

## ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

CRUZ, José Miguel

VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: THE IMPACT OF CRIME IN THE LEGITIMACY OF POST-WAR REGIMES

América Latina Hoy, 35, diciembre del 2003, pp. 19-59

The main purpose of this article is to show that the high levels of common violence and crime, which currently affect Latin American countries, especially post-war Central American ones, represent a threat and obstacle to democratization processes. This is so, because common violence erodes the citizens' support to the regimes emerged from the political transitions and deteriorates the legitimacy of the political system. The article is based on the results of a series of surveys conducted with more than 6.700 citizens who live in post-war Central American countries (Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua) during 1999, as the link between victimization levels, perception of public insecurity and the level of political support for the system is analyzed.

*Key words:* democratization, common violence, insecurity, legitimacy, political culture, political support.

SIEDER, Rachel

RENEGOTIATING «LAW AND ORDER»: JUDICIAL REFORM AND CITIZEN RESPONSES IN POST-WAR GUATEMALA

América Latina Hoy, 35, diciembre del 2003, pp. 61-86

This article examines reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law in Guatemala implemented since the signing of the Peace Accords in December 1996. Despite nearly \$200 millions in foreign aid to the justice sector, impunity remains the rule, the judicial

process is subverted by military and criminal networks, citizen confidence in the judicial system remains low and recourse to non-judicial measures –the «privatisation of justice»– is on the increase. It is argued that the institutionally-focused approach to rule of law reform currently predominating in donor thinking ignores the historical context within which understandings of «law», «justice» and «rights» are shaped. Institutions do matter, but only by understanding the role of law in long-run processes of State formation and the dynamic, inter-subjective nature of legal interactions can we begin to understand the specificities of socio-legal change.

*Key words:* reform, rule of law, Guatemala, judicial system, Peace Accords.

SÁNCHEZ GONZÁLEZ, Salvador

MAKING DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTIONS. THE CENTENARY CONSTITUTION PROJECT PREPARED BY PANAMA'S LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN 2003

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The article is the explanation of the recent experience of the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Panama, which prepared a proposal for the complete change of the constitutional frame of that country. The article offers a complete description of the initiative, including the name of the politicians between its promoters, as well as the staff of specialists and the members of the civil society that introduce their comments during the public consultation of the project. However, an important part of the paper explains the content of the project, contrasting it with the constitutional law of Panama, as well with other salient aspects of other initiatives of reform from other sources and in other periods.

*Key words:* constitutional reform, Panama, Constitutional Assembly, Constitutional Law.

SÁNCHEZ, Fernando

THE CHANGE IN THE DYNAMICS OF COSTA RICA'S ELECTORAL SET UP: A CASE OF DEALIGNMENT

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The results of the last two general elections (1998 and 2002) in Costa Rica, suggest that the country's electoral dynamics have exited their apparent stability and entered a process of change. The present study evaluates the main signs of this change (rising

levels of absenteeism, ticket-splitting, electoral volatility, and support for third parties), and defines it as an «electoral dealignment» process. Moreover, it argues that there is evidence to conclude that electoral dealignment in Costa Rica seems to be a result of a process of «partisan dealignment».

*Key words:* Costa Rica, elections, political parties, electoral behaviour, democracy.

DIETRICH, Wolfgang

THE MARIMBA: MUSICAL AND SECRET LANGUAGE OF THE POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN GUATEMALA

*América Latina Hoy*, 35, diciembre del 2003, pp. 147-166

The author reflects the construction of national music while the arise of the nation State in Guatemala. This development begins formally while the first decades of the nineteenth century and has not finished yet. For the myth of the nation State and those who use it for their project of domination it is crucial that national music can be distinguished externally from musics generated by other nations while it can be applied internally for the aim of national homogenisation. Since the middle of the nineteenth century the music is used in Guatemala for the dissemination of ideologies that help to construct this myth. The vernacular music of the Maya people does not follow this logic. Hence it is considered inferior or «incorrect». For the myth of the nation State only the totality of «the people» as an abstract concept can understand and appreciate the national music, but not the concrete or individual group. Assuming this the music is converted into an important tool of a repressive mechanism and deculturation.

The marimba thus is the symbol of the nation State in Guatemala. The dictatorships of the army, who were the main responsible of the genocide of the Maya people, declared the chromatic marimba symbol of the nation. After a long history of violence the marimba *desindianizada* and therefore *ladinizada* reached the status of the national instrument. While the period of violence the chromatic marimba never ceased to sound in the nightclubs and the elegant restaurants of the Capital. In the meanwhile the Mayas of the highlands hid their *K'ojomes* in caves and cañons to protect them from the army. Therefore the anarchic and rebellious diversity of the *k'ojom's* tuning continues to be the vernacular and secret language of groups and individuals who do not belong to the national reality of the chromatic marimba.

*Key words:* nation State, vernacular music, cultural violence, political resistance, Maya people.

MOLINA, José Enrique

THE LEFT AND THE DEMOCRATIC STABILITY IN LATIN AMERICA: THE IDEOLOGY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL PROCESSES IN VENEZUELA AND LATIN AMERICA

*América Latina Hoy*, 35, diciembre del 2003, pp. 169-198

One of the main areas of work in Comparative Politics and Political Theory has been the determination of the variables associated with the stability/instability of political systems in general, and democracy in particular. This paper focuses on one of these variables. One with newly acquired importance after the recent electoral successes by the left, but that nevertheless has not been in the spotlight of scholarly analysis: ideological polarization. Particularly, ideological polarization brought about by the attempt to pursue by the government a leftist political project. The main focus is on the ideological project pursued by the Venezuelan Bolivarian Government and its association with the political instability of 2002 and 2003. The paper considers this topic taken into account mainstream theoretical approaches on political stability, and the experience of previous Latin American leftist governments. The paper reaches the conclusion that in Latin America the attempt to implement a socialist program by a democratically elected government, if it is done without meaningful social and political negotiation, and with authoritarian overtones, is likely to lead to intense political instability and to the ultimate failure of the proposed social change.

*Key words:* ideology, democracy, gobernability, Venezuelan politics, Latin-American politics.

REVERÓN ESCOBAR, Zaira

DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS IN VENEZUELA, UNDER PERSPECTIVE OF MAYORS ELECTED FOR THE TERM 2000-2004

*América Latina Hoy*, 35, diciembre del 2003, pp. 199-224

This paper addresses the process of decentralization in Venezuela, under mayors' perspective, elected for the period 2000-2004. Our main goal is to identify the vision they have over such an important process that theoretically strengthens, supports, and enhances the democratic system. We contrast decentralization theory (which states that if there is not democracy at levels of government closer to the citizens-municipal government-democracy is not sustained over real bases) with what Venezuelan mayors exposed about the facts observed in the nation in this sense. Our hypothesis is that the concepts and visions that the mayors expressed must coincide with the theory sustaining decentralization in general and particularly decentralization in Venezuela, which must coincide with their praxis in their municipalities. We concluded that the positive

perspectives and visions as the negatives or pessimistic ones stated by the interviewed mayors coincided with theory supporting decentralization in different countries and with the evaluations of decentralization that have been conducted in different nations. Venezuelan decentralization process is not different from those that have been discovered in other countries in this sense. It seems to be that the decentralization policy in Venezuela enjoys the same virtues and suffers the same problems that decentralization policies in other countries.

*Key words:* decentralization, mayors, democratic system, local government, municipal autonomy.