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POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY IN
CENTRAL AMERICA

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

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CAPEL
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June 19-22, 1988
Guatemala City
Hotel El Dorado

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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CONFERENCE AGENDA

Sunday, June 19

Arrival of Participants

Monday, June 20

Opening Session: Introduction, Louis W. Goodman
Jose Luis Vega Carballo
The Context of Political Activity, Rodolfo
Cerdas Cruz

Tuesday, June 21

Session Two: The Transitions to Electoral and Democratic
Politics in Central America, Kenneth Sharpe
and Morris Blachman

Case Studies: Costa Rica, Jose Luis Vega Carballo
Belize, David Smith (for Assad Shoman)
El Salvador, Cristina Equizabal
Panama, David Smith
Guatemala, Hector Rosada
Honduras, Ernesto Paz

Wednesday, June 22

Session Three: Nicaragua, Virgilio Godoy
The Role of the Military, Richard Millet
The Contadora Countries, Bruce Bagley
The Catholic Church, Margaret Crahan
Summary of Additional Papers and Conclusion,
Louis W. Goodman

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Introduction

In June of 1988, the second conference of the project "Political Parties and Democracy" was held in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The purpose of this conference was to allow the participating scholars, representing the Centro de Asesoría de Promoción Electoral (CAPEL) and The American University, to present overviews of their papers to the rest of the group and receive feedback from their colleagues in an effort to a) ensure that all relevant issues will be discussed and b) address important questions of methodology as well as administration.

This report will summarize the most salient points of each presentation and provide a review of the comments that were generated in response to each presentation.

Jose Luis Vega: The CAPEL Project

Professor Vega outlined the focus of the CAPEL investigation in order to show how that study compliments the overall focus of next year's conference. The goal of the investigation is to systematically analyze the political parties in Central America, party by party, highlighting both differences and similarities in order to assess their potential contribution to the process of democratization. The CAPEL study essentially addresses six questions concerning political parties in Central America:

1. What is the pre and post-authoritarian state of the political party in Central America?
2. How has the institutional centralism impacted on the process of transition toward democracy?
3. What are the relationships between the political parties and system and the political and nonpolitical actors, as well as any social movements that have emerged from the crisis?
4. What conflicts exist between political parties and their political systems and with what efficacy are their conflicts resolved.
5. What are the technical and organizational limitations of the parties and what do they lack in order to "modernize" and "institutionalize" their efforts?
6. What are the implications of the international ties and external influences on the political parties?

Louis W. Goodman: The American University Project

As noted by Louis W. Goodman, the CAPEL focus ably compliments the American University initiative which was born out of a concern for the lack of research with an institutional base currently being undertaken. The project on political parties is the second in a two-part series; the first project is entitled "Civil-Military Relations and Democracy in Latin America."

Dr. Goodman noted that this project will have both a theoretical and practical focus; i.e., politicians will be included in the project in an effort to test hypotheses.

Comments

Two critical questions were raised following the introduction. The first dealt with the appropriateness of including Belize and Panama in the project. It was concluded that both countries deserve inclusion so that both retrospective and prospective relationships could be explored. Even though this strategy may fly directly in the face of convention, it was argued that there are sufficiently strong political, geographic, historical, and cultural justifications to warrant it.

Rodolfo Cerdas Cruz: The Context of Party Activity: Conditions for Democratic Politics

Referring briefly to the preceding discussion, Dr. Cerdas Cruz reiterated the importance of defining just which Central America we're talking about. He noted that this is a prerequisite for any project dealing with the region. He chose to limit the parameters of his contribution to the project to Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Professor Cerdas began the summary of his paper by recalling that Central America was subjected to three separate conquests. As efforts to negotiate a centralized power structure failed, the emerging elite resorted to a Spanish tradition: they strategically arranged for the marriage of sons and daughters, thereby consolidating power in the hands of a few elite families. Land and human resources was divided among this dominant elite with the best of both going to the "North" or northern regions. The assertion here is that to a great degree, this unequitable distribution is visible today; note that Nicaragua and Honduras remain relatively more disadvantaged.

The dominant elite concentrated their efforts in the economic arena and used the military to control social and political life and guarantee a stable environment for the economy. One of the effects of this strategy was to limit the economic options of the younger children of these elite families and it was often the third and fourth children who abandoned the economic arena in favor of politics.

While the northern regions were developing closed political systems through repressive control, the phenomenon in the "South" was altogether different. In Costa Rica, for example, because economic opportunities were more limited, political competition emerged from several sectors of society. Violence gradually worked its way out of the political arena as rules governing political behavior became the norm.

In Honduras we see a clear example of how elites were coopted by foreign companies. This system is still in evidence today as various groups within the country continue to vie for foreign patronage.

