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## RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

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### THE POLICY CAPABILITIES OF DEMOCRATIC REGIMES IN LATIN AMERICA \*

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The present trend toward democratic regimes in Latin American countries raises the issue of their regime-determined capabilities. Democracy is generally defined in procedural terms and supported on moral rather than policy grounds (Schumpeter 1950, 242). Consequently, very little is known about the policy consequences, if any, of the adoption of democratic forms and procedures by Latin American political systems. One way to examine this question is to analyze the policy performance of the three democratic regimes in Latin America that are the most institutionalized: Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. These three nations, unlike Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay, were able to withstand the authoritarian trends of the 1960s and early 1970s. They have been democratic long enough (well over two decades) during a period when development issues were salient to indicate the policy-performance capabilities of democratic regimes operating within the cultural, economic, and political context of Latin America.

The purpose of this essay is to compare the policy performance of these three democratic regimes with four modernizing authoritarian regimes: Argentina (1966–1973 and 1976–1983); Brazil (1964–1985); Chile

\*This research note is a revised version of a paper originally read at the meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Boston in October 1986.

(1973–1985); and Mexico (1960–1985). To this end, succeeding sections will review democracy in Latin America, analyze the relationship between regime type and public policy, and examine the policy record of the seven countries mentioned above from about 1960 to 1985.

### *Democracy in Latin America*

The aspiration to establish democratic political systems has been a persistent component of the Latin American political culture since the nations of the region achieved their independence from Spain and Portugal early in the nineteenth century. Democracy, however, is only one competing component within the fragmented Latin American political culture. That is to say, in Latin America, democracy is an authentic and persistent motif, but it is only dominant periodically. Democracy competes against several varieties of authoritarianism (traditional authoritarianism, bureaucratic authoritarianism, and corporatism) and also against socialism (Martz and Myers 1983; Paz 1982; Sloan 1984, 17–18; Collier 1979; Malloy 1977; Hartlyn and Morley 1986, 19). In the context of a fragmented political culture and political instability, democratic regimes are looked upon more as temporary instruments than as permanent features. Moreover, Howard Wiarda correctly claims that Latin America has adapted (often by diluting) democratic forms and procedures to its own cultural context (1980, 285). In comparison with Western European democracies, Latin American democracies are likely to accept a stronger, more personalistic executive, fewer checks and balances, and greater restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, and assembly.

From a policy point of view, contradictory criticisms and opposing predictions have been made regarding the consequences of democratic regimes in Latin America. Proponents of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes argue that democratic regimes lack the necessary rationality to promote economic growth. Because democratic regimes allegedly allow and even encourage demagogic politicians (populists and socialists) in search of votes to agitate and mobilize the poor (who constitute majorities in Latin America but not in the West), such political systems are said to sacrifice long-term growth for short-term consumption. Robert Wesson summarizes (but does not advocate) this argument: “If the less affluent masses are mobilizable and power comes from their votes, politicians are sure to bid for their support, without necessarily considering the costs of fulfilling their promises. This easily leads to economically questionable subsidies, as for food or transportation, to labor legislation raising costs, to uneconomic make-work projects, and most of all to deficit financing” (Wesson 1984, xvi). In contrast, bureaucratic-authori-

tarian regimes are supposed, through the use of repression in restricting consumption demands, to free expert technocrats in the public bureaucracies from democratic accountability and allow them free reign to pursue economic strategies that will benefit the nation in the long term. Bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes thus eliminate the policy uncertainties of democratic regimes that discourage private investment.

The proponents of democracy stress its moral legitimacy and argue that democratic accountability and technical competence are not incompatible. They assert that bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes can never acquire moral legitimacy, but democratic regimes can. By freeing the technocrats from democratic accountability, bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes pursue economic strategies that aid elites at the expense of most of the population. Moreover, the experiences of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes like those in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile during the late 1970s and early 1980s suggest that "such problems as accelerated inflation, external bottlenecks, and the fact that cycles of expansion come to an end can also occur in the absence of effective competitive electoral processes and of any possibilities of organization and protest by the popular sector" (Serra 1979, 162). Supporters of democracy claim that bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes inevitably become rigid, self-serving, corrupt, and incapable of adjusting policy priorities to changing conditions. Democratic systems are more flexible because they respond to changes in the electorate. Octavio Paz stresses that "social change and democracy are inseparable. To defend democracy is to defend the possibility of change; in turn, only change can strengthen democracy and allow it finally to take shape in social life" (Paz 1982, 162).

