

Central America, civil society and the 'pink tide': democratisation or de-democratisation?¹

Barry Cannon, School of Law and Government, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

Mo Hume, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Corresponding author email: barry.cannon@dcu.ie

Postal address: Instituto de Iberoamérica, Universidad de Salamanca

Hospedería de Fonseca nº 2

37002 Salamanca, Spain

Tel: (+34) 923 294 636 | Fax: (+34) 923 294 637

Biographical information:

Barry Cannon is a Post-doctoral CARA fellow with the School of Law and Government, in Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS). He is currently researching the Latin American Right at the *Instituto de Iberoamérica*, University of Salamanca, Spain. He is author of *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution: Populism and Democracy in a Globalised Age* (Manchester University Press, 2009) and has published articles on Venezuela and civil society in Central America in a number of academic journals including *Third World Quarterly*, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* and *Development and Practice*.

Mo Hume is a lecturer in Politics at the University of Glasgow. She is author of *The Politics of Violence: Gender, Conflict and Community in El Salvador* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and has published on the problems of post-transitional violence in Central America in a number of academic journals, including *Latin American Perspectives*, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* and *Women's Studies International Forum*.

ABSTRACT:

In the literature on the turn to the left in the wider Latin American region, Central America has generally been neglected. The aim of this article is to seek to fill that gap, while specifically assessing the left turn's impact on prospects for democratization in the sub-region. Using three case studies – El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua – the article questions the usefulness of transition theory for analysis and instead offers a framework based on state/civil society interaction within the context of globalization. Four key conclusions are made: First, democratization is not a linear process, but can be subject to simultaneous processes of democratization and de-democratization. Second, continued deep structural inequalities remain central to the region's politics but these often provoke unproductive personalistic and partisan politics which can inhibit or curtail democratization. Third, interference from local and/or international economic actors can curtail or reverse democratization measures, underlining the influence of globalization. Fourth, Central America is particularly revelatory of these tendencies due to its acute exposure to extreme oligarchic power and outside influence. It hence can help shed light on wider questions on the blurring of boundaries between state, civil society and market and its impact on democratization, especially within the context of globalization. In this way the article contributes to the analysis of Central America in the current context of the 'pink tide', underlines the importance of continued analysis of Central America for democratization studies, and brings new insight to debates on transition theory..

Keywords: Central America; El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua; pink tide; left; democratisation; transition theory

Introduction

In recent years the emergence of left and left of centre governments in Latin America –the so-called ‘pink tide’ - has been attracting much academic attention.² It is surprising, however, that little of this literature places the phenomenon within democratisation theory, particularly ‘transitology’, which held great sway over much political science analysis of Latin America in preceding years.³ Furthermore, most of the literature on the ‘pink tide’ has understandably concentrated on South America, where the most notable left governments have emerged. Little attention has been paid to Central America, despite the fact that that this region was the centre of intense activity by the revolutionary left in the 1980s, and an intense right wing counter-offensive in the context of the Cold War, resulting in devastating civil conflicts. Furthermore, it was subject to one of the first comprehensive international peace building processes in the post Cold War era, including internationally supported democratisation programmes.⁴ Finally with the elections of Daniel Ortega of the revolutionary Sandinista movement (FSLN) in Nicaragua (2007); Mauricio Funes of the erstwhile left guerrilla movement, FMLN (Faribundo Martí Front for National Liberation) in El Salvador (2009); and, the social democratic Álvaro Colom in Guatemala (2008), Central America has not been immune to the ‘pink tide’ sweeping the wider region. The 2009 coup against left leaning Manuel Zelaya in Honduras further signals the region’s importance for understanding the backlash to broader pink tide politics in the context of democratisation, and as we argue here, de-democratisation processes.

The paper is based on three case studies– El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.⁵ It begins by offering a critical review of transition theory in order to foreground the importance of a relational analysis of civil society and the state for

understanding processes of both democratisation and de-democratisation. This analysis concludes that it is necessary not only to take account of who controls the state, but also to analyse who constitutes civil society and what impact the existing correlation of forces within civil society has had on the state and its actions. These findings must be put within the context of globalisation – understood here as neoliberalism and its associated institutions - in order to accurately assess the impact on democratisation or de-democratisation processes on the polity under study.. This analytical framework is then used to argue that democratisation is not a linear process, but is subject to processes of de-democratisation. Historic continuities within Central America, namely the continued presence of deep structural inequalities remain central to the region's politics, but we argue these struggles are frequently sidetracked into unproductive personalistic and partisan politics. These findings open up wider questions about the blurring of boundaries between state, civil society and market and its impact on democratisation, especially within the current context of globalised neoliberal socio-economic structures. In this way the paper not only seeks to emphasise the importance of continued analysis of Central America for democratisation studies, but also to make an important contribution to debate on democratisation theory and its continued usefulness for political analysis globally.

Democratisation theory and the role of civil society

While Grugel identifies a number of distinct types of democratisation theory, it was transition theory, or 'transitology' which dominated the field in the 1980s, particularly with reference to Latin America. 'Transitology' sees democratisation as a process, led by cost-benefit calculations on the part of key actors. As such it has been subject to two major critiques. First, the very concepts of 'transition' and 'democratisation' were

held to be inherently teleological in their assumptions, with a pronounced ‘eurocentric’ bias in what was deemed to be the ultimate democratic end-point. Second, ‘transitologists’ concentrated on elite bargaining and procedural and institutional definitions of democracy, leading to difficulties in explaining the varying outcomes of democratisation processes, resulting in conceptual stretching by analysts.⁶

In answer to the first critique on teleology, three points have been raised. First, democratisation needs to be viewed within a wide-angle, long term analytical perspective, perhaps from when it was first conceived in Ancient Greece, but certainly since the Enlightenment.⁷ Second, democratisation is not a uni-directional process, but rather polities can experience periods of democratisation and *de-democratisation*, that is the ‘expansion and contraction of popular rule’.⁸ Third, all real or concrete political systems – be they established ‘democracies’ in the ‘West’ or ‘authoritarian’ regimes elsewhere – ‘exhibit to greater or lesser degrees democratic and autocratic traits’.⁹ This also undermines the notion that the ‘West’ can act as a yardstick against which other regimes are measured. Hence, the end result of democratisation processes is not ‘democracy’ as established in the ‘West’, which is equally subject to such processes. To echo Barrett et al., ‘it may be more appropriate to speak of *democratisation* as an ongoing, dynamic process than of *democracy* as a final end state’ (emphasis in original).¹⁰

In answer to the second major critique of concentration on elite actions leading to problems in explaining outcomes, Grugel recommends focussing on the interaction between state and civil society within the context of globalization. First, for democratisation to occur the state has to undergo ‘a substantive transformation in its operations and its representativeness’, to give it the capacity to deliver ‘better, more

secure lives' for citizens.¹¹ Second, a shift in the power balance in civil society must take place to facilitate this transformation of the state. Finally, attention must be paid to globalization's impact on these processes in each state.¹² All these three factors will have impact on the depth and quality of different democratisation processes. She hence deals with the problem of structure, on the national and global levels, in explaining outcomes.