The case of Nicaragua is different in that it seemed to find itself as neither a predominately rich, nor completely poor nation. A very strong elite manipulated foreign (U.S.) influence in order to maintain control. This policy, as we have seen, resulted in a number of direct interventions. Popular demands were not allowed in the political milieu. At one point, all four powers were combined when Anastacio Somoza Garcia established military control, then married into social and political power. The circle of power was completed when he became the mouthpiece of North American interests.

In sum, revolution in Nicaragua versus reform in Costa Rica, etc., can be explained, in part, by the way in which the dominant elites shaped the distribution of political and economic power throughout the history of Central America.

Comments

First, it was noted that focusing on the entire region is an important, albeit difficult task.

The point was made that Somoza G. was a politician who incorporated the military, and not the other way around.

Several clarifications were asked for, specifically: 1) What is meant by "North" and "South" when referring to Central America? 2) What is the link between the indigenous population, racism, and political centralization? Is there not a tributary relationship here in addition to labor ties? 3) What is the link between the international market and the political, social, and economic environment that evolved? 4) Should not the distribution of wealth and the concentration of power in Guatemala be considered without mentioning the overwhelming racism which defined those lines of distribution? 5) What is the link between the concentration of power, the bureaucracy, and religion? Finally, 6) how are we to view cultural factors?

In an earlier time, it was noted, power in Central America was determined by regional factors. However, since 1909, political autonomy was lost and tributary politics was born. The importance of the U.S. "blessing" in Nicaragua is evidence of this, and resulted in the Nicaraguan brand of militarism.

It was mentioned that Costa Rica may not have been incorporated into the centralized system, in part, due to the special communications problems posed by greater distances.

In a different vein, the problem of specificity was touched upon. This is obviously more relevant to those attempting a comparative analysis than to those working on an individual case study, particularly given our space limitations.

The same commentor brought up three additional points for consideration: 1) To what degree can the origins of the oligarchical crisis be traced to a colonial heritage? 2) To what degree are the failed attempts to integrate Central America due to the failings of parliamentary norms? And 3) what explanatory possibilities are offered by the conjuncture?

Yet another participant raised questions regarding the structural aspects of Dr. Cerdas' socio-political analysis. For

instance, what is the importance of the Spanish crown? And should not the differences in the economic origins of each country receive more weight in a comparative analysis? Last, the issue of the military control of the economy might benefit from further investigation.

Two final comments regarding Dr. Cerdas' work bear mention. It was felt that the study of the impact of the conquest was both timely and novel. And it was recommended that all of the projects, but especially those employing a comparative approach, would benefit from a focus on general themes and the use of extensive footnoting to get to specific cases.

Dr. Cerdas' Response:

Concerning the "North-South" delineation, the professor noted that the geographic distinction is useful given discrepancies in arable land. He further explained that an analysis of the conjuncture requires a historic perspective.

The issue of militarization brings up the interesting question of who is actually in control of whom.

Finally, Dr. Cerdas pointed out that the role of the bureaucracy is most pronounced where the Spanish influence was the strongest.

Morris Blachman and Kenneth Sharpe: The Transitions to "Electoral" and Democratic Politics

As a preface to the presentation, Kenneth Sharpe stated that their work should not merely be considered within the context of the electoral process, but rather within the context of a progression towards democratization. It is felt that the mere existence of elections in no way indicates a state of democracy. Thus the question becomes, how are the stages of democracy distinguished? The presenters identified three stages of electoral politics: pseudo, limited, and democratic.

The first section of their paper deals with the transition process in Central America to electoral politics. This transition is mapped from a Pre-WW II phase identified as "Reactionary Despotism", through the Post-WW II period characterized by a number of structural changes necessary for transformation, seen in patterns of repression, revolution, reform, and finally, electoral politics. The argument points to a historical conjuncture in which interrelated phenomena occurred that had the combined effect of exerting pressures for political and social change. A review of these phenomena point to forces other than political parties that created the conditions for the transition; in fact, the role of the party seemed to be minimal. After the review a series of tentative hypotheses were suggested.

Section II represented an analysis of the Post Electoral Period and asks the question: "Is a transition to democracy possible in Central America?" Sharpe and Blachman maintain that, given the external and internal constraints placed on political parties, Central America remains far from achieving "real" democracy.

Of particular significance in this work are the questions posed by the authors designed to facilitate an understanding of both the theoretical problems involved in the study of political parties in Central America, as well as the empirical evidence and prospective insights; section II ends with three such questions that bear repeating here: 1) How can parties help to create conditions that will enhance effective participation. 2) How can parties help to create conditions that will enhance political accountability? 3) How effectively do parties foster values and attitudes supportive of "Democratic Civic Virtues".