Supporters of democracy also argue that the open expression of conflict—as reflected in competitive elections, legislative divisions, and interest-group activities—is more conducive to effective policymaking in the long run (say, over five years) than the artificial public consensus achieved by authoritarian regimes through the squelching of dissent. These supporters concede that at times democratic systems will make mistakes, experience immobilism, appear inefficient, and endure chaos. But proponents assert that democratic systems have a particularly high capacity to respond to problems and to rectify mistakes. Supporters of democracy assume that good policy will result from a "dialogue" between politicians and voters. The openness of democratic systems allows mistakes to be recognized and provides the means by which misguided policies can be changed. Policymakers will either respond to these problems and correct these mistakes or be replaced. As John Martz has observed, "The capacity to change, to learn by error, and to apply corrections lies at the core of the representative system" (1984, 184). Thus proponents of democracy claim that although an authoritar-

ian or totalitarian regime might outperform a democratic regime in the short run, the benefits of a democratic regime are likely to be superior in the long run.

Leftist critics in Latin America argue, however, that democratic regimes are incapable of promoting authentic reforms because they are dominated by domestic and foreign bourgeoisie. William Ascher summarizes (but does not advocate) this criticism: "liberal democracy, once synonymous with reform in Latin America . . . , has become the object of disdain and frustration for most advocates of redistribution. The flaw in liberal democratic practice is widely perceived as the power it accords upper-income and middle-income groups bent on blocking redistributive economic reforms. According to this view, although the rationale and rhetoric of liberal democracy are rooted in the strength of numbers, the power of the masses can be checked by the superior organization, finances and access to policymakers enjoyed by the wealthy few" (Ascher 1984, 4). In his study of Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela, John Peeler claims that these nations were able to institutionalize democratic regimes because their competing elites were able to overcome the Latin American cultural obstacles to compromise, accommodation, and sharing power. Peeler observes, "Structurally, accommodation between rival elites has had the obvious effect of bolstering the institution of liberal democracy. Concretely, that means . . . strengthening the tendency to immobilism that is inherent in liberal institutions. Limitations on governmental authority, protection of individual rights, constitutional checks and balances—all serve to make it harder for any government to decide and act upon major departures in policy" (Peeler 1985, 152). He therefore claims that the policy uncertainties of democratic regimes are reduced by immobilism. Peeler concludes that "since all three of these societies, like the rest of Latin America, are characterized by extreme inequality to the point of palpable injustice, then liberal democracy's immobilism must be seen as defending social injustice by making it virtually impossible to bring about fundamental change" (1985, 153). Peeler, however, does not provide comparative policy evidence demonstrating that other types of regimes perform better than democratic regimes.

### *Regime Types and Public Policies*

Kent Tedin and I have conceptualized regime type as a set of stable expectations concerning what problems can be handled politically, the rules for processing these political issues, and what institutions and authorities can make legitimate decisions in the political arena (Sloan and Tedin 1985, 3). The twenty Latin American countries can be divided into a variety of regime types, although scholars often disagree,

sometimes vehemently, about the classification of governments like that of Mexico or the Sandinista administration in Nicaragua. Disputes will also arise about the years when a nation should be labeled democratic or bureaucratic-authoritarian. Part of the problem is that no nation's political system is likely to be a pure regime type. Echoing Aristotle, Juan Linz has claimed that all political systems have mixed forms; they are constructed "by leaders and social forces with contradictory conceptions of the polity and [are] subject to constant changes in emphasis and direction. Regimes are the result of contradictory manifest and latent tendencies in different directions and therefore are all mixed forms" (Linz 1975, 180). Regimes are not only mixed but can change over time (Osztak 1986, 221). Grounds nevertheless remain for classifying one political system as essentially democratic and another as authoritarian.

For the purposes of this essay, I am classifying Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela as democratic because they have comparatively free and competitive elections. Since the 1950s, each of these countries has held periodic elections in which candidates of different parties have won, necessitating numerous legal and peaceful transfers of power. These changes in government were decided by elections, not by coups or juntas.