Grugel's framework points to the general agreement found in the literature on the centrality of civil society in democratisation processes, yet civil society itself is a contested concept. We argue here that the particularities of this empirical contestation over who or what is civil society can offer important insights into democratisation processes. Analyses of civil society can be grouped into four perspectives. First, liberal perspectives see civil society as separate from state and market, having a watchdog role towards the former and an unproblematised relationship with the latter.¹³ Second, an 'alternative' neo-gramscian perspective, emerging from sectors of civil society, sees it as a realm of struggle riven by inequalities, aimed at transforming the state to benefit the less privileged.¹⁴ Third, both these neglect what has been called an 'uncivil society' of criminal or clandestine groups such as gangs, terrorist organisations, or racist or xenophobic groups, amongst others.¹⁵ This is particularly resonant in contemporary Central America, where levels of criminality and violence among non-state actors are among the highest in the world. Fourth, and finally, some put forward a perspective denying the validity of civil society as an explanatory concept¹⁶ or from a more Marxist perspective, questioning its separation from the state¹⁷ or from the state and the market.¹⁸ Indeed Meiksins Wood questions the liberal dichotomy of the state as an agent of oppression and civil society that of liberation. For her civil society – which includes the market – is the 'privatization of public

power'¹⁹ and hence both it and the state are subsumed in the over-arching and limiting structures of globalisation and its interactions with the politics of regional and national capital.

Pearce helps locate the roots of some of these perspectives in Latin America in an exploration of the trajectory of democratisation since independence. She identifies a bifurcated republican identity in Latin America, between classic liberal republicanism inspired by a belief in individual liberty and a Rousseauian radical republicanism based on belief in the 'common good'. Struggles between these two types of republicanism shaped the contours of both state and civil society in the region throughout post-colonial Latin American history. From elite based civil society organisations of the nineteenth century to the top-down inclusion of popular sectors during the populist era; the authoritarian counter-revolution of the 1970s, with its attempted eradication of progressive civil society groups; the renaissance of social movements emerging in reaction to this repression; and, the rebirth of 'civil society' as a concept in the democratic transitions of the 1980s; in each of these eras distinct groups were favoured over others by national states – and by foreign states through development cooperation or other aid - as the 'actually existing civil society'.²⁰

Pearce's account indicates a number of important points useful in the construction of an interpretative framework for examining civil society/state interaction within democratisation. First, it reaffirms the centrality of civil society to democratisation processes and points to the long term nature of those processes. Second, it reveals the influence of ideology on conceptions of civil society, with both forms of republicanism present in Latin America shaping differing conceptions of it and thus its relations with the state and market. Third, it points to the role of the state in privileging certain groups over others – creating an 'insider' and 'outsider'

dynamic - as the operative, empirical 'civil society' of that era. Hence, the political context – internationally as well as domestically - can denominate which social sectors are recognised officially as constituting civil society – and which are not. In other words who constitutes civil society *vis á vis* the state is not a given but a result of deliberate policy.

Pearce's account indicates how the conception and constitution of civil society in any given polity is shaped by the ideology, power configuration, class sectors and political context dominant in that polity. 'Civil society' therefore is not a fixed entity, with established permanent features, but rather an 'empty signifier' over which struggles take place amongst the contending social forces for its appropriation and definition. Actually existing 'civil society' is formed dialectically by the struggles between these different social, political and institutional forces. As Robert Cox contends: 'Any fixed definition of the content of the concept 'civil society' would just freeze a particular moment in history and privilege the relations of social forces then prevailing'.²¹ The conception and constitution of 'civil society' is therefore historically constructed and attention must be paid to the historical context in any assessment of its constitution, a theme we draw out here.

To sum up, democratisation must not be seen as a uni-linear process but rather as a constant, even daily struggle between democratizing and de-democratizing tendencies. Imperative to this is the need to place democratisation processes within the wider socioeconomic and structural contexts of neoliberal globalization, paying specific attention to the interaction between the state, civil society and the market. Civil society, therefore, cannot be seen as a fixed entity, but one which is shaped by struggles between contending social forces at specific historical conjunctures.

This discussion allows us to identify five key questions to guide any examination of democratisation processes. First, who controls the state? Second, who constitutes civil society in this context? Third, has there been a shift in the power balance within civil society and what impact has this had on the state? Fourth, what influence has globalisation had on these processes? Fifth and finally, have these processes resulted in increased democratisation or de-democratisation? In the next section we analyse the so-called ‘pink tide’ in Latin America within this framework and ask what impact it has had on democratisation processes in the region, before going on to look more specifically at the situation in our three Central American case studies.

Democratisation, civil society/state relations and the emergence of the ‘pink tide’ in Latin America

The emergence of the ‘pink tide’ has been located in the failures of neoliberalism to deliver its promise of prosperity, with a concurrent ‘democratic disillusion’ towards the political system which promoted it. This rejection of neoliberalism was led by social movements which formed and found their voice during the neoliberal era, enriching and revitalising the left and sidelining the old social democratic parties, who were often responsible for the introduction and implementation of neoliberal policy. Among the unifying characteristics of the new left governments which emerged from this dynamic, is a more pronounced search for equality to counteract the perceived increase in inequality and poverty left by neoliberalism in the region.²² This is pursued in two principal ways: through democratic innovation and a policy agenda that seeks to lessen social inequality.

In the current context of 'pink tide' Latin America, civil society is increasingly conceived of as social movements (women, environmentalists, anti-globalisation activists, indigenous groups etc.). These social movements emerged as the chief counterbalance to the 'social forces of oppression' and are identified as 'the primary impetus for social and political change'.²³ This potential for change can best be realised through the adoption of participatory democracy, which is seen as a 'convergence between the deepening of democracy and...the revitalisation of civil society and its articulation with the state'.²⁴ As the key attribute of the state is seen as its capacity to intervene in social and economic relations, it is thus viewed as a 'strategic terrain' upon which contending social and political forces struggle in order to realise their strategies.²⁵ Social movements thus can transcend the narrow role assigned to civil society in liberal theory, aiming to transform the state both by redirecting its modes of intervention (in order to lessen social and economic inequalities and thus alter the balance of social forces) and transforming its forms of representation (in order to make it more accessible and thus more susceptible to pressure from below). Hence, the relationship between civil society (conceived of as social movements) and the state 'should be understood as a dialectical one'.²⁶

Nonetheless, as many of the new left governments matured in power, this promise of a renewed contract between civil society and the state did not always materialise.²⁷ Boron offers three reasons for this. First and notable for our cases, the increased power of markets and their 'capacity for blackmail' (capital flight, investment strikes etc.) against governments which may introduce policies seen as detrimental to market interests. Second, 'the persistence of imperialism', either through conditionalities imposed in return for debt readjustment by the multilateral financial agencies and/or direct political demands from the United States such as the

‘war on drugs’ and bilateral aid systems. Both are policed through ‘the ideological manipulation made possible by big capital’s almost exclusive control of the mass media, the creators of the ‘common sense’ of our times’. Third, the devaluation of democracy in the preceding decades weakened the state’s ‘capacities for intervention in social life’²⁸, further exacerbated by the many historical weaknesses of the state in Latin America.²⁹ Additionally many Latin American left governments have pursued a development model which privileges resource extraction, bringing it into conflict with many social movements, such as environmentalist and indigenous groups in particular, despite revenue from these being used, in some cases, to satisfy social demands. ³⁰All these factors seriously circumscribe the room for manoeuvre of the new left governments to deliver on their promises, causing disillusion and estrangement amongst many of the social movements which had brought them to power and impairing the prospects for the ‘new deal’ between state and civil society to consolidate itself.