Other sections of this work not yet fully developed by the authors include a section in which the formal definition of democracy is relaxed and widened in order to measure more subtle changes, and a final sections that focuses on the question of loyalty to the notion of democracy even when this means possible disloyalty to the party.

Comments

First, it was suggested that the paper reflected a compressed yet relatively accurate summary of the cases included. The operational model employed also received high marks. Concerning the account of the relative explanatory weight accorded political and economic power, it was emphasized that political power was delegated to professional politicians with significant accompanying autonomy. As to Costa Rica, it was noted that the dominant classes have become much weaker than the "burocracia tica".

The same participant favored a more extensive accounting of the internal situation of the political parties. The question of whether political parties can aid the democratic process through electoral institutions and by mediating conflict was felt to have been somewhat neglected. For instance, what other types of institutions exist besides the parties that manage conflict and attempt to keep it out of the realm of violence.

A second participant advocated a more thorough examination of the transitional process itself; what type of transition is being suggested? Bearing in mind that a change of any sort is a process of advances and retrogressions. What of the distinction between the political process and the political system?

How are we to view the various actors that enter in to each of the stages of democratization? Are there further questions concerning levels of analysis? And last, to what extent does reform involve starting over completely as opposed to modification?

An additional line of questioning focused on theoretical and conceptual vagaries. How, for instance, do we define democracy when the literature currently identifies thirteen different types? The concept of a "limited" democracy was seen as particularly puzzling. With such a huge range of possibilities, would it make sense to ground the investigation in works by Lipset, Dahl, or Huntington. The notion of "democratic values"

seems to be linked to economic and institutional resource availability that may deserve more attention.

An additional consideration may be the role of the democratic process and the embassy. This notion is tied to world power centers and their role.

It was observed that military power is rarely independent, rather it is almost always delegated from the real power sources, i.e., the Central American families.

Still another comment made reference to the political actors vis-a-vis the parties. Due to the potential external influences, there is simply no guarantee of participation within the parties themselves.

The "booty" must always be recognized in order to measure incentives. For example, how would the actors define the questions posited by Blachman and Sharpe? There is an authoritarian prevalence even among the civilian groups.

The concluding commentor noted that Blachman and Sharpe have developed an exemplary work in regards to question formation. But even this sound piece might benefit from a more complete integration of extant literature.

Blachman in Response:

As the authors are setting the stage for the rest of the works, it is critical to agree upon certain definitions. Their focus must be on political parties and democracy rather than on the individual parties themselves. Thus they are obliged to limit the paper to generalities whenever possible as specific questions are answered in the case studies.

One final note concerning history. The authors feel that this is part of the artifact of the process of grappling with the specificity problem. They would appreciate feedback concerning the particular types of generalities that would be useful in setting the stage for the case studies.

Case Studies

Jose Luis Vega: Costa Rica

The central thesis of this paper is that the political parties and the electoral system have not been the prime impetus of democracy in Costa Rica; the society was already

"democratized" when these evolved. (It is recognized here that the functioning of political parties does not necessarily provoke a democratic environment.)

Historical analysis points to "tacit agreements" among the political actors, moderated by the elites. Political conflict was mediated from a central location and backed by an electoral constituency. During earlier times the process was dominated by one party. The system became more effective, however, as parties were able to penetrate civil society and meet certain needs.

The sequence or timing of the various elements of the democratization process is noteworthy. Penetration of the parties into society was followed by the legitimization of the state by the political parties as a promoter of development.

Thus the political parties served as mediators between civil society and the state. A series of specific events prohibited the military from intervening in the political arena. These and other crises reinforced the democratic process as the political party system was forced to make adjustments. The center-right was particularly strengthened. This is not to preclude, however, the possibility of a crisis of legitimacy in the future.

Several generalizations emerge from this analysis. First, competitive politics and the constitutional process were products of political conflicts. The development of participation was in turn, a product of the resulting constitutional commitment. Thus all conflict was moderated within the framework of legitimate norms. Furthermore, the history of "pactos de dominacion" established these norms which were then broadened as other actors arrived on the scene.

It was felt that causal links between values or culture, and the emergent political system in Costa Rica are unclear. Somehow radical urban interests were balanced by the conservative landowner elites so that a system evolved that today, resembles the Anglo-American model much more than the Spanish. Additionally, there is no apparent link between economic development and the articulation of political expression. In sum, important historical events are seen as far more significant than structural elements.

Comments

In spite of the apparent lack of hegemony in Costa Rican politics, perhaps it would be of value to focus more closely on the "pactos de dominacion" and assess who took part and who did not. It was also mentioned that culture may have been treated too lightly in the analysis but that the discussion of leadership was important.