Following the lead of Guillermo O'Donnell, I have classified Argentina (1966–1973 and 1976–1983), Brazil (1964–1985) and Chile (1973–1985) as bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes (O'Donnell 1973, 1978). Bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes are based on a tacit alliance among the military, technocrats, the domestic bourgeoisie, and foreign capital. The creation of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes is likely to occur in nations that have undergone relatively substantial bureaucratization, industrialization, and mass mobilization. Each of the countries that became bureaucratic-authoritarian had previously experienced periods under a democratic system that were ended by military coups. Thus the construction of a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime is essentially an elite response to the alleged policy failure of a democratic regime. A bureaucratic-authoritarian regime is designed to hold down demands for distributive social policies by demobilizing labor unions, peasant organization, and leftist political parties, which then allows technocrats to make the economically rational decisions necessary to promote the orderly advance of economic development. The policy expectations (and justifications) of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes are that by avoiding competitive elections, technocrats will be free to pursue economically rational policies (usually of the neoliberal variety) to promote higher levels of investment, faster economic growth, and lower levels of inflation and foreign debt.

Mexico's government can be classified as an authoritarian re-

gime, but it has some unique characteristics that prevent its inclusion among the other bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes (Remmer and Merx 1982, 7; Domínguez 1987, 73). Mexico cannot be classified as a democratic regime because its periodic elections are not truly competitive or honest. Since 1929 the official party of the Mexican Revolution has won every major election and has frequently engaged in electoral fraud. Mexico shares some of the characteristics of a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime in that the nation has undergone substantial bureaucratization, industrialization, and mass mobilization and the political system is increasingly influenced by technocrats (Camp 1985). But Mexico has never experienced a democratic period. The political system emerged from the Revolution in 1910 rather than from a military coup, and the military is clearly not the dominant player in the ruling coalition. Moreover, the Mexican political system has not demobilized its citizens but has attempted instead to coopt and control different social sectors. These controls and the absence of competitive elections allow Mexican policymakers the opportunity to engage in many of the same policies associated with bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes. For this reason, I am grouping Mexico with the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes although, strictly speaking, it is not a member of this category. The four authoritarian regimes will be labeled "modernizing authoritarian" in tables 1 and 2 in order to differentiate them from traditional authoritarian regimes like Stroessner's Paraguay and Somoza's Nicaragua.

To compare the capabilities of democratic and modernizing authoritarian regimes, I have used a variety of policy outcomes from approximately 1960 to 1985. Tables 1 and 2 summarize how well the three most institutionalized democratic regimes have been able to promote economic growth, avoid inflation and foreign debts, and achieve distributive justice in comparison with four authoritarian regimes. The tables stress policy outcomes (literacy rates) rather than policy outputs (public expenditures on education) because I am interested in what these regimes can achieve. Policy outcomes thus provide a good indication of how well these regimes are achieving their developmental goals.

### *The Policy Record*

The data in table 1 indicate that the three democratic regimes have good records in the policy area of economic growth. Being democratic did not prevent these nations from generating the necessary levels of gross domestic investment to finance economic growth. Between 1960 and 1985, the average annual increase in per capita GDP was 4.7 percent in Colombia and Costa Rica and a respectable 3.8 percent in Venezuela. The Venezuelan record is a bit disappointing, however, because the country was not able to transform its soaring oil income into

TABLE 1 *Comparative Economic Performance of Democratic and Authoritarian Regimes, 1960–1985*

Regime	Average Annual Rate of GDP per capita	GDP per capita (1982 dollars)		Average Annual Inflation Rate	Debt Service as Percentage of Exports	
		1960	1984		1960	1985
<b>Democratic</b>						
Colombia						
1960–1985	4.7	565	1,045	17.6	13.9	29.2
Costa Rica						
1960–1985	4.7	957	1,565	12.9	4.8	36.6
Venezuela						
1960–1985	3.8	1,972	2,340	6.0	4.4	12.8
<b>Modernizing Authoritarian</b>						
Argentina						
1966–1973	5.0	1,586		33.4	25.5 <sup>a</sup>	17.9 <sup>b</sup>
1976–1983	–1.0		1,929	207.1	18.3 <sup>c</sup>	24.0 <sup>d</sup>
Brazil						
1964–1985	6.9	858 <sup>e</sup>	1,626	65.1	26.4 <sup>f</sup>	34.8
Chile						
1973–1985	1.2	1,735 <sup>g</sup>	1,674	93.5	11.5 <sup>h</sup>	26.2
Mexico						
1960–1985	5.9	1,104	2,086 <sup>i</sup>	20.4	15.5	37.0

Sources: For average annual rates of GDP per capita, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America: 1987 Report*, p. 17; for this category on Argentina (1966–1973), Hartlyn and Morley (1986), p. 41. For GDP per capita, IADB, *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America: 1985 Report*, p. 388. For average annual inflation rates, IADB, *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America, 1987 Report*, p. 20. For debt service as a percentage of exports, World Bank, *World Development Report*, no. 218, p. 239.