To summarise, returning to our framework above, we find in the new left governments of Latin America, to greater or lesser degrees, on a local and/or national level, an attempt to reorient state/civil society relations by facilitating greater civil society influence over policy making processes. Many of these governments, rhetorically or more practically, privilege certain social movements as the ‘actually existing’ civil society. This interaction between social movements and government has resulted in a greater emphasis being placed on social policy directed at lessening poverty and inequality. This re-orientation of policy, however, is severely circumscribed by the influence of neoliberalism, at the international and national level, impairing its effectiveness and sowing distrust amongst the very social movements who were instrumental in creating the conditions for the left to gain

power in the region. In other words the desired state/civil society alliance to advance equality and control the market is not emerging, primarily as a result of national and regional capital interests strengthened by globalisation processes.

While in this section we looked at the situation on state/civil society relations within Latin America in general, how has Central America been faring in the current context? The next section will examine these relations in Central America in historical context, concentrating specifically on the paper's three case studies: El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras, before examining empirical evidence from fieldwork in 2009-10. In the conclusion, we will evaluate the implications of these findings on democratisation theory and practice.

Democratisation processes in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua in historical perspective

Following independence, liberal reform in Central America sought to break up traditional socioeconomic structures inherited from the colonial era and transform the state in order to facilitate an export oriented economy based on agricultural commodities.³¹ In El Salvador this resulted in the development of a unified national bourgeoisie with strong institutions that were subservient to its needs. In Nicaragua and Honduras, local elites remained divided and the state weak, with episodes of US intervention in both. Each of the countries as a result developed different political regimes with different patterns of state/society relations. El Salvador developed sharply polarised military-authoritarian regimes used managed elections and ample coercion to control and suppress dissent with the full cooperation of economic elites. In Nicaragua and Honduras, traditional dictatorships developed, based on patronage and clientelism, with a limited use of coercion and ample corruption. In Nicaragua the

state was dominated by the US backed Somoza clan, while in Honduras it was led by military personnel, again supported by the US, but with individual rather than institutional rule. In each state civil society was limited to bourgeois elites, with occasional reform gestures made to trade unions and peasant groups.

This situation changed substantially in the 1970s and 1980s. In Nicaragua in 1979 the popular, socialist Sandinista government swept away the Somoza clan in power since 1932. This led to a long period of war against the US supported and funded *contras*, which finally resulted in the Sandinistas losing power in the 1990 elections to a US-supported conservative coalition. In El Salvador the existing military-bureaucratic regime was replaced in 1979 with a non-democratic, civilian regime with heavy support, both military and otherwise, from the United States, in order to pursue the war against the revolutionary forces of the FMLN. Finally, in Honduras the dictatorial regime in power from 1932 was replaced in a managed transition to civilian, party rule in 1982. Honduras, however, was also used as a base for US counter-revolutionary campaigns in El Salvador and Nicaragua thus, the military remained a powerful institution in Honduran politics until the 1990s.

The path to peace was finally sealed in 1987 with the Esquipulas II agreement,³² The wars had devastating impacts on Central America with 300,000 killed, 2 million refugees and an already weak social and economic infrastructure destroyed. In response, the international community launched a large and complex peace-building strategy in Central America, with democratisation processes at its centre.³³ Despite massive international investment, what resulted, however, were ‘low intensity democracies’, which go little beyond electoralism.³⁴ In all three countries elite domination continues of much of the economic and political infrastructure. The public in general suffers from a ‘democratic disillusion’, due to such factionalism and

the inability of the state to solve problems of inequality, poverty and injustice.³⁵ Although El Salvador and Nicaragua have strong civil society organisations, emerging from the disbanded revolutionary movements, these were frozen out of policy making by the right wing governments in both states and in the case of Nicaragua, many continue to be excluded by the current government of Daniel Ortega.

Arising partially from this situation are high levels of crime and violence,, further compromising state capacity in each of the three countries. Jenny Pearce has argued that this context of criminality is closely linked to the development of the state in the region, notably its subservient relationship to elite interests. She suggests that we should be aware of the ways in which states *enable* violence whether this is through direct involvement in criminal networks, incapacity, complicity, omission and economic policies that further exacerbate inequalities. Her argument is based on the contention that a historic ‘perverse state formation’ took place in Latin America, dedicated to the preservation of elite rule, and through which ‘categories of people are “sacrificed”’ to become non citizens, notably those who are victims of violence from both state and non-state actors. This arrangement of power has not changed significantly with democratization.³⁶ Despite rising citizen preoccupation with security in the region, state response has been weak. Notably, increased criminality provides economic opportunities, both legal and illegal. Key political actors in the region have economic interests in this fast growing market for the provision of private security and the provision of arms, but also some of the more illicit acts such as money laundering and drugs.³⁷

This is amply illustrated in the case of Central America. The northern triangle of the isthmus has amongst the highest homicide rates in the world. In 2008 El

Salvador (52 people murdered out of 100,000) and Honduras (58/100,000) far surpassed the Latin American average (25/100,000 in 2006), while Nicaragua remained well below it (13/100,000 in 2008) (PNUD, 2010: 68-69).³⁸ Many of these murders, as with much crime in the region, are drug related, due to Central America becoming a crucial transport route for drugs from the (Andean) producing to the (North American and European) consuming countries. Large, criminal and competing transnational gangs have developed to manage this lucrative trade, with the financial sector at a national and regional level becoming involved to facilitate money laundering, and with local youth gangs becoming involved at a micro-level in terms of distribution and other tasks. .

This huge growth in criminality in the region has had a debilitating effect on Central American states on a number of levels. As crime has increased so has citizen insecurity, yet the police and justice system are incapable of responding effectively to the challenge, and indeed heavy handed policies employed throughout the region to target youth gangs have merely exacerbated the problem by allowing other types of crime to flourish.³⁹ Corruption has become widespread, both on a petty, daily basis but also at the highest level of state, with state/criminal relations becoming increasingly institutionalised allowing ‘money laundering, control of local state apparatus, buying of police and judicial authorities and political parties or candidates in need of funding’.⁴⁰ This can reach such levels that not only does criminality subvert the state, it can even replace it, developing, in some areas, into ‘parallel states with their own economic, social, and political regulatory systems’.⁴¹ Hence the very weakness of the state, exacerbated by globalisation, has allowed such criminal activity to grow, while simultaneously being weakened further by it.

In sum, building on our framework above, the state in each of the three countries has not experienced a transformation near enough sufficient to deliver ‘better, more secure lives’ to its citizens.⁴² Nor, has a transformation taken place in the power balance in civil society with elites remaining in control of key state institutions and the state favouring an elitist, as against a popularly based, ‘civil society’. Meanwhile, globalization, in the form of neoliberal restructuring has further favoured those elites. They have benefitted from the privatization of public assets and free trade agreements, while poverty and inequality remain static or have deepened, adversely affecting lower and some middle sectors. The pervasiveness of criminality has subverted the state at a national level and even replacing it in some local areas. Democratisation therefore at the very least has advanced little beyond electoral formalism and has brought few substantive benefits to the ‘have less’, thus retarding that possibility even further. What, if anything has changed with the arrival of left or left of centre governments to power in each of these three countries?

El Salvador’s turn to the left: challenges to re-democratisation?