Again, since democratization is a process, the prospective view is crucial; degrees of participation are constantly developing. Related questions are: what is it about this particular process of consolidation that resists incursions? What is there about the system that allows it to absorb the shocks better now than 15 years ago? What "is eating away at the edges" of the system? E.g., how are parties working towards maintaining and promoting democracy? Obviously every case is unique and idiosyncratic at the micro level, but what can be learned from the general trends that do exist?

A different line of questioning sought to focus on specific actors and ideology, noting that programation, integration, and implementation of policy varies according to specific leaders. Thus we might ask ourselves, whose interests are being served and which policies are finding general acceptance?

Costa Rica's electoral culture has benefited from an attitude of compromise and a capacity for negotiation not seen in other parts of the region. Therefore, many elements must be integrated into the analysis. Lastly, what is the relative

importance of the newspaper "La Nacion" in the articulation of interests by Costa Rican political parties?

David Smith (for Assad Shoman): Belize

The development of the political party in Belize was initially an anti-colonist process. Economic crises such as droughts and low exports also played a part. After a party emerged from the general workers union (PUP), the crown created the National Party to counterbalance this new force.

Further maneuvering and coalition forming was given greater significance during the move towards self-government. After independence four axes of interests emerged: Great Britain, the English-speaking/Caribbean contingent, the Guatemalan threat, and U.S. relations.

Still, the weight of the recent independence and the problems of a new nation provide the most interesting dynamic. For example, what is the party platform now that the main issue of independence has been resolved in its favor? New issues center on the immigrant/refugee dilemma, union support for refugee membership, and the United Black Development Association.

Comments

Most of the discussion revolved around the problems of scale presented by the analysis of Belize.

Cristina Equizabal: El Salvador

Dr. Equizabal proposed to focus on the period between 1948-1984. This decision was made reluctantly as she feels that there are a number of important factors worthy of consideration that predate that time period. For instance the birth of the "coffee elite" who essentially broke with their colonial counterparts. From that point, several alliances emerged as capital was needed to sustain the coffee industry.

Another important point was the process of political institutionalization that occurred during the 1900-1935 period. This was followed by the unification of the country with the help of new technology in communications as well as the network of roads.

The period of 1932-44 was marked by the Martinez dictatorship during which time the military rose to prominence. This period ushered in the beginning of a civil-military state of conflict that was to dominate for the next 2 and 1/2 decades when the electoral process was restored, a process that was needed to pacify the international community. This point underscores the fact that domestic politics are not merely decided at the national level; the military felt the need to organize political parties and elections, in part, to placate international concerns. The military, however, always retained control of the key state positions as the official part was consistently able to coopt civilian leaders.

It is not surprising, given the above scenario, that the opposition parties' principal reason for being, then, was to

confront military rule. Coalitions, with a broad base of domestic and international support, emerged for this very purpose. The two principal actors to openly oppose the military were the Church and the far left. But the importance of the growth of the economy, which permitted other sectors of society to become involved, cannot be overlooked.

The violent closing of the political arena took place in 1972. Violence and an agrarian transformation characterize the period that immediately followed. In 1979 the U.S. begins to play a more significant internal role in El Salvador by threatening the cut off of military aid. The military then exits the conflict for political party control, but by no means pulled out of the struggle for political power.

At this point, Dr. Equizabal intends to add a synthesis assessing the recent past.

Comments

It was suggested that an amplification of the most recent events would be useful with a special focus on the process of transition. For example, what has changed and what has remained the same within the military and civil society? What has been the effect of the FMLN on the political process? What changes have occurred in the rural areas and why does ARENA enjoy the power that it has?

The US influence was seen as notable and worthy of further exploration. (Note the amount of money spent on elections in Chile, are similar factors observable in El Salvador?) The explanatory importance of chronologies was mentioned, but care must be taken in order to avoid sacrificing analytical content for historical

accounts. The question is how far back in history to go with the analysis given the space limitations.

The international linkages provide still another compelling point of focus; just how profound are these linkages and what importance are we to assign them? With whom are the relationships established, what are the initial objectives and what results are manifest?

David Smith: Panama

Dr. Smith's presentation was designed to raise several critical questions: First, when discussing Panama, it is essential to determine to which Panamanian state we are referring. If referring to the period since the Republican era, what place do we accord the power delegated to the U.S.? Second, what political activities allow us to identify the relevant actors?

Next, three clearly distinct periods were outlined; these were characterized as a restricted state of oligarchy (1903-31), a complete state of oligarchy (1931-68), and a period of crisis (1968-present). Within the second era, the period spanning the years 1950 - 64 are noteworthy; they involve a succession of plutocratic, patrimonial, family regimes.