<sup>a</sup>as of 1966<sup>b</sup>as of 1973<sup>c</sup>as of 1976<sup>d</sup>as of 1983<sup>e</sup>as of 1964<sup>f</sup>as of 1964<sup>g</sup>as of 1970<sup>h</sup>as of 1973<sup>i</sup>as of 1985

higher growth-producing investment. All three nations have significantly raised their per capita income. In comparison, there were wider variations among the authoritarian regimes. Brazil and Mexico had better growth records. Argentina's military government between 1966 and 1973 performed well in this policy area, but its record from 1976 to 1983 was poor. Pinochet's government in Chile has had good and bad years, but the average per capita growth has been very low. In constant dollars, the per capita income in Chile in 1984 was slightly lower than in 1970, the year Salvador Allende was elected. In brief, the evidence suggests that although the democratic regimes were not able to match the

TABLE 2 Comparative Distributive Policy Performance of Democratic and Authoritarian Regimes, 1960–1985

Regime	Percentage of children ages 6–11 in school		Percentage of children ages 12–17 in school		Literacy Rate		Infant Mortality		Life Expectancy (years)	
	1960	1985	1960	1985	1960	1983	1960–1965	1980–1985	1960–1965	1980–1985
<b>Democratic</b>										
Colombia										
1960–1985	47.9	74.9	28.8	71.0	65	86	84.5	53.3	56.2	63.6
Costa Rica										
1960–1985	74.4	98.7	35.7	61.0	84	93	70.6	20.2	63.0	73.0
Venezuela										
1960–1985	68.8	86.3	49.0	69.3	80	86	76.9	38.6	61.0	69.0
<b>Modernizing Authoritarian</b>										
Argentina										
1966–1973	93.6	99.0	52.7 <sup>a</sup>	72.9	92	94	59.7	36.0	65.5	69.7
1976–1983	100.0	99.9								
Brazil										
1964–1985	54.7	81.4	36.1 <sup>b</sup>	62.5	61	76	109.4	70.6	55.9	63.4
Chile										
1973–1985	100.0	100.0	49.5 <sup>c</sup>	62.5	84	96	72.0 <sup>d</sup>	54.0	63.8 <sup>e</sup>	69.7
Mexico										
1960–1985	58.4	96.7	37.4	72.6	65	88	86.3 <sup>f</sup>	53.0	58.6	65.7

Sources: For children age 12–17 in school, IADB, *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America, 1987 Report*, p. 65. For literacy rates, Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures, 1986*, p. 36. For infant mortality data, *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America, 1984*, p. 119. For life expectancy data, *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America, 1984*, p. 88.

<sup>a</sup>as of 1966

<sup>b</sup>as of 1964

<sup>c</sup>as of 1973

<sup>d</sup>for 1970–75

<sup>e</sup>for 1970–75

<sup>f</sup>for 1970–75

capability of the most effective authoritarian regimes, they were competitive as well as superior to the less effective authoritarian regimes.

In measuring inflation and external public debt, table 1 also suggests how rational policymakers were in avoiding these twin pitfalls. Proponents of authoritarian regimes argue that democratic regimes are most likely to have high inflation rates because their politicians will engage in demagogic policies in order to win elections. This expectation, however, is refuted by the evidence. For the three democratic regimes between the year 1960 and 1985, the average rate of inflation was 12.2 percent; for the four authoritarian regimes, the average rate was

74.9 percent. The authoritarian regimes suffer in this comparison partly because the inflation rates for most Latin American nations were considerably higher in the 1970s and early 1980s than in the 1960s. From 1960 to 1970, the average annual rate of inflation in Latin America was 10.9 percent; from 1970 to 1982 it was 32.4 (*World Development Report* 1984, 218). Because these authoritarian regimes were in power for more years after 1970 than before 1970, their inflation rate averages are not reduced by the generally lower rates that prevailed during the 1960s. Nevertheless, when one considers that several of these regimes were instituted at least in part to overcome what were considered to be shockingly high rates of inflation during the last years of democratic rule in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, their record looks very poor. In contrast, for both the 1960–1970 and 1970–1982 periods, the average annual rate of inflation for the democratic regimes was about one-half the Latin American average.