Democratization in El Salvador coincided with an aggressive neoliberalism developed by the right wing party, ARENA, that held power from 1989-2009. Throughout ARENA’s twenty year tenure, state institutions were widely perceived to serve the interests of a minority and closely linked to party objectives.⁴³ Likewise, civil society was restricted to a few organisations whose ideology was acceptable to the interests of capital, such as Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES) and the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP). Other civil society organisations with arguably more progressive agendas, many of which had grown out of the FMLN guerrilla movement, were firmly excluded and formed an

unofficial opposition often in conjunction, though not always in agreement, with the FMLN. This not only led to charges of a weak state, political exclusion and polarisation, but also of electoral authoritarianism since the state was widely perceived to protect minority interests rather than to provide public services.⁴⁴

The swearing-in of Mauricio Funes leading an FMLN government on June 1, 2009 challenged this hegemony and provided a real 'test' to both the procedures and substance of democracy in El Salvador.⁴⁵ In his inauguration speech, Funes promised a government of national unity and has made a pragmatic effort to reach across historic party lines.⁴⁶ A Social and Economic Council was set up to guide state policy, led by a chief government advisor, Alex Segovia Cacerés, with broad NGO and private sector participation. The Funes government has included important elite families as backers and/or state appointees, a move that has heralded criticism from the ranks of the FMLN.⁴⁷ The aim of this strategy was to include more 'progressive' elements of the traditional Salvadoran oligarchy in a pluralistic, modernising government thus increasing its room for policy manoeuvre while not entirely alienating local elites and their international allies.⁴⁸ Hence, civil society, which previously was associated with NGOs related to ARENA and business interests, has now become more pluralistic with representation from those NGOs traditionally associated with the FMLN and 'progressive' elements of the traditional oligarchy.

This has led to a cautious shift in the power balance within civil society. Although civil society groups previously shut out from policy making now feel some opening, new structures such as the Social and Economic Council have had little direct policy impact.⁴⁹ These strategies have also opened up breaches within the FMLN movement, with the Funes government seen as hesitant, and the links to bourgeois elites viewed with suspicion. Polarisation also reinforces previous patterns

endemic in state structures, namely the state appointments dictated by party loyalty, something which is equally prevalent in civil society.

This partisan polarisation of the Salvadoran state points to the historic blurring of boundaries between civil society, political parties and state institutions. Moreover, it points to the highly exclusionary nature of these bodies. Several leaders from NGOs and academics historically associated with the FMLN took up posts in the new government, although the massive sacking of personnel that usually follows a change in government did not occur. Many state institutions remain dominated by functionaries appointed by the previous ARENA administration, due to a belated introduction of a labour stability law for government functionaries one month before Funes was sworn in, an act that was widely seen as an attempt for ARENA to ensure its continued control of the state apparatus.⁵⁰ On taking up office, the Funes government found that several state institutions had spent large parts of their budgets before the change of government, a prevalence of ‘ghost’ projects that did not exist yet cost the national purse millions of dollars and ‘ghost’ staff who failed to show up to work, but received payment.⁵¹ This is indicative of high levels of corruption and more pertinent to our analysis, of political manoeuvring that puts minority interests before effective governance. Squabbles within government departments between old functionaries and new appointees hinder reform.

The effects on the former incumbents have been both of retrenchment and internal division. Taking advantage of increased levels of criminal violence, historic right wing groups such as ARENA, ANEP and the Chamber of Commerce charge Funes government of ‘ungovernability’ and ‘lawlessness’.⁵² Thinly veiled warnings from key ARENA figures such as former President Alfredo Cristiani indicate they would do whatever it took to protect their ‘system of freedoms’.⁵³ This highlights

threats to Funes' limited space in which to manoeuvre and also points to the determination of the right to protect their 'system of freedoms' over democratic values (a theme that is discussed in more detail in the Honduras case). Nonetheless, the position of the right has weakened following the electoral defeat. In late 2009, a new party, GANA, was formed, weakening ARENA's position in the Legislative Assembly.⁵⁴

Continuity is also evident at the international level. With its dollarized economy, its membership of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the US, and its huge population of migrants, El Salvador is highly globalized. This limits reform possibilities, for fear of response from the US and local transnationalised elites. The impact of this can be seen also at a regional level in its relationship with other 'pink tide' governments. Funes has distanced himself from Venezuela, despite many local FMLN administrations having links to ALBA. He has also expressed support for the Porfirio Lobo administration in Honduras even though many Latin American countries, including Brazil have refused to recognise his legitimacy.

These factors provide positive and negative indications for democratisation in El Salvador. On the positive side, increased inclusion of previously excluded civil society groups in policy making structures has opened up possibilities for progressive, inclusive measures to further democratisation processes. On the negative side, the continued patterns of polarisation along party lines of many civil society and state institutions (at national and local levels), and the predominant influence of market oriented ideology and US influence, seriously inhibit possibilities of democratising policies. In this context, the fluidity between civil society, parties and the state reinforce that these cannot be analysed as neatly autonomous due to deep political

influences and allegiances and the legacy of a state that has been built on the interests of a narrow minority.

Democracy in crisis: the coup against President Manuel Zelaya in Honduras

Honduras is perhaps the most dramatic example of de-democratisation in Latin America and the site of a violent backlash against 'pink tide' politics. In June 2009, president Manuel Zelaya Rosales was ousted from office in a coup enacted by economic and political elites. To most observers, including the members of the Organisations of American States, the EU and huge numbers of Honduran citizens, this was a straightforward case of a coup. As the news filtered out, thousands gathered to register their shock and dismay at the presidential palace in Tegucigalpa. A *de facto* government was established by Roberto Micheletti, president of the Congress. During that period, the official message was clear: a coup had not occurred, rather Zelaya's expulsion was understood a case of constitutional secession of powers with Micheletti as 'interim' president. Popular protests were brutally repressed and the *de facto* regime defied the international community to remain in power until January 2010. Scheduled elections were held in November 2009 which, while severely questioned, allowed the installation of Porfirio 'Pepe' Lobo of the Nationalist Party as President of Honduras on January, 27, 2010. In order to understand this process, it is important to trace the controversial presidency of Zelaya.

Manuel Zelaya (2005-2009) was the epitome of an oligarchic president, coming from Honduras's economic and political elite which like its neighbours is dominated by a small number of families who also have key roles in the state.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, in the latter two years of his term, Zelaya broke with history and attempted to engage with popularly based social movements and NGOs. Examples of

actions in this direction were his holding of regular popular assemblies in the presidential palace, and implementation of measures seen as hostile to business elite interests such as raising the minimum wage by almost 40 per cent in 2009.⁵⁶ The most contentious proposal, however, was to hold a referendum, at the same time as the elections in November 2009, on the installation of a Constituent Assembly to redraft the country's constitution. This was a step too far for the Honduran elite and, in their view, firmly allied Zelaya with Hugo Chávez. This was the final straw that led to Zelaya's overthrow on June 28, 2009.⁵⁷

After the coup, the Honduran state retrenched firmly to its servile position to the oligarchy, while 'civil society' became polarised into two main camps. Anti-coup groups consist of two main tendencies: those who were originally supporters of the president and those who supported the return of the constitutional order, but did not necessarily support Zelaya. The social base of these groups consists of indigenous, peasants, feminists, progressive sections of the Catholic Church, labour unions, LGBT groups etc. Those supporting the coup are business groups, the media, the church hierarchy, including the country's Cardinal Rodriguez, the two main political parties, the Human Rights Ombudsman, the Armed Forces, the police and, crucially, the main institutions of the state. Mass media campaigns and marches, heavily protected by the army and police have framed these groups under a careful rhetoric of national unity and claiming to be the true voice of 'civil society', calling themselves the 'whites', in an effort to symbolise peace and purity.⁵⁸ This stands in stark contrast with media portrayals of the anti-coup groups who were dubbed as 'mobs' and 'undesirables'. In more than a rhetorical act, these groups have rejected the label 'civil society' in favour of what they consider the more inclusive terminology of 'National popular resistance movement' (FNRP).⁵⁹

Social divisions were not a consequence of the coup but were made visible by it, both at the national and international level. These fissures are further crossed by ideological views of democracy. Pro-coup groups understand democracy as the existing institutional configuration that benefits elite interests: order is prioritised over Human Rights as the massive repression of social movements since 2009 has attested.⁶⁰ One business leader suggested that this ‘peaceful’ handover of power was in fact a ‘great test for Honduran democracy’ and not a coup at all.⁶¹ Anti-coup groups seek a more inclusive form of democracy, with a more progressive, conception of the state and a ‘new social pact’, the central aim of the FNRP.⁶² Hence, Honduran civil society is fractured between those who recognise the current Lobo administration and those who reject it, who are active in the FNRP and demand a new social pact. At the heart of this struggle is what constitutes ‘democracy’ and whose needs it serves.