The political party history of Panama is marked by a series of alliances among the parties. Of the six most important parties, three have dominated. Nevertheless, political modernization in Panama has not meant the modernization of the political party system. The five most recent elections have taken place without the real participation of the political parties. Thus, the sectors of society that have been excluded from the political process are now mounting opposition to the political system in Panama, not merely against one individual. This political system has developed from a cultural inheritance that includes, among other elements, the dominance of political bosses.

Four key questions emerge from the present crisis in Panama: 1) Which political entities are capable of exerting the most significant influence in Panama? 2) Concerning power and authority, who are dominant and governing classes? 3) How is the economy impacted by the political situation and vice versa? And, 4) what is the role of the armed forces in this milieu?

Comments

One salient factor worthy of mention is the role of the military within the dominant party. A second is the divisions among, class, racial, and geographic lines. Finally, if Torrijos would have lived, could a situation analogous to the PRI in Mexico have developed?

Panama (due to the canal) has a highly visible international profile. How has this impacted the political process?

In conclusion, Dr. Smith reacted to these comments and added other points of interest to the discussion. First, the national guard occupied a party position when there were no parties. The armed forces grew out of the police force. A PRI-type situation was not likely in Panama because of the strength of the military.

It is worth noting the ideological flexibility of the parties in Panama, as well as the importance of the political boss or leader. Because of the heightened visibility of Panama's political crisis, international ties with the political parties are likely to become increasingly important. However, a rapid solution to the Noriega problem would thwart the process of political reorganization. Noriega, while he may be the most externally visible aspect of the problem, is only a mere fraction of a much more profound malfunction of the political system.

Hector Rosada: Guatemala

Dr. Rosada's work included a particularly unique data-gathering technique: He invited the political parties to draft descriptive monographs that essentially allowed them to present the image they desired. The period of analysis involves the years 1944-85 and was designed to assess the system of political parties within the larger political system as well as the

political and electoral behavior of the Guatemalan citizen. The structure of authority was an additional focus of the study.

Thus, political party activity was charted from 1944-85; moving ideologically from the left to the right, the parties fell into the following descriptive categories: Anti-system, Revolutionary, Reformist, Progressivist and Conservative. This mapping was useful in demarcating a series of significant trends within Guatemalan party politics.

Among the general observations Dr. Rosada noted the survival of the conservative parties, the polarization of the parties and the subsequent counter-insurgent and anti-communist movements. Relevant to the latter point is the political project undertaken by the military in which the counter-insurgent policies were consolidated. A symbiotic relationship between the military and economic elites ensured the prolonged life of the military and the desired conditions of land and capital important to the dominant economic interests. Broadly defined, the two-part strategy of this project was to 1) win the war with the leftist groups, and 2) to control the civil population. Note that the steps taken toward political participation will obviously open up quite differently when introduced by a military government as opposed to the process of electoral politics.

In 1983 when the political process was opened, 36 parties registered, 17 appeared on the ballot, and 5 received 90% of the popular vote. The military, though split into two groups (one more developmentalist and one more anti-insurgent), is fomenting a return to democracy without the real leadership of political parties. The sectors that seem to be benefiting the most, at least initially, are the finance sector and the agro-export sector.

Comments

The first comment asked for clarification between the terms "progressivist" and "reformist". Dr. Rosada responded that a distinction must be made between revolutionary movements that choose to work within the system, and those that operate outside of the system. More directly, the progressivists are more in favor of taxation, redistribution of wealth, and social welfare programs.

A question was raised regarding the divisions in the military; might these be due to socially based differences? To this inquiry Dr. Rosada noted that the more progressive officers tend to have ties with the political parties whereas the conservative officers are linked with the ultraconservative sector of society.

Another participant wondered whether the oligarchy and the agro-export sector are really not one and the same. The response indicated that while this is true to some degree, the oligarchy was also interested in the generation of internal markets.

A final comment speculated as to the alternatives for the

future . . . In general, any political transition must be established on the basis of effective national dialogue.

Ernesto Paz: Honduras

As with the case of El Salvador, Dr. Paz also approached the case of Honduras from a historical perspective. He began with the period between 1821 and 1886, and era characterized by liberal and conservative factions. The economy was dominated by oligarchic families and subsistence farmers.

The second period was labeled "traditional". This period experienced capitalist development fueled by foreign capital and "white immigration". Economic growth was especially pronounced in the mining and banana industries. Politically, this period was dominated by two principal political parties. Civil war was also prevalent during this last era, the last occurring in 1932. As usual, economic interests controlled the more conservative of the parties.

The point was made that the transition from a dictatorship to electoral politics was smoother in Honduras than in other Central American countries. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the military was the last sector to be modernized, among other reasons.

