism" (Irazábal and Foley 2010) and what it has (or not) achieved, still it holds the record in winning a good number of elections, as never before in the history of Venezuela, or among radical left leaders in Latin America. It includes; the presidential elections in 1998, and 2000, 2006 and 2012 under the new constitution; the parliamentary elections in 2000, 2005 and 2010; the referendums on the new constitution in 1999, including constitutional amendments in 2007 (only defeat) and 2009; and the recall referendum about Chávez's status as president or not. All these elections were discussed through electoral campaigns and debates, and were validated by international observers and media (Ellner 2010:80). It means that Venezuela still maintain the basic foundations of a representative liberal democracy, though one could discuss to what extent it still could be defined as an electoral democracy.

However, the Bolivarian revolution has carried out the deepest political transformations and social and economic reforms since the start of the contemporary left wave across Latin America. It has been, by nature, deeply anti-globalization and against most of the global institutions and norms from the Western hemisphere; no government has challenged the contemporary international hegemony as much as Chávez. Furthermore, it is the only Latin American case so far that has really challenged and largely replaced the previous game of democracy and socioeconomic system: in the Venezuelan case, the liberal political system rooted in the Pacto de Punto Fijo of 1958, and with its neoliberal socio-economic policies from the 1990s (see Moreno-Brid and Paunovic 2008; Kornblith and Jawahar 2005; McCoy 2005, 2010).

In fact, Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution has, at least in theory, called for strengthening civil rights and building a participatory, protagonist democracy, and establishing a solidarity economy. The model of participatory democracy is explicitly established in the 1999 constitution of Venezuela (Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1999). At the same time, there still seems to exist an intention to maintain a representative liberal democratic system parallel to a more socialist participatory democracy (see Azzellini 2010; McCoy 2010). This hybrid form is expressed in different laws and in national and local planning of concrete socio-economic policies (Irazábal and Foley 2010). Except for the national referendums, the action of direct participation is more relevant at local level, and particular in the local planning. However, still there are elected mayors and representative local municipalities, but around half of its members are elected by so called local organizations, as a counterpart to the representative body.

To some extent, the revolutionary process has been initiated both from above and below (see López-Valladares 2008; Azzellini 2010; Hawkins 2010; Beasley-Murray 2010). One strategy to achieve socialism from above has been to create a parallel structure to the state through these local organizations in civil society, stimulating peoples' participation in the revolutionary process. The main idea has been to establish councils – Communal councils, Communes and Communal cities – in which people are supposed to become engaged and make and implement decisions related to community development and projects. In addition to this council, there also exist health committees, cooperatives, and urban land committees, which basically administrate state programs related to reducing poverty; providing health care, land and housing; and creating alternative forms of business to the market. Back in 2001, Chávez began organizing civil society in *Círculos Bolivarianos* as a key actor to push forward and defence of the revolution. For example, in 2001, more than 20,000 members of *Círculos* throughout the country were sworn in a mass ceremony in Caracas; later, it had about 2.2 million members (Hawkins and Hansen 2006: 103). At the beginning

of Chávez's time in office, these circles played a significant role, but during the last years, it has diminished. Still, all of these actions could be seen as an expression of the value of grassroots participation by civil society.

As a conclusion, however, Venezuela has a hybrid political system, in which it both exist representative liberal institutions with elections and political parties, and more participatory direct democratic bodies, including social organizations, at local level. As Azzelini (2010) understands it, the ambition is to create parallel structures to the liberal institutions, but to focus on social development at local level.

During the first years of Chávez much of the political agenda was related to the new constitution which also incorporated concepts about social rights such as education, health and other welfare issues (Ellner 2010). Furthermore, still the government emphasized, as its processor, fiscal macro-economic discipline, in accordance with the international community, represented by global institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. To adjust to these structural adjustment policies, some programs to compensate social issues was put in place. However, around 2002-2003, the administration became more radical and made a clear cut with the hegemony of neoliberal economic and social policies, as well as its forerunners around the world (Nakatani and Herrera 2008). According to Ellner (2010), the Chávez government has initiated economic reforms to be able to achieve the three main goals; overcome dependence on U.S. oil market, avoid dependence on capital and technology from other capitalist countries, and challenge national oligopoly by open up for competition. The economic reforms include nationalization of parts of the oil businesses and other key sectors such banking, electricity, and telecommunication, steel and cement; a more active state in exporting Venezuelans goods and promoting joint venture projects; and much more emphasize in developing infrastructure including roads, harbours and trains.