Honduras also illustrates vividly the impact of globalisation in contemporary democratisation struggles. Zelaya had taken Honduras into the Venezuelan led ALBA initiative in 2008 and many identified the coup as a ‘laboratory’ strategy to defeat the advance of that initiative with its close alliance with social movements in the region and its rejection of neoliberal conceptions of international cooperation, such as free trade agreements. Conservative elements within the US establishment, as well as sections of the Miami Cuban and Venezuelan right were said to be advising the coup plotters. The close involvement of the United States in brokering agreements on the coup underlined Honduras’ political and economic dependence on that state. The eventual failure of Zelaya to return permanently to Honduras and the continuance in power of the Lobo administration, despite questions around its democratic and hence international legitimacy, reinforce this reading’s plausibility.⁶³

In Honduras we find both state and civil society as terrains of struggle between two contending forces, with differing social bases and holding distinct views of what constitutes democracy and democratisation, divisions equally reflected at the international level, most notably in the Americas. Whether this conflict will eventually result in further democratisation or de-democratisation will depend on the outcome of the struggle between the contending forces within Honduras and the impact of the international context on that struggle.

Nicaragua: Civil Society or ‘Sociedad sí vil’? ⁶⁴

Daniel Ortega’s return to power in January 2007, for the first time since the FSLN’s (Sandinista) defeat in elections in 1990, ended 16 years of conservative rule in Nicaragua. While the Ortega government claims that it is aiming to restore the social advances of the Sandinista revolution (1979-1990) dismantled since its defeat, Ortega’s re-election as president has instead seen Nicaragua experience a deepening polarisation between the government and the social forces supporting it on the one hand, and on the other, many prominent NGOs, much of them historically linked to *Sandinismo*, the media, particularly the print media, and opposition parties. This polarisation is cemented around the figure of Daniel Ortega as president and his wife, Rosario Murillo.

This polarisation is also philosophically and ideologically based on different conceptions of democracy, with the nature and role of the state, that of civil society and their inter-relation central to these differences. The government insists that state power must be restored after the damage inflicted on it by neoliberalism, and central to this is the restoration of popular power and the re-balancing of state/civil society relations. The Ortega led government seeks to achieve the ‘restoration of popular

power', by two principal means – popular participation and social programmes aimed at the poorest sectors of society. The main vehicle for the FSLN government to establish popular participation is through the Citizen Power Council's (CPCs), also known as Citizen Power Cabinets. CPCs are neighbourhood based committees with the officially stated objective of improving local access to services. Civil society in this conception, therefore, is about people engaging directly with the state. The second element in the restoration of popular power, social programmes, are directly related to the first, in that CPCs also administer the flagship government projects, Zero Hunger – whereby local women receive farming animals and seeds to allow them to farm on a small scale – and Zero Profit, where local people can get access to microloans to start small enterprises. CPCs along with the local community identify the people who would most benefit from these government schemes, acting in effect as the liaison mechanism between the neighbourhood and the state.

These actions are framed within a wider geopolitical strategy, whereby the FSLN government seeks to achieve greater room for manoeuvre for such policy experimentation through the establishment of alliances with new international actors, while attempting to refrain from overly alienating other key actors with considerable power over Nicaragua. Nicaragua has joined the Venezuelan led Petrocaribe and ALBA initiatives, allowing it to avail of cheap oil at low credit rates, as well as accessing considerable funding for development projects. Equally, Nicaragua has formed a close relationship with Russia, leading to a number of preferential deals. Nonetheless, it has maintained scrupulously circumspect relations with the IMF, ensuring prompt payment of debt, a key issue for this heavily indebted nation, although the Ortega government has managed to alienate key donors due to its disputes with NGOs.

The CPC, however, have been met with scepticism, if not outright, hostility by traditional ‘civil society’, mostly NGOs which have been historically aligned with the FSLN. After the fall of the Sandinista revolution, the NGO sector expanded enormously in Nicaragua, supported by international cooperation funds aimed at strengthening ‘civil society’. The arrival of an FSLN government caused splits within the NGO community, creating an insider and outsider status in their relations with the state. Ortega and the First Lady, Rosario Murillo have attacked NGOs, with the latter calling them ‘*sociedad sí vil*’ – ‘vile society’ - a play on the Spanish for civil society – *sociedad civil*. Links between NGOs and United States funders associated with political meddling in Latin American politics (i.e. USAid and the National Endowment of Democracy [NED]) – not least in Nicaragua – have been questioned. Furthermore, government officials question NGO claims to representativeness, due to their unelected status, unlike government.⁶⁵

While these critiques may be valid with regard to NGOs more generally, they must be considered within the conflictual politics of Nicaragua. In 2008 the government accused a number of national and international NGOs, including Oxfam GB, of money laundering. Feminist organisations in particular were targeted. Many believe that this is linked to their opposition to the criminalisation of therapeutic abortion and to their support for Ortega’s stepdaughter, Zoilámerica Narvaez, who accused him of sexual abuse in the late 1990s.⁶⁶ The accusations against these organisations are thought to have emerged also due to these NGOs being seen as competitors with the *Frente*, and hence the state, both for consciences and for resources.

These developments have had mixed reaction within the NGO sector, ranging from vehement opposition to the government, rejection of its behaviour but with a

reluctance to enter into conflict, and amongst some sectors active cooperation. The most notable reaction, however, has been the first, with many NGOs, supported by the media, accusing the government of totalitarianism similar to that of the Somozas, pointing to the CPCs in particular as a means to that end.⁶⁷ This is based on an evaluation of the CPCs as sectarian and exclusive in character, inhibiting existing organisational models and acting as indoctrination mechanisms. They are seen to reduce citizen autonomy of thought and action, occupy increasing numbers of social spaces and act as gatekeepers for access to social goods.

The different interpretations of CPCs are emblematic of the polarised views on the Sandinista government led by Daniel Ortega. The government argues that their policies are instruments to challenge neoliberalism and replicate historic revolutionary structures. Critics argue that the government is in fact neoliberal due to the business interests of Ortega and his continued cooperation with international financial institutions, including capital. While the government sees its policies as the beginnings of a new pact between society and the state, its most ferocious critics see it as a totalitarian project aimed at perpetuating Ortega and the FSLN in power. The government claims that polarisation is media driven and mostly Managua based but many fear that it is so acute that it has caused irreparable damage to the political process.⁶⁸ Poll evidence suggests that polarisation directly affects the Nicaraguan public's trust in both government and civil society. Thus, it is difficult to imagine in the current context how these diametrically opposed visions can be reconciled, and trust in political elites, and their civil society allies, strengthened.⁶⁹

Conclusion: the 'pink tide' in Central America: democratisation or de-democratisation?