Honduras was also affected by three additional international sources: 1) Revolutionary movements in other Latin countries; 2) the Church; and 3) the multinationals. Finally, the policies of the Reagan administration were seen as having a debilitating affect on political parties as they tend to reinforce the military.

Comments

The influence of 1979 must be noted. It was, in part, a reaction to the events in neighboring Nicaragua that caused the political process in Honduras to close.

Another participant pointed out that the U.S. is intent on painting Nicaragua as the only country in the region that does not hold regular elections. It was then suggested that the role of the U.S. in the region is often exaggerated, that internal coalitions and agreements are far more significant. Then again, what of the close relationship between the Honduran military elite and the Department of State?

Dr. Paz concluded by observing that political conflict is rarely resolved within organizations. He remarked that the Christian Democrat party in Honduras is center-left, but center-right in all other Central American nations. The left in Honduras is not interested in revolution, but in supporting the solidarity of the left in Central America.

One final point: human rights violations in Honduras are seen as the result of the external environment. This point was left without further clarification; it might be of interest to explore the role of political parties and the human rights issue.

Virgilio Godoy: Nicaragua

Dr. Godoy began his analysis with the end of two-party dominance in Nicaragua circa 1945; however, the stage was set with an historical account that described the country's violent history from independence, throughout three periods of history.

Among the more salient external factors affecting the Nicaraguan political process, Dr. Godoy cited William Walker, the U.S. intervention in 1902-03, and Cuba today.

In the 19th century, coffee, introduced in the 1840's, was a key determinant of the revolution of 1893. Also in 1893 universal suffrage was established in the Constitution. 1893 also saw the professionalization of the Armed Forces based on a European model.

The 20th century saw an increasingly active role in Nicaraguan politics on the part of the United States. But the most remarkable factor introduced during the new century was the installment of the Somoza dictatorships. After the U.S. marine departure in 1932, Somoza g. established himself as a military caudillo. This caused the liberal and conservative parties the two traditional parties in Nicaragua, to ally in order to delegitimize the Somoza rule. Somoza, however, was able to retain power with support of fragments from both parties.

The Communist party was founded in 1944, late by some standards. This same year Somoza announced what was to become a highly suspect electoral process. By 1950 Somoza and Chamorro agreed to respect a 19th century constitutional principle that calls for 1/3 of the Congress to belong to the minority party. (The principle also held that only the two highest vote-receiving parties have the right to legislative representation.)

The next decades were characterized by several failed coup attempts, the introduction of the Christian Democrat party, and guerilla warfare. At one point, circa 1963 and the Alliance for Progress, the "guerrilla" moved into electoral politics. This was short-lived, however, as they reemerged when A. Somoza, Jr. assumed power. A violent era of repression followed which ultimately resulted in the fall of Somoza and an increase in the popularity of the Sandinista party. Violence, external intervention, and the failure of the electoral process all contributed to the result.

Though the original tenets of the Sandinista party stated otherwise, participation of the opposition parties in the political process during the early years of Sandinista rule was not significant and decreased over time. By 1984 the Sandinistas had managed to gain control over every aspect of society.

Comments

What can be said concerning the Sandinista's apparent return to their original plan of 1978? How are we to characterize the transition that seems to be taking place in Nicaragua? It was asserted that the U.S. is guilty of interrupting an internal debate with less than positive results.

One suggestion favored more discussion of the opposition groups. And along those lines, would it be beneficial to assess the social bases of all of the parties. What must the parties do to broaden their social bases?

A final point by the presenter, the Nicaraguan situation cannot be explained without discussing the intervention of foreign governments.

Richard Millett: The Military in Central America

Dr. Millett began his presentation by noting the difficulty encountered when defining just who is a member of the military and who is a civilian. He further pointed out that there are in reality, four types of military in Central America: the "personalist" military, the military as an institution, and as in the case of Belize, a military dominated by foreigners.

A discussion of the unique development of the various armed forces in each country was followed by a review of war in Central America.

What can be said about the military and political parties? The parties have, to great degree, been dominated by the military in Central America. An especially poignant case would be that of Panama. On several occasions alliances have been established between the parties and the armed forces. Several cases provide examples of one without the support of the other. In all cases, the parties and their governments must negotiate their "political space" with the military.

In summary, Dr. Millett outlined the goals of his essay as follows: 1) Assess the impact of the military on the political party. 2) Look at the impact of the countries' policies on their neighbors. 3) Examine the impact of foreign forces. 4) Assess the internal divisions within the armed forces and the way in which parties attempt to take advantage of these situations. And 5) Look at the impact of the professionalism of the military on the relationships established with political parties.

Comments

It was suggested that one might look at the military question in the context of political projects. What would a thorough examination of the auxiliary institutions of the military yield in terms of what they mean today? Moreover, how does the military leave power?