In addition, several states financed and controlled social programs have been initiated aiming to broaden social rights such as universal healthcare and education (including campaign against illiteracy) and to reduce income inequality as well as promote state ownership of certain economic and social sectors (McCoy 2010; Nakatani and Herrera 2008). Most of the socioeconomic reforms have been channeled through state programs: Mision Mercal is a nationwide state-owned store that subsidizes food and other basic products, as well as soup kitchen; Mision Barrio Adentro provides free medical care for all people; Mission Guaicaipuro aims to guarantee indigenous people their collective rights; and Mission Zamora gives small farmers some rights to expropriate the land from bigger farmers (see Hawkins 2010). Instead of its processors neoliberal macro-economic policies, the Chávez-administration has implemented a more state lead economy, though still most of the economy still is in the private sector. To large extent, the social reforms have been financed by oil, in which the state has nationalized the major private oil company. The dependence of oil, however, is one of the major problems with the economy of Venezuela. To conclude, as a result however, already by 2007, Venezuela had reduced poverty from roughly 55 percent to less than 30 percent (Nakatani and Herrera 2008: 294), including extreme poverty, and most people now also have access to free public education and a nation-wide healthcare system.

However, the Venezuelan case raises the issue about deepening democracy, what democracy means and if it exist, and what type of democracy that does exist with all its features and shortcomings. Several concerns have to be raised about development in Venezuela. First, although Venezuela has been practicing free and fair elections in the 1990 and 2000s, and in fact since 1958, other liberal democratic institutions have gradually eroded during recent years. In Latin America, no other leftist

government has taken such measures and policies to strengthen the power of the presidency while weakening the power of Congress, the judicial system, and some political and civil rights – including the free media – as much as Venezuela during the Chávez administration. As for example, Ellner (2010) has pointed out, several key positions as the attorney general, national controller and members of the electoral council are sympathizers with the socialist revolution. In addition, president Chávez has carried out some policies through presidential decree. Since the parliament has been in almost total control of the government, the opposition has been weak. It means that the checks and balances are very weak.

It has also gone so far that Freedom House, since 2009, does not anymore consider Venezuela as an electoral democracy, though they consider the elections themselves as having been relatively free and fair (Freedom House 2010). The rationale behind this judgement is mainly because Freedom House considers that the opposition has to work under generally poor political conditions and because the weakness of separation of powers or the checks and balances. Freedom House's report raises several concerns. Worth mentioning as well are that there seem to be no limit for the government of using state resources in the political campaigns for example through state television, the social campaigns seems to blur between the official state role and the ruling party, and due to the fact the government is directly controlling state funds for socio-economic programs leads often to corruption (Freedom House 2012).

Second, furthermore, from a participatory democratic perspective, critical remarks must also be made. While the democratic system in Venezuela, according to Ellner (2010), attached the importance of mobilization of the people and popular sectors other mechanism, such as the internal debate and institutionalization of participatory democracy, as a new rule of game lies far behind. At the same time, figures from the Latinbarometro (2008) support the fact that positive feelings of the democratic system nowadays has been higher compared to average in Latin America. In addition, Hawkins (2010) concludes that participation has increased among poor people and women, and that it also gives people an opportunity to participate in everyday practise and choose leaders of the organizations.