Effective policymakers are also expected to avoid the suffocating consequences of large external debts. During the 1970s, soaring foreign public debts became a major problem for many Latin American countries and reached crisis proportions in August 1982, when Mexico could no longer service its debt. Between 1960 and 1984, six of the seven nations under consideration increased their external public debt enormously to magnitudes well beyond their ability to pay. A standard indicator of a nation's ability to meet its external debt obligation is the ratio of each country's yearly debt service to the value of its yearly export of goods and services. The higher the debt-service ratio (anything over 20 percent is considered high by international bankers), the less chance that the nation will be able to service its foreign debt obligations through export earnings. In 1983 Costa Rica's debt-service ratio soared to 50.6 percent, the highest in Latin America. Fortunately, Costa Rica was able to renegotiate its foreign debts and reduce its debt-service ratio to 36.6 percent in 1985. Table 1 reveals that neither type of regime was successful in holding down the debt-service ratio. Only Venezuela, with its tremendous oil wealth, was able to keep its debt-service ratio at moderate levels.

In the distributive policy area of education, the evidence in table 2 indicates that both types of regimes have registered significant progress over the past two decades. Education is a policy area characterized by a convergence of outcomes. All seven nations increased the percentages of students ages six to eleven and twelve to seventeen in school and raised their literacy rates. At the elementary school level, where the standard goal is to have 100 percent enrollment, Costa Rica was able to increase the proportion of its school children between six and eleven years old from 74.4 percent in 1960 to 98.7 percent in 1985. Venezuela spent considerably more money and increased its elementary

school enrollment from 68.8 percent to 86.3 percent. Starting at a lower level, Colombia made good progress in this policy area, although by 1985, one-fourth of its children of elementary school age were still not attending school. Colombia, however, has been more successful in retaining a higher proportion of its children between ages twelve and seventeen in school than either Costa Rica or Venezuela. All three countries have steadily improved their literacy rates.

In the health policy area, the evidence demonstrates that many countries made significant progress during the period from 1960 to 1985. The democratic regimes succeeded in significantly reducing their infant mortality rates from an average of 77 per 1000 live births in 1960–1965 to 37 per 1000 in 1980–1985. The average Latin American infant mortality rate decreased from 107 per 1000 in 1955–1960 to 61 per 1000 in 1980–1985. For this indicator, Costa Rica's record was impressive, while Colombia's was disappointing. From 1980 to 1985, Costa Rica's infant mortality rate was the lowest in Latin America (tied with Cuba), while Venezuela ranked fifth and Colombia placed seventh (tied with Mexico). Colombia's infant mortality rate of 53.3 per 1000 indicates that many preventable deaths are occurring each year.

Life expectancy in the democratic regimes increased from an average of sixty years in 1960–1965 to sixty-nine years in 1980–1985: During this same period, the overall Latin American life expectancy lengthened from fifty-five years to sixty-four years. Again, Costa Rica's record was impressive—its life expectancy increased by ten years. A Costa Rican born between 1980 and 1985 could expect to live for seventy-three years, longer than anywhere else in Latin America except Cuba (seventy-four years). Venezuela and Colombia each lengthened their life expectancies by about eight years to rank fifth and eighth respectively in Latin America.

Among the authoritarian regimes, none can match Costa Rica's health record. In the 1960s, Argentina had a lower infant mortality rate and a longer life expectancy than Costa Rica, but this ranking was reversed by the 1980s. Despite having the best (lowest) population per physician ratio (521) in Latin America during the early 1980s, Argentina's improvements in this policy area were sluggish, as were health improvements in Pinochet's Chile. Both Brazil and Mexico significantly reduced their infant mortality rates and lengthened their life expectancies, but Brazil's infant mortality rate remains shockingly high. Authoritarian regimes have demonstrated a limited commitment to providing health care for the majority of their population.