What then do we learn regarding transition theory from these three Central American ‘pink tide’ case studies? First, we have argued that democratisation can both go forward and be subject to setbacks, and this is borne out by evidence from the case studies, Honduras being the most notable example. Case studies, however, indicate that democratisation and de-democratisation processes do not take place in a linear fashion, but rather each case shows co-existing democratising and de-democratising tendencies. Second, we emphasise the continued centrality of structural inequalities to democratisation struggles in Central America. These should be analysed within the heritage of weak states, divided elites and foreign interference, which can and does divert such struggles into polarising, personalistic politics with little democratizing potential. Here ‘civil society’ is circumstantially defined since the power arrangements of each case include and exclude different characterisations of civil society. This is key to understanding the ebbs and flows of the political process. The partisan links of civil society in El Salvador can open or close political space. In Honduras, social movements against the coup reject the label of civil society, while the government disqualifies and represses those grouped in the FNRP. The state engages only with an ‘official’ civil society of organisations linked to church and business sectors. In Nicaragua the contestation over the ‘civil society space’ is played out between the state-designated CPCs and those NGOs which are excluded by the state and reviled by the presidential couple. All three cases point not only to the dialectical nature of state/civil society relations in the face of the impact of capital and its effects of poverty and inequality, but to the subordination of the public interest to the so-called ‘freedoms’ of a narrow elite.

This brings up a third issue, related to the level and radicalness of reform and the very meaning of democracy. All three cases, with Honduras in particular, point to

the limitations on democratizing measures by the threat of interference by local and international economic actors, if essential oligarchic interests are jeopardised. In other words, market interests circumscribe the actions of the state and weigh heavily on the designation of different sectors as ‘civil society’, confirming the porousness of boundaries between state, market and civil society. These findings emphasise further the limits to the current left projects throughout Latin America within the current context of an ideologically weakened but institutionally persistent neoliberal governance.

Finally, the paper highlights the usefulness of studying Central America in this respect, since few areas in Latin America have been quite so exposed to the combination of extreme oligarchic power and outside interference. This has heightened ideological and economic polarisation within these countries, with a determining effect on their political processes. As this paper shows, in the context of the ‘pink tide’ this can provide valuable data on how these processes can be affected negatively by personalised politics and elite interests, the latter further strengthened by neoliberalism and globalisation.

These findings therefore strengthen our position on transition theory as set out in the introductory sections. As we stated, two main critiques have been levelled at that theory; that it is inherently teleological- and ‘eurocentric’ - in its assumptions, and that its concentration on elites and institutions lead to difficulties in explaining outcomes in democratisation processes. In response to these critiques and following Grugel, we emphasise the need to pay attention to civil society/state interaction on the national level, and within the wider context of globalisation.⁷⁰ Key to this more nuanced understanding is our contention that most societies have been subject to both democratizing and de-democratizing tendencies within a long term open-ended

historical struggle – in other words that democratisation is not a uni-linear process, much less one which will terminate in ‘democracy’ as it is assumed to exist in the ‘West’. This demands an analysis of this struggle within the wider limits of neoliberal governance, questioning the conventional liberal separation between state, civil society and market. Finally, we stated that while civil society is a central concept to help understand democratisation processes it cannot be viewed as a fixed entity but one shaped by the contending social forces of a particular historical conjuncture, a struggle in which the state has a crucial determining role.

It is not our intention to argue that democratisation theory is of no analytical benefit. Indeed we argue that it is crucial for accurate analysis of political developments in Latin America and beyond, but the paper underlines the need for a radical re-evaluation of its central tenets. In particular there is a need to depart from transition theory and all its teleological implications. We agree with Whitehead (2002) that a wide-angled historical and analytical lens is required, rather than the usual focus in transition theory on a narrow time scale and sets of actors, but depart from the liberal perspective underlying his thesis. We argue instead - moving closer to a neo-Gramscian approach - that democratisation theory should centre analysis on empirical phenomena arising from class based, open-ended and simultaneous struggle within the interlinked terrains of civil society, state and market. With such a renewed perspective difficulties such as conceptual stretching and teleological assumptions can be avoided, allowing democratisation theory to remain an essential tool for future political analysis within the current uncertain global context.

Bibliography

Amnesty International, 2009. *Honduras: Human Rights crisis threatens as repression increases*. Available from: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR37/004/2009/en>. (Accessed: 27 August 2009).

Barrett, Patrick, Daniel Chavez, and César Rodríguez-Garavito, (Eds), *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn* London: Pluto, 2008.

Boron, Atilio A.. 'Promises and challenges: The Latin American Left at the start of the twenty-first century'. In *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn*, eds. Barrett, Patrick, Daniel Chavez, and César Rodríguez-Garavito, 232-255, London: Pluto, 2008.

Branford, Sue. 'Brazil: has the dream ended? In *Reclaiming Latin America: Experiments in Radical Social Democracy* eds. Lievesley, Geraldine and Steve Ludlam, 153-170, Zed Books: London and New York, 2009.

Carothers, Thomas and William Barndt. 'Civil Society' in *Foreign Policy* 117 (1999-2000): 18-29.

Castañeda, Jorge and Marco A. Morales, eds. *Leftovers: Tales of the two Latin American lefts*. New York and London: Routledge, 2008.

Cerdas-Cruz, Rodolfo. *El desencanto democrático: Crisis de partidos y transición democrática en Centro América y Panamá*. San José, Costa Rica: Red Editorial Iberoamericana Centroamérica, 1993.

Close, David. 'Nicaragua: The return of Daniel Ortega'. In *Reclaiming Latin America: Experiments in Radical Social Democracy* eds. Lievesley, Geraldine and Steve Ludlam, 109-123, Zed Books: London and New York, 2009.

Cox, Robert W. 'Civil Society at the turn of the millennium: prospects for an alternative world order'. In *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999):3-28.

Dangl, Benjamin. *Dancing with dynamite: social movements and states in Latin America*. Oakland, Edinburgh, Baltimore: AK Press, 2010.

Diamond, Larry. *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation* Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Diamond, Larry, Jonathan Hartlyn, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, 2nd Edition, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999.

Díaz, Nidia. 'El FMLN en 15 años de posguerra en El Salvador'. In Stolowicz, Beatriz, ed. *Gobiernos de izquierda en América Latina: un balance político*, 227-253. Aurora: Bogota, 2008.

Fraser, Nancy. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in Calhoun, Craig, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 109-143, Cambridge, Mass and London: MIT Press, 1993.

Freedman, Elaine 'GANA's Birth Is ARENA's Loss' *Revista Envío* Number 341 | December 2009 <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/4115> (accessed 31 January 2011)

Grugel, Jean. *Democratisation: A Critical Introduction* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002.

Howell, Jude and Jenny Pearce. *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2001.

Hume, Mo. *The Politics of Violence: Gender Conflict and Community in El Salvador*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell 2009.

Kampwirth, Karen. 'Abortion, Antifeminism, and the Return of Daniel Ortega: In Nicaragua, Leftist Politics?' *Latin American Perspectives* 168 (2008): 122-136.