However, Hawkins and Hansen (2006) argue that the role of civic organizations role to strengthen democracy in Venezuela has a paradox: On one hand, the Círculos and other councils and state programs have been working with democratic methods and goals and, therefore, could be considered as pro-democratic forces. On the other hand, these civil organizations' relations with the presidency under Chávez could not be seen as signs of autonomy (financial or related to the content), and they embodied strong charismatic and negative links with Chávez's strong overtones of clientelism that has undermined their role in strengthening democracy. As Azzellini (2010) states the dependent relations between the state and all the community organization opens up for clientelism (see also Irazábal and Foley, 2010). In addition, according to Hawkins (2010), all the councils and programs are totally dependent on government funding and, in a way, are controlled by the state authority under the Chávez's presidency. Though the programs invite people from less active such as women and poor people, most participants are still very active Chávez' supporters.

To summarize, democratic concerns about the development must be raised both from a liberal as well as a participatory democratic perspective. Although the Bolivarian revolution, as such, could be understood as mostly top-led by the state, it could also be seen as having a bottom-up structure since the people through civil society might get a chance to influence everyday decisions at a local level (Azzellini 2010; McCoy 2010). If one also includes that Venezuela still have functioning free and fair elections, it makes into a remarkable hybrid case, with several features of liberal and participatory democracy. Worth mentioning, however, is that no matter how one judges it, the

Bolivarian revolution has no intention of separating the political society or the state from civil society: It is the key point in the participatory democratic model (Azzelini 2010:18).

At the same time, however, no other government in Latin America has challenged or met such hard resistance as Chávez's (McCoy 2010). Since the radicalization began, Chávez has survived several major political crises or attempted military coups (McCoy 2005; Kornblith and Jahawar 2005). Since the revolution began, he has survived a military coup (2002), won referendums on staying in office and on a new constitution (2004) and, in 2006, was re-elected as president. Furthermore, in December 2007, the failure to win approval for additional constitutional changes seemed to temporarily weaken Chávez's authority, but this all changed again in late 2008, when he won another constitutional referendum (this time about the possibility for presidents to be re-elected more than twice). Still, the revolution seems to have support from many poor sectors of Venezuelan society.

Nonetheless, the last year of reforms to nationalize banks, food factories, and natural mineral companies have further increased polarization between the pro-Chavistas and the domestic opposition (including international actors such as the United States), and foreign companies. Furthermore, the harder climate that constrains a free media and other political rights has further polarized Venezuelan society. As a result of this radicalization in the 2000s, Venezuela might not develop a participatory democracy in which the state, civil society and the people are engaged in developing the country together. Instead, Venezuela might have left the old liberal democratic system, moving toward participatory democracy, but ending up with a one-man dictatorship and a further decrease in political rights, with state control over civil society and the media, yet with increasing of social rights. It is a paradox: The poor people might have it better; meanwhile, the democratic system might erode even more.

The Bolivian case (2005-)

The second most radical and controversial case is Bolivia (Walker 2008; Sánchez 2008; Rochlin 2007). In late 2005, Evo Morales won the presidency, and the Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS) became the most important political actor. The background of Morales and MAS's victory is that they managed to form a coalition of supporters, including indigenous peasants, miners, landless peasants, and indigenous movements, claiming cultural and civil rights. They all share a common hostile view of globalization and neoliberalism, and lack any larger representation before MAS began to succeed (Postero 2010a, 2010b; Anria 2010). After Morales took office, a call for a sociocultural and democratic revolution was made proclaiming nationalization of gas and oil, agrarian and land reforms, and that a constitutional assembly would create a more equal constitution. This radicalization has continued, for example at a United Nations speech to celebrate the declaration of Indigenous rights, Morales talked about eradicate capitalism and substitute it with communitarian socialism, blaming capitalism for the exploitation of natural and human resources (Postero 2010b:59).