*Conclusion*

This report has compared the policy capabilities and performance of democratic and modernizing authoritarian regimes in Latin America from 1960 to 1985. Because so many aspects of development are now measured and publicized, all political systems are under pressure to demonstrate progress lest they provide ammunition for their opponents. Each type of regime is subjected to similar, but varying, pressures to attain such goals as promoting economic growth, increasing school enrollments, lowering infant mortality rates, and lengthening life expectancies. Most Latin American political systems have had the ability to achieve some advancement in many of these policy areas. Thus the differences in policy consequences among regime types in Latin America are diluted. Moreover, regimes are headed by policymakers who can and do make choices. Accelerating economic growth is generally considered a high priority in bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, but policymakers in Brazil may decide to achieve it through the expansion of state enterprises, while policymakers in Chile may select more market-oriented policies. The regime-influenced inclinations of these choices can be overwhelmed by the politics of survival or the effects of the international economy. Any type of regime is ultimately dependent upon skillful policymakers who can efficiently employ domestic resources and take advantage of international opportunities.

But a political system that structures itself into a particular type of regime can supposedly develop the capabilities to accomplish some policy goals better than others. As an increasing number of Latin American nations restructure themselves into democratic forms, an important question becomes: What are the policy capabilities of this regime type? One way to begin to answer this question is to compare the policy performance of the three most highly institutionalized democratic regimes with four modernizing authoritarian regimes. Such a comparison is appropriate because modernizing authoritarian regimes are a major competitor (and predator) of democratic regimes.

The data provide some support for the expectation of democratic supporters that democratic regimes will provide their countries with moderate economic growth and moderate improvements in distributive justice. In terms of economic growth, the democratic regimes could not equal the exceptionally high growth rates of Brazil and Mexico, but they did better than Argentina and Chile. During the 1960s, the democratic regimes were able to generate these rates of economic growth without suffering high rates of inflation and external debts. In the 1970s, however, the democratic regimes proved vulnerable to the suffocating effects of high inflation and soaring foreign debts. Venezuela, however, escaped the stifling effects of an oppressive debt-service ratio because

of its oil income. The authoritarian regimes had higher rates of inflation than the democratic regimes and debt-service ratios that were comparable to those in Colombia and Costa Rica. For the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, negative growth rates during the early 1980s, skyrocketing inflation, and foreign debt crises were potentially lethal threats to their already limited legitimacy and their underlying myth of "technocratic omniscience."

The record of the democratic regimes in the fields of education and health were poorer than expected. By 1985 only Costa Rica had placed over 90 percent of its children between ages six and eleven in school and attained a literacy rate of over 90 percent. Considering its wealth, Venezuela should have achieved more. The Colombian record was disappointing because in 1985, one-quarter of the elementary-age children were still not enrolled in school. A similar pattern appears in the health policy area. Only Costa Rica was able to achieve outstanding results in reducing infant mortality rates and extending life expectancies.

The performance of the authoritarian regimes in the fields of education and health were mixed. The bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in Argentina and Chile inherited good school systems in which most school-age children were already enrolled, and their literacy rates were already high. In the 1980s, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico had over 95 percent of their children between the ages of six and eleven in school. Education appears to be a policy area of convergence in terms of outcomes. The record of the authoritarian regimes is less impressive in the health area. Argentina's health statistics approximate those in Venezuela, while Chile's and Mexico's statistics were similar to those of Colombia. Brazil still has a high infant mortality rate, indicating that the political system is not meeting its developmental (and moral) responsibilities.

What does all this data reveal about the policy capabilities of democratic regimes? Democratic regimes appear to be more flexible than specialized; that is, they may be more capable of shifting priorities and achieving moderate progress toward a variety of developmental goals than of being structured to attain more rapid success in either economic growth or distributive justice. They are definitely capable of promoting impressive rates of economic growth. Indeed, their concern with promoting rapid economic growth probably made them vulnerable to becoming too dependent on external credit to help finance development, which soon left most of them as ensnared in foreign debt as the modernizing authoritarian regimes were. Their commitments to distributive justice vary from the high represented by Costa Rica to the low represented by Colombia. Thus the flexibility of democratic regimes makes it difficult to predict the policy consequences of the present

trend toward democracy in Latin America. Nevertheless, the policy evidence indicates that democratic regimes have the policy capabilities to achieve a variety of developmental goals without suffering the high levels of repression that often accompany bureaucratic-authoritarian rule. It is to be hoped that this tendency will make the selection of democratic regimes in Latin America the increasingly rational choice in terms of achieving economic growth and distributive justice.

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