Keane, John. *Violence and Democracy* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Kurtenbach, Sabine. 'Why Is Liberal Peace-building So Difficult? Some Lessons from Central America', GIGA Working Paper, Hamburg. GIGA Hamburg, 2007. <http://www.giga->

hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp59_kurtenbach.pdf.

(Accessed 7, October, 2010)

Lievesley, Geraldine and Steve Ludlam, eds. *Reclaiming Latin America: Experiments in Radical Social Democracy* Zed Books: London and New York, 2009.

Linz, Juan J. and Arturo Valenzuela, eds. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Mainwaring, Scott P., Guillermo O'Donnell and Juan S. Valenzuela, eds. *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American democracies in comparative perspective*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.

Mahoney, James. *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America* Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Mayden, Amanda 'Who's behind the lawlessness?' *Revista Envío*

Meiksins Wood, Ellen. 'The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society'. In, *Socialist Register 1990*. www.socialistregister.com, 1990. (Accessed: 21 April, 2010)

Moreno, Ismael (SJ). 'Hay brújula, hay rumbo en el régimen de Pepe Lobo?'. In, *Envío Honduras* 24, (2010): 3-10. *Envío*.: www.eric-sj.org. (Accessed 12 July 2010)

Murillo, Rosario. 'El Imperio y sus sociedades secretas (Retrato de la Pelelocracia)'.
In *El 19*, Year 1 (4) (11-17 September 2008):16.
<http://www.presidencia.gob.ni/documentos/periodico/edicion4.pdf>. (Accessed 7
October 2010)

Nef, Jorge and Berndt Reiter. *The Democratic Challenge: Rethinking Democracy and Democratisation*. Houndsmills, Hants and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

O'Donnell, Guillermo, Phillippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Prospects for Democracy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Panizza, Francisco. *Contemporary Latin America : Development and Democracy beyond the Washington Consensus: The Rise of the Left* London: Zed, 2009.

Pearce, Jenny. 'From Civil War to "Civil Society": Has the End of the Cold War Brought Peace to Central America?' *International Affairs*, 3 (1998): 587-615.

Pearce, Jenny. 'DEBATE: Collective Action of Public Participation? Contemporary or Contradictory Democratisation Strategies in Latin America?', *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 4 (2004): 483-504.

Pearce, Jenny 'Perverse state formation and securitized democracy in Latin America' *Democratization* 17 (2), (2010): 286 – 306

Philip, George and Francisco Panizza. *The New Left in Latin America*. Cambridge: Polity Press (forthcoming), 2011.

PNUD (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo) *Informe sobre desarrollo humano para América Central, 2009-2010: Abrir espacios para la seguridad ciudadana y el desarrollo humano*. 2010. PNUD: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/regionalreports/latinamericathecaribbean/name.19660,en.html>. (accessed 9 September 2010)

Ramirez Gallegos, Francisco. 'Mucho más que dos izquierdas'. *Nueva Sociedad*. 205 (2006), Nueva Sociedad: www.nuso.org. (Accessed: 4 September, 2009)

Ruhl, J. Mark. 'Honduras Unravels'. *Journal of Democracy* 2 (2010): 93-107.

Seligson, Mitchell A. and John A. Booth. 'Crime, Hard Times and Discontent'. *Journal of Democracy* 2 (2010): 123-135.

Slater, David. 'Other Domains of Democratic Theory'. *Environment & Planning D: Society and Space*, 3 (2002): 255-276.

Stolowicz, Beatriz, ed. *Gobiernos de izquierda en América Latina: un balance político*. Aurora: Bogota, 2008.

Tercera, La. 'Las 22 Familias más poderosas de Honduras hicieron sentir su peso tras el golpe'. *La Tercera*, Sunday 12 July, 2009:13.

Tribuna, La. 'Mayoría de nicaraguenses decepcionados con Ortega'. *La Tribuna* Thursday, 15 July, 2010. *La Tribuna*: www.latribuna.hn.

Tilly, Charles. *Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Torres Calderón, Manuel. 'El poder de los señores mediáticos en Honduras' in Victor Meza et al., *Honduras: Poderes Fácticos y sistema político* Tegucigalpa: CEDOH, 2009.

Torres-Rivas, Edelberto. *La piel de Centroamérica. Una mirada epidérmica de setenta y cinco años de su historia*. San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 2007.

Towers, Marcia. 'The Socioeconomic Implications of Dollarization in El Salvador'. *Latin American Politics & Society*. 3 (2007): 29–54.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). *Opening Spaces to Citizen Security and Human Development: Human Development Report for Central America, 2009-2010: Main findings and recommendations*. UNDP: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/regionalreports/latinamericathecaribbean/irdhc-2009-2010-summary.pdf> (Accessed 7, October, 2010).

Whitehead, Laurence. *Democratisation: Theory and Experience* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Wood, Elisabeth 'Challenges to Political Democracy in El Salvador' Paper prepared for the 2001 conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C., September 5-8, 2001

¹ Earlier versions of this article were presented to the 'Sustainable Global Development Conference' held at the University of Limerick, Ireland on 16-17 October, 2009 and to a workshop organised by the authors at the ECPR Joint Sessions, University of Muenster, Germany, March 23-26, 2010. Thanks to all those who provided comments at these events. Special thanks to Jenny Pearce who provided exhaustive comments and advice on numerous previous drafts of this article.

² Castañeda and Morales . *Leftovers: Tales of the two Latin American lefts*; Barret, Chavez and Rodríguez-Garavito, *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn*; Solowicz, *Gobiernos de izquierda en América Latina: un balance político*; Lievesley, G and Ludlam, S, *Reclaiming Latin America: Experiments in Radical Social Democracy*; Philip and Panizza, *The New Left in Latin America* to name a few of the more notable contributions.

³ O'Donnell et al., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Prospects for Democracy.*; Mainwaring et al., *Democratic Consolidation: The New South American democracies in comparative perspective*; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation.*; Diamond et al., *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation* are a few of the better known examples.

⁴ Close 'The return of Daniel Ortega' and Díaz 'El FMLN en 15 años de posguerra' on pre-Funes El Salvador are some exceptions.

⁵ This paper is based on field work carried out by the authors July/August 2009, January 2010 and July 2010. It was funded through the DCU led *Active Citizenship in Central America 2007-2010* project financed by Irish Aid. The requirements of the project circumscribed the choice of case studies.

⁶ Grugel, *Democratisation*; especially 58-61.

⁷ Whitehead *Democratisation: Theory and Experience*; Tilly, *Democracy*; Nef and Reiter, *The Democratic Challenge*.

⁸ Nef and Reiter, *The Democratic Challenge*, 3.

⁹ *ibid.*: 4.

¹⁰ *The New Latin American Left*, 29.

¹¹ *Democratisation*, 67.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ See Diamond, *Developing Democracy*.

¹⁴ For example, Howell and Pearce *Civil Society and Development*.

¹⁵ See Keane *Violence and Democracy*.

¹⁶ Carothers and Barndt. 'Civil Society'.

¹⁷ Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere'.

¹⁸ Meiksins Wood, 'The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society'

¹⁹ *ibid.* 73.

²⁰ Pearce, 'Collective Action of Public Participation?'

²¹ 'Civil Society at the turn of the millennium', 5.

²² Ramirez Gallegos, 'Mucho más que dos izquierdas'.

²³ Barrett et al., *The New Latin American Left*, 32).

²⁴ *ibid.*:30.

²⁵ *ibid.*:34.

²⁶ *ibid.*:35.