However, though the case of Bolivia has major differences with Venezuela, it also has major similarities. First, in terms of the ambition to change society, both have had and still have radical plans; Chávez and Morales have launched new constitutions marking a clear cut with the old society and the existing social order, marking a new political and socio-economic direction for both the countries. In both countries the former ruling elite – conservative parties, landlords, military forces

and rich entrepreneurs – have more or less opposed the radical development, and have tried to prevent this path, sometimes with unconstitutional methods such as the regular military coups as in Venezuela 2002. Second, both have leftist ideas, though it looks somewhat different, about participation as a part of the democratic system. Though both have tried to get support from poor people, farmers and indigenous groups, Bolivia is a stronger case in this matter. In Bolivia, the participatory dimension is furthermore more focused on referendums and related to indigenous people. Third, both leaders and the parties behind are founded upon the rejection of neoliberal ideas about society, which means rejections of the economic system and social policies as it was developed in the 1990s. It also includes ideas to develop democracy beyond liberal democracy. Fourth, both have so far had a majority of the population behind them in the presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as in a great number of referendums about future issues. Morales has won the presidential elections in 2005 and 2009, including elections to the parliament and a constitutional assembly and recall referendum as well as one constitutional referendum.

As in the case of Venezuela, Morales initiated reforms of the political system through the game of the liberal institutional setting when a new constitution was introduced. After the landslide victory in 2005, an election to a constitutional assembly to rewrite the constitution was held. However, since MAS lacked the required two-third majority to vote for the outcome, the majority of MAS decided that each article would pass with a simple majority, but that the draft of the entire constitution still needed two-thirds majority. In December 2007, the elected constitutional assembly, with the majority of the MAS, voted for major changes to the constitution: The changes would establish both direct and indirect democratic institutions, and Bolivia was about to become an official multiethnic country, in which social reforms was supposed to be financed by the national mineral resources. According to Postero (2010b:67), however, some critical voice, mainly from the political right and its allies such as landlords, entrepreneurs and other rich people, were raised on how the constitutional process was run (see also Anria 2010; De la Fuente Jeria 2010; Valdiva 2010; Rocabado 2010). As a consequence, some of the richer regions held referendums that resulted in proclaiming autonomous regional status. However, these referendums were not recognized by the central government or by the judicial system; this was followed by demonstrations and uprising against the Morales administration. The problem was now how to succeed with the constitutional work, since a new constitution by the law needed two-thirds majority pass. A majority of the opposition was against most parts of the constitution meanwhile the regional prefects, in addition, demanded to move the capital from La Paz to the region of Sucre. For a while, it looked like that the constitutional process would end. But after several months of death lock, Morales used a constitutional weapon when he launched recall referendums about his presidency and the regional prefects. Morales won the referendum and several opposition leaders lost. According to Cameron and Sharpe (2010, 72) this changed the balance of power in Bolivia; from now on, the leaders of the opposition in Congress, and the regions were more or less forced to negotiate a new draft of the constitution. Finally, on January 2009 the constitution was approved in a referendum by over a sixty percent margin (Postero 2010b:67).

The constitution – *Constitución Política del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia* (2009) - defines Bolivia in article one as a unitary social state of pluri-national multiethnic and secular (rather than just catholic) country (see also Lupien 2011; Postero 2010a-b). It means that Bolivia is a nation among many nations, and that the indigenous groups have their civil and cultural rights, as well as rural self-government as long as the laws of the country are not broken. Furthermore, democracy is defined as a combination of direct participatory democracy and indirect representative liberal democracy, but with a clear separation of power between the presidency, legislative, judicial and

electoral power (recall of elected officers). Participation takes place through actions such as referenda, citizens' initiatives and prior consultations, while representative democracy is practiced through the regular elections. The new constitution recognizes departmental autonomy as well as municipal, provincial, and indigenous autonomy. When it comes to economic issues it is stated that it is a mixed economy with both ownership of the state, communes, and private people. It means for example also that natural resources such as gas, oil and water will be administrated in the collective interest through the state. In addition, the constitution gives the people several social rights to water, food, education, health care and other basic socio-economic conditions.