An explanation was sought concerning the diversity of the operational functionality of the military; e.g., the type, range, and depth of conflict, as well as the mechanisms for discipline. What are the perceptions of the military regarding civilian leaders and vice versa?

The military is seen as part of the state by one of the participants, and thus, negotiations with the military are merely part of the political process. This point was further augmented by a second comment that stressed that the armed forces develop within a social context and therefore, it is this context that should be the base of analysis. All of society in Central America is affected by military policy and activity. The military may just be the inverse of the political party as the military tends to exclude political participation. The role of the military is national defense, the defense of its own interest, and to promote the growth of the institution itself.

Bruce Bagley: The Contadora/Group of 8

In Colombia, the link between domestic and external policy is critical. This fact is sometimes at odds with the need to develop a compatible relationship with Sandinista government. This contradiction underscores the collapse of the period of peace in Colombia itself.

Panama is seen as paradox. On one hand, it participates in the Contadora/Group 8 process, while on the other, it deals directly with the Sandinista regime. As to the implications of the Panamanian question for the rest of Central America, it points to the possibility that the military is able to execute internal policy freely without the U.S. being able to interfere.

Esquipulas perhaps emphasized the democratic process within the context of regional security concerns. It is an example of Central Americans attempting to deal with their own problems. While Mexico's rejection of Esquipulas represents the end of one process and the beginning of another.

Another aspect of the Contadora/Group of 8 issue is the U.S. effort to undermine the process. It was suggested that U.S. officials see the effort as threat to U.S. policy in the region.

Comments

The Contadora/Group 8 appears to be an important force against the U.S. intervention in Central America. It points to multilateralism as a possible alternative to the historical bilateralism that has characterized negotiations in the region. The limits of bi-lateralism are highlighted by the Contadora case.

The negative side to the Contadora/Group of 8 question also exists. While they present a unified front in terms of policy, each member nation also uses the process to exact its individual interests from the United States.

What is the effect of the Contadora/Group of 8 on the region's political parties. Might not the Contadora/Group of 8 be used to explain multilateral relations vis a vis the parties? What impact is there on internal party policy?

A note concerning the Contadora/Group of 8 issue and the theoretical underpinnings of the book; the goal of the publication is to-fold: First, the exposition of case studies; and second, as a part of the larger field of international

studies. Thus, the Contadora/Group of 8 issue has significant implications for the study of the democratic processes on an international scale.

It was also urged that the Chilean participation in the group of eight not be ignored. The Chilean/Central American link is worthy of further examination.

Margaret Crahan: The Role of the Church

The Church has demonstrated several noteworthy characteristics during the present crisis. Dr. Crahan asserts that it is, in effect, the custodian with the most natural presence. The Church, historically, has been a powerful institution where other institutions operating in the same environment have typically exhibited less organization. This has resulted in important political influence which the Church has exploited to introduce other philosophies into Latin American society. The Church has been able to mobilize grassroots initiatives in C.A. . However, it must be noted that not all of these initiatives enjoy the support of the Church hierarchy.

Before the 1960's, the Church promoted a strategy of elite interest promotion. Since that time there is evidence of multiple influences in the Church. In fact several factors, not the least of which is the Vatican II conference, discussed by Dr. Crahan continue to shape official Church policy.

In Nicaragua, in particular, there exists within the clergy a commitment to revolutionary ideals. The majority of those associated with the Church support change by non-violent means.

Pope John Paul II seems to have his own agenda as he has tried to involve himself in the debate; a strategy that has received little support from either side of the ideological continuum. The Pope has always pressed for pluralistic governments.

The Catholics are not the only ones split by ideology; the Protestants are as equally divided on many issues.

In conclusion, Dr. Crahan stressed that while the Church encourages "concientizacion", there is no apparent consensus on how a more democratic society might be achieved. The Church has been used as a mediator in several areas of conflict in Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Comments

The notion that the Church is not political is categorically incorrect; the Church can play, and has, the important role as a mediator.

Is the Christian Democrat party capable of introducing the role of the church? If so, why are some C.D. parties in some countries strong, but weak in others?

National Church conferences must seek to understand Church strategy. The Catholic Church has developed into one of the principal accusers of repressive tactics. Is this a role that the Church can play effectively? What of the role of the Church in the negotiations with Noriega?

Topics treated by absent authors: Louis Goodman

William Leogrande: The Consumption of Information on Central America in the United States

Dr. Leogrande's intent is to discuss a reality that is perhaps not sufficiently understood in Latin American social sciences, i.e., the long history of American isolationism and the "discovery" of Central America and its impact.

Interest was expressed regarding the differentiation between false information and propaganda on the one hand, and the information available. Tangentially, how have the distortions affected political parties? E.g., U.S. many U.S. officials are convinced of the existence of four democracies in Central America when in fact there are not. The production of information should be given ample attention.