²⁷ For example, Branford, 'Brazil: has the dream ended?' on Brazil.

²⁸ Boron, 'Promises and challenges', 247

²⁹ Panizza, *Contemporary Latin America*, :226

³⁰ Dangl, *Dancing with dynamite*.

³¹ Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism*.

³² The war in El Salvador formally ended with the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords in January 1992, while the end of the Nicaraguan civil war came with the defeat of the FSLN in the 1990 presidential elections.

³³ Kurtenbach 'Why Is Liberal Peace-building So Difficult?'

³⁴ Torres Rivas, *La piel de Centroamérica*.

³⁵ Cerdas-Cruz, *El desencanto democrático*.

³⁶ Pearce, 'Perverse state formation and securitized democracy in Latin America' p289

³⁷ Throughout Latin America, ex-military have been central to the private security industry, which Argueta argues allows them to maintain 'informal mechanisms of control'; see: Argeta 'Private Security in Guatemala: The Pathway to Its Proliferation' p. 6.

Evidence from Guatemala and Panama suggests high level involvement of state actors in drug gangs. See Pearce, 'Perverse state formation'. Research into the 2007 murder of three Salvadoran members of the Central American Parliament indicated their links to drugs gangs. See El Faro 'CICIG determinó que asesinato de diputados fue por drogas' available at: <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201011/noticias/2911/> (Last accessed 8 February 2011).

³⁸ These lower figures for homicide in Nicaragua, equally reflected in lower levels of gang membership are said to be due to that countries more traditional social and economic structure, higher levels of social organisation, and a police force with close community ties, the last two results of the Nicaraguan revolution (PNUD, *Informe sobre desarrollo humano para América Central, 2009-2010*, 113, Box 4.4).

³⁹ Hume, *The Politics of Violence*.

⁴⁰ UNDP, *Opening Spaces to Citizen Security*, 142)

⁴¹ *ibid*: 144, quoting Gustavo Duncan.

⁴² Grugel, *Democratisation*, 67.

⁴³ See, Wolf, 'Subverting Democracy : Elite Rule and the Limits to Political Participation in Post-War El Salvador'. Also, research carried out on women's perceptions of state services to assist and prevent violence against women showed that women perceived that access to state institutions for basic services was reliant on strong party connections or economic power. See, Hume, *Yo sí tengo una vida diferente*.

⁴⁴ *ibid*: 433

⁴⁵ Wood, 'Challenges to Political Democracy in El Salvador'

⁴⁶ Since the Chapultepec peace accords in 1992, agreed between the then Salvadoran government and the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Group) guerrilla group, El Salvador has been ruled by the right wing ARENA (National Republican Alliance) party.

⁴⁷ Examples are the Cacéres and the Salumé families, which backed the Funes presidential bid through an informal business grouping *Amigos de Mauricio* (Friends of Mauricio – Funes' first name). Some members went on to serve in key state posts, such as the son of his main campaign contributor, Nicolás Salumé, being appointed as president of the Executive Hydroelectric Commission of the Lempa River (*Comisión Ejecutiva Hidroeléctrica del Río Lempa, CEL*).

⁴⁸ Author interview with government functionary and leading FMLN activist, July, 2010.

⁴⁹ Author interview with director of feminist NGO, San Salvador, July 2010.

⁵⁰ El Diraio de Hoy 'ARENA busca dar estabilidad a 30 mil empleados por contrato' http://www.elsalvador.com/mwedh/nota/nota_completa.asp?idCat=6351&idArt=3632526 (last accessed 31 January 2011).

⁵¹ See: El Faro 'Subsecretaría Transparencia halla "indicios de irregularidades" en gestión Saca' <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201007/noticias/2193/> (last accessed 31 January 2011). Author interviews with two state employees (January 2010) revealed how they were encouraged to go on a 'spending spree' before the change of administration. In one case, the interviewee claimed that the office spent US\$400 000 on stationary in an institution with severely weakened operational capacity whose priorities lie elsewhere.

⁵² Mayen 'Who's Behind the "Lawlessness"?'

⁵³ Manuel Rojas Bolanos 'Centroamérica: anomalías o realidades?' *Nueva Sociedad*, No 226 (marzo-abril 2010) available at: http://www.nuso.org/upload/articulos/3687_1.pdf (last accessed 11 August 2010). For a commentary in the Salvadoran press, see: Antonio Martínez Uribe 'Octubre 15, 1979: ¿nuestro último golpe?' *Diario CoLatino*, 15 October 2009 available at: <http://www.diariocolatino.com/es/20091015/opiniones/72517/> (last accessed, 11 August 2010).

⁵⁴ Freedman, 'GANA's Birth Is ARENA's Loss'

⁵⁵ For example Carlos Flores Facussé was president between 1998 and 2002 and has been an important supporter of the coup government. Eighty percent of the newspapers circulating in the country belong to one family, the Canahuati, while another, the Ferrari own one of the largest television groups, Televisión, with five signals, and 17 radio stations (Torres Calderón, '*El poder de los señores mediáticos en Honduras*').

⁵⁶ José Antonio Cordero *Honduras: Recent Economic Performance*

⁵⁷ Zelaya has remained in exile since then, except for a period between September, 2009 and January, 2010, when he took refuge in the Brazilian embassy in an attempt to regain power. At the time of writing (January 2011) he continues in exile in the Dominican Republic, although there are efforts on the part of 'pink tide' governments to allow him return to Honduras.

⁵⁸ In the immediate aftermath of the coup, allegations were made that business groups forced their workers to march in support of the coup government, specifically the *maquila* sector (Author interviews with NGO representatives, San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, July 2009).

⁵⁹ Popular movement comes from the Spanish *popular*, meaning of the people.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Amnesty International, 2009. *Honduras: Human Rights crisis threatens as repression increases*. Available from: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR37/004/2009/en>. (last accessed: 27 August 2009) Inter American Commission on Human Rights 'Honduras, Human Rights and the Coup D'État' (December 2009) available at: <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/HONDURAS2009ENG.pdf>. For reports on the Lobo government, see: 'IACHR concerned about Human Rights Violations in Honduras' available at: <http://www.cidh.org/Comunicados/English/2010/54-10eng.htm> (last accessed 6 September 2010). more recent updates on ongoing Human Rights abuses, see the regular reports by Honduran Human Rights organisations and see Informe sobre Derechos Humanos y Conflictividad en Centroamérica 2009-2010 available at: <http://fespad.org.sv/documentos/informe-sobre-derechos-humanos-y-conflictividad-en-centroamerica-2009-2010.pdf> (last accessed 8 September 2010).

⁶¹ Interview with Industrialist, San Pedro Sula, 22 January 2010.

⁶² Moreno, 'What the coup left us'

⁶³ For example Moreno, 'Hay brújula, hay rumbo en el régimen de Pepe Lobo?'

⁶⁴ From Murillo, 'El Imperio y sus sociedades secretas', 15, see further below for explanation of term.

⁶⁵ It is important to note that the 2008 municipal elections in Nicaragua were plagued by claims of fraud on the part of the FSLN.

⁶⁶ Kampwirth, 'Abortion, Antifeminism, and the Return of Daniel Ortega'.

⁶⁷ Author interview with NGO representative, Managua, August 2009.

⁶⁸ Author interview with media expert, Managua, August 2009.

⁶⁹ See *La Tribuna* 'Mayoría de nicaraguenses decepcionados de Ortega'.

⁷⁰ *Democratisation*.