During the first years of this new radical presidency, Bolivia boasted mostly positive macroeconomic indicators related to growth, unemployment, and trade, for example the economic growth increased to from 3.7 (2005) to 6,1 percent (2009) and GDP per capita was almost doubled to 4,500 (Kohl and Bresnahan 2010: 6). The most concrete examples of these radical policy initiatives were the nationalization of the country's natural gas supply (some from international companies), bringing billions of dollars to the state. Since then the nationalization has expanded to cover other natural resources, such as oil, mines, water and communications. Furthermore, in late 2006, the Bolivian Congress voted in favor of a controversial and reform program, aimed at redistributing land to mostly poor and indigenous people in the countryside. In addition, some price control of gas and food subsidies had decreased the rate of extreme poverty. Other social reform policies have included a campaign against illiteracy and an initiative to provide access to medical care in the countryside. Today, the UN recognizes Bolivia as free of illiteracy.

However, as a contrast to Chávez, the leftist government has so far not contributed to decrease civil and political rights in Bolivia, nor have any major military coups taken place against the democratically elected government. Though there had been periods of social unrest since Morales took office, such as during the constitutional debate in 2008, and in 2010-11 when some subsidies of gas were decreased, there has been no real attempt of coups, or similar uncivil actions (Anria 2010; Valdivia 2010; Kohl and Bresnahan 2010; Kohl 2010).

The key question is, however, to what extent the Morales administration has deepen democracy, and to what extent one could criticize the democratic path. In accordance with the liberal tradition, or vertical accountability, the voters have continued to vote for Morales and MAS in the constitutional assembly 2006, the recall referendum in 2008, and in the referendum for a new constitution in 2009, and in elections to presidency and congress in 2009. Regard to Freedom House (2005-2012), Bolivia is still a young democracy, but shows that civil and political rights have been stable around 3 (scale: 1-7) during the Morales administration, the same as when he assumed office. Regard the horizontal accountability, according to Anria (2010), the congress has weakened its position, but this has to do with the crisis of the party system and the weak and unorganized opposition, rather than as a result of actions taken by the Evo Morales's presidency.

At the same time, along with a participatory tradition Morales has frequently launched referendums as a method to talk directly to the people (see Anria 2010; Montambeault 2011). However, this creates internal problems within the MAS, since its bottom-up structure could be understood as a centralization of power of the agenda to the presidency. Rather than trying to get support from the roots of MAS, the presidency relies on support from the people, directly though the referendums. Remarkable is that while Morales had to deal with the right opposition and the regional back clash during his first period, the focus after 2009 has been more to hand his own supporters, unions, social movements and indigenous groups (see Freedom House, 2012). During 2008 and 2009, the

debate about the constitution changes and the radical measures further increased the conflict in Bolivian society. As a result, on the one side, the radical left struggle against the old elite system and the neoliberal policies established in the 1980s to 1990s. The radical left has its main supporters from peasants, coca peasants, mineworkers, and indigenous people. On the other side, the rich upper class represents only a few regions and the former political and economic elite of the country but has a minority in the national parliament, trying to maintain the existing political and economic order. But since President Morales has aimed to continue his radical policies after the re-election in 2009, he might get into trouble both from his opponents and from inside his own supporters if only parts of the radical agenda is achieved.

The Contemporary Radical Left: Concluding remarks

The new tendencies of the left in Latin America have followed two distinct paths. One is the reformist, social-democratic left, which supports liberal democracy and market economy. This path has historical roots to early democratization in for example Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Costa Rica. This variation of leftist politics complies with the global and national political, social, and economic order of the day – liberal democracy with neoliberalism. In contrast, the radical left in the Andes and parts of Central America emphasizes participatory democracy with socio-economic reforms that may challenge the rule of liberal democracy and market economy – and the major actors' supporting these structures, both on the global and the domestic arena. This path has historical similarities with the radical cases of Guatemala in the 1940-1950s and Chile under Salvador Allende.

In addition, beside the most important cases of Venezuela and Bolivia, the radical left has also been represented by two other governments in the 2000s: Nicaragua and Ecuador. Nicaragua is a case, where the former Sandinista revolutionary leader Daniel Ortega was installed as president in January 2007 (see Kampwirth 2008). However, Ortega and former president Aléman and his conservative liberal party factions have had a political pact since the 1990s that constrains politics and democratic development in Nicaragua while also constraining any possibility of accomplishing radical reforms. Although domestic politics are somewhat different in Nicaragua compared to other radical cases, it is still relevant to categorize the Ortega administration as radical.