Wayne Smith: The Soviet Union and Cuba

Dr. Smith will focus on the impact of the USSR and Cuba on political parties and democratization. Much of his data will be acquired through interviews of Soviet and Cuban officials.

The second question raised by Dr. Smith is whether any parties in Central America actually follow the Soviet model. The popular thesis hold that only the Sandinistas can claim to have assimilated this model. Professor Smith will examine the Sandinista case to determine to what degree this is true.

Wolf Grabendorf & Eusebio Mujal-Leon: The Socialist, Christian Democratic, and Other Internationals

Each will write a separate essay on the impact of international political organizations on the parties in the region. Dr. Grabendorf will attempt to extend his earlier work on the Socialist & Christian Democratic Internationals to include the Liberal and Conservative Party organizations. Dr. Mujal-Leon will deepen his work on the Socialist & Christian Democratic Internationals. Great interest was expressed in these papers.

Mariano Fiallos: Nicaragua

Great enthusiasm was expressed for Mariano Fiallos authorship of a paper on Political Parties in Nicaragua to complement that authored by Vergilio Godoy.

Additional Papers:

Interest was also expressed for the project directors recruiting authors to write papers on two topics included in the original project design, but for which authors had not yet been selected: The Impact of the Policies of the United States and The Limitations Placed by Small Open Economies.

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7-23-88



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ms. Roma Knee
Project Officer
U.S. Agency for International Development
LAC/AJDD Room 3253 NS
Washington, D.C. 20523

July 19, 1988

Dear Ms. Knee:

The purpose of this letter is to report on the progress made during the last quarter on AID grant number LAC-0003-G-SS-6077-00 "Political Parties and Democracy in Central America". I am pleased to state that we have made great progress on this project, having just completed a successful three day meeting in Guatemala in late June. Our paper writers for the program are now almost all in place. Cooperation with CAPEL is excellent; all parties to the project are working well together as we move ahead to plan the third phase of this project, a meeting in Washington, D.C. scheduled for March 1989.

As indicated in my last report, this project got off to a late start because of problems in schedule coordination with CAPEL. In retrospect, the delay resulted in a bonus; CAPEL produced a series of completed papers on individual country studies of political parties which will lay the groundwork for the new articles being prepared for the March meeting. Now that all participants have met and have had an opportunity to work together in Guatemala, I am confident that our progress will be satisfactory on all areas of the project.

Our meeting in Guatemala gave scholars from North and Central America a unique opportunity to discuss ideas about the subject matter of the project. In particular, the availability of country-specific papers, and the addition of themes such as the impact on the evolution of democratic political systems of the Church, the military, the Contadora Group of 8 process, and the political party internationals, created several days of important dialogue among the scholars present. A copy of the draft rapporteurs report (just circulated to the working group) of the meeting is enclosed with this report.

In particular, the discussion focused on setting the framework for analyzing political party development from two perspectives: First, participants suggested that party development be viewed within the historical context of the Central American political

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also be examined within the wider context of the impact of foreign powers (i.e., the United States and the Soviet Union) within the region. Integrated into this approach were the other factors which have affected the emergent democracies in the region: the continued presence of low intensity armed conflicts, the impact of international parties on national party development, the influence of the global economies on the region, and the competition from other governing institutions that have traditionally wielded extensive power in Central America: the Catholic Church and the various militaries. How these political institutions impact on the democratic goals of many of the parties in the region is one of the principal questions that must be examined within the broader inquiry of democratization.

Our plans now include the following: All final papers are scheduled for delivery by November 30, 1988. These will be distributed to the working group and also to the political practitioners who will be invited to the March 1989 meeting. As we discussed the format for the meeting in Guatemala, we assured our Central American and North American participants that they each would be encouraged to ask at least one or two of the practitioners with whom they worked to join us in Washington for the March conference. We will also be working very closely with CAPEL to coordinate the revised versions of the individual country study papers they have prepared for inclusion in the final volume of essays we plan to publish as a result of this project.

One additional message is clear from the meeting we held in Guatemala. The discussion of democratization must recognize the role of the military in the region as a key political force. The inclusion of the military in the theme of political party development was welcomed by the group's participants as a major factor in the success or failure of the fragile democracies that have come to exist in the region. All acknowledged that, with the exception of Costa Rica, democracies are new to region. Learning to use the political parties as a force to ensure the continuation of this form of government will require redefinition of the roles of other important institutions in the political systems of the countries of the region including the military and the church.

We would be pleased to discuss any part of this report with you in the weeks ahead. We would appreciate comments on this and on our draft rapporteur's report.

Sincerely,



Louis W. Goodman