First, during Ortega's first months in office, several political and social reforms were enacted. Some – such as free school for children, free medical care, and a fifty percent reduction in public servants' salaries – have not been controversial. Other, more contentious reforms include Ortega's decision to increase citizens' participation in government through creation of new state authorities and committees, and a move to strengthen presidential control over the police and military. Ortega's move to centralize presidential power immediately inspired criticism from right-wing opponents, who drew analogies to the revolutionary regime of the 1980s. In November 2007, through a presidential decree, Ortega began to implement one of his controversial ideas: *Consejos Ciudadanos* (People's Committees), a power structure parallel to the political institutions. Second, during recent years, Ortega has been accused by the media and human rights groups of institutionalizing a dictatorship, increasing corruption, violating freedom of speech and assembly, and disrespecting the constitution and human rights. Another controversial example is the local elections in 2008, during which violations of the electoral laws were obvious – at least, according to the civil society, the church, United States, OAS, and the political right. Another example is the government's attempt to control civil society; for example, forbidding civil organizations from receiving money from foreign sources if the intended use is for political purposes. However, it is

too early to call whether or not Nicaragua will become further radicalized as for example Venezuela and how it will be judged in the end.

Ecuador has similarities both with the development in Bolivia as well as with Venezuela (see Cameron and Sharpe 2010). Since Correa was elected in 2006, his PAIS (Patria Altiva I Soberana) has called for a revolution to achieve socialism for the 21st century, including a political, economic, ethical, social, educational, and health revolution, and furthermore a revolution for Latin American regional integration. As in the other radical cases, the Correa administration has been fighting against the neoliberal economic order and against the old ruling elites. In 2007, the people voted for a constitutional assembly, which was elected the same year, with the mission to establish a new, more radical constitution aiming to achieve some of the policies president Correa had called for. In 2008, a new constitution was drafted, which was confirmed in a national referendum. As in the case of Bolivia, the indigenous people has achieved a central role in the constitutional as well as in the policies carried out. Furthermore, processes of nationalization of infrastructure and minerals, as well as land reforms, and major socio-economic reforms, have started. As a consequence, and as in the case of Venezuela (and Bolivia), the actors behind the former political and economic power, the political right, landlords and rich entrepreneurs' have protested against this development, also including a discussion about decreasing of political rights and the media's role in the country. During the recent years, the political climate has been intensified with threats of military coups and other major demonstrations and strikes as a consequence. However, president Correa will remain in office, at least, until 2013.

Of course, as has been noticed, all these radical governments have similarities and differences. All their radical political, economic, and social agendas have challenged the global order of liberal democracy and neoliberal economy as well as the main actors behind it: international and domestic elite actors – such as landlords, military forces, businessmen, international economic organizations – and, of course, the United States. However, the radical governments also have much that divides them: their degree of radicalism differs somewhat, with Venezuela as the most radical, followed by Bolivia, and Ecuador and Nicaragua as the least radical. Furthermore, the effects of this radicalization for each country and Latin America as a region are still undetermined.

As a consequence, democracy could be deepened in the case of the radical lefts' participatory democracy, because it means more possibility for people to actively participate in political decision-making, particular at a local grassroots-level on issues related to daily-life socio-economic issues. But this path seems to be more problematic and controversial, both in historical time and today. Historically, this type of radical agenda with a more anti-capitalistic approach, and socially conscious has a great amount of similarities with previous attempts by left-wing parties to develop radical democracy with strong economic and social anti-poverty measures, as in Guatemala (1944-54) and in Chile (1970-73) (Oxhorn 2003). In both cases the radical political and economic changes of society were challenged by the same actors - the economic elite, the military and external (mainly U.S.) forces and the parliamentary right - and these actors stood in both cases behind the military interventions as well as the fall of the democratic governments in Guatemala and Chile.

The paradox is that the radical attempt to deepen democracy as, for example in Venezuela and Bolivia, beyond the liberal focus on political institutions, i.e. free and fair elections and freedom of political rights, may actually cause the failure of these institutions and the democratic rule. Though motivated by good intentions to for example redistribute economic resources from the rich to the poor people and to carry out social reforms, it may also mark the beginning of the end of democracy. In the short run, radical administrations have been able and may be able to carry out some socio-economic reforms as in the historical cases of Guatemala and Chile, but over the long

term the question is if democracy, as it has been seen in Latin America during the past two decades, will survive unless these radical governments also manage to develop the democratic rule. The challenge is, though, that the threat does not just seem to come from the external enemies of current radical administrations such as landlords, the military, the U.S.A and the private sector, but more problematic from the left's own attempts to constrain political rights, as in the case of Venezuela.

In Venezuela, the liberal democratic institutions have eroded since Chávez took office in the late 1990s, but still elections and political rights are in practice. Today, by the year 2012, it scores 5 on Freedom House's freedom ranking; the same year Chávez was elected, in 1998, Venezuela scored 2.5. It is a significant decrease on Venezuela's civil and political rights. However, at the same time, to some extent, the participatory dimensions have increased another part of the democratic system, which is not measured in the liberal concept of democracy. Furthermore, according to polls such as the Latinobarometro, people in Venezuela, during the Chávez administration, have believed that they participate in the democratic system much more than before. As a conclusion, democracy has both been weakening and deepening in Venezuela.

In Bolivia, since Evo Morales began his presidency in 2006, however, the participatory dimensions through the new constitution have been created to be able to deepen democracy in the country, and to include more people (indigenous people) in this democratic process. Meanwhile or parallel to this development, the liberal representative democratic institutions still remains relatively intact. In 2005, before Morales took office, Bolivia scored 3 in Freedom House's ranking of freedom of the year; 2012 it still scores 3. In Ecuador, however, the ambition to deepen democracy through participatory dimensions have not yet had any effect, meanwhile the liberal institutions show some problems. Still, Ecuador's freedom ranking, according to Freedom House, is still 3 (year 2012), the same as before during the 2000s. In Nicaragua, the liberal democratic institutions also have problems; Nicaragua's freedom rating 2012 is 4.5, compared to 3.0, the year 2005, before President Ortega began his presidency; meanwhile the dimensions of participation have not sufficiently enough increased people's engagement in the democratic development.

To summarize, it means that democracy regards to both liberal and participatory dimensions have not been deepening (0) during the radical left's presidencies in Latin America in the 2000s, compared to what was the case before the radical governments came to power. Though some dimensions of participatory democracy have increased (+) the quality of democracy and deepen it to some extent in for example Venezuela, the liberal democratic institutions have eroded (-), at least, as much. Bolivia is the exception, so far, since the orientation toward participatory elements in the democratic development has been established, meanwhile the liberal democratic institutions still remain intact.

Table: Radical Left Administrations and Deepening Democracy in the 2000s

democratic Direction in the 2000s	Liberal Democracy	Participatory Democracy	= Deepening Democracy
Venezuela (1998-)	-	+	0
Bolivia (2006-)	0	+	+
Ecuador (2000s-)	0	0	0
Nicaragua (2007-)	-	0	-

To conclude, as such, the great number of democratically elected left leaders in Latin America, with as much as fourteen elected left presidents at the same time, is a new phenomenon, but the division between more radical and moderate views of democracy, however, has been witnessed before. The moderates of the left will most likely survive and win new elections as before. But the question remains: what will happen to the radical left-administrations - will they meet the same destiny as Guatemala (1954), Chile (1973) or as President Zelaya in Honduras (2009)? Or will they gradually weaken the liberal democratic institutions ending up with left-wing authoritarian regimes as in Cuba? Or will they survive long enough to implement radical reforms, deepen democracy, and win or lose new elections? These are questions that we have to wait for, at least, a decade before we know the consequences of the left wave that started in the 1990s. Hopefully the radical and the moderate left, as well as other liberal and conservative actors, at least, will continue to contribute to the democratic path across Latin America.

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