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Introduction

Latin America is the portrait of a disorderly globalization characterized by the absence of a shared responsibility from the international community confronted with problems that are common. If the region's progress is undeniable and even though Latin America has a more visible place in international arena, it is undergoing a period of questioning the values that had given it its strength during its transition to democracy and respect for human rights.

Any debate on governance must first address the question of the values that are its foundation.

I. The questioning of democracy

Latin America has, in general, a good state of democratic health. The protection of human rights and the rule of law have made considerable progress and seem to have acquired citizenship in the region. We are far now from damages done to democracy by the army or by groups who would chose violence to transform the state.

Pluralism is part of the political landscape of the region. Left parties and the center-right have made Latin America less homogeneous and more critical towards development models assigned to major economic powers, as well as to multilateral financial institutions.

Latin America is no longer the scenario of recurrent economic crises. Growth is steady, even if it is insufficient. Trade liberalization and the potential of domestic markets attract foreign investment (105 billion dollars in 2007). However, over the past few years, we have observed with concern that Latin American societies seem to be disappointed. Despite the indisputable progress of democracy, these societies have not yet received all the benefits that go hand in hand with democratic institutions. A recent report shows a significant decrease of public support for democracy.

The benefits of globalization are not considered as equal and feed a growing debate on development, especially in light of intra-regional migrations, as well as toward the United States and Europe (Spain in particular). Actually, poverty is still present in Latin America: 43% of the population lives in poverty, 18% of which live in extreme poverty. Some countries will probably not achieve the development objective of the Millennium, set by the UN for 2015. Yet, the social programs that closely associate the beneficiaries to the action of the State, have proven their relevance and record steady progress every year.

Brazil, Mexico, and Chile, are excellent examples of the success of these programs. This is still insufficient, even though population growth has stabilized compared to the 1970s. The fight against social exclusion is not the only priority in Latin America. The fight against crime is receiving more and more attention from governments and corporations. In this context, crime in all its forms, that affects the region, and insecurity that affects the ordinary citizen cannot be attributed only to poverty. It is more about the emergence, almost without exception, of very powerful transnational criminal groups linked to drug trafficking, arm trafficking and human bondage.

Violence is no longer limited to confrontations with the police or even to clashes between groups of criminals: attacks against the civilian population have become more frequent. The views of some sectors in favor of restoring the death penalty in Mexico reflect the seriousness of the situation.

In short, what are the stakes for democracy and human rights in Latin America? Are democratic institutions, including political parties, able to channel people's expectations and to work towards the transformation of the country?

II. The drifts in the wake of general indifference



We said that today the threats to democracy no longer have their origin outside democratic institutions. The opposite occurs. It is from inside democratic institutions, through the use of its operating rules, that the foundations of democracy are undermined.

Whether one uses the pretext of the pressing need for security or one advocates an alleged primacy of economic and social rights over civil and political rights, it is democracy, as we understand it since the end of the Cold War, that is attacked. Automatic majorities in the legislative powers to support the decisions of the head of state, control over the media, some unilateralism in intra-regional relations, lay the specter of a new form of authoritarianism that nevertheless complies with the formalism of democracy.

Basically, democratic institutions, starting with the judiciary one, are still fragile and still too often prone to corruption. Institutions must be able to account for their actions to the people. The ability to access information that the state manages has recorded a positive development in Mexico in recent years.

We also see a return in force of ideologies that put forward a concept of sovereignty that we thought had expired. This makes international supervision toward human rights more difficult. International organizations have reported new clashes on the subject. However, despite a difficult context, Latin America has been able to adapt to changes of the post Cold War and was able to preserve its achievements. The region is primarily a zone of peace and of growing regional and sub-regional cooperation.

Many territorial disputes have been referred to international courts. Bilateral crises are most often settled in the regional realm, with the help of players such as Mexico and Brazil. Even if worrisome signs have reappeared on the horizon, there is no need yet to talk of an arms race in the region. However, it is clear that the region lacks the attention of the large centers of world power equal to its challenges and its potential. International cooperation is focused on low income countries and is not suitable for medium-sized economies.

This indicates a drastic lack of international responsibility to problems affecting the whole planet including the need to address migration in a full perspective that takes into account economical aspects and the respect of human rights toward migrants. There is simply no policy in support of the region. It is in everyone's interest to reinforce the prospects of sustainable development and of rule of law in a region that includes more than five hundred million people and that represents one of the most promising markets of this century.

Moreover, the shared responsibility of the many challenges facing Latin American countries requires a greater effort of the private sector in the promotion of economic and social conditions of the poorest. Perhaps we should just simply and humbly admit that democracies do not grow like mushrooms after rain. If we accept a more gradual process of change and a greater support of our partners, we can hope again.

III. Conclusions

Latin America remains the cultural reservoir of the West, Far West, to quote Alain Rouquié, but also the West at the end of the day.

It is not acceptable that the region once again be the object of economic and political envy of the major powers, especially if a form of new Cold War might return.

We want to take our place as responsible actors on the global stage. We must give another chance to sub-regional initiatives for integration, stay the course on free trade and strengthen the voice of Latin America in the global area. The dialogue between the G5 (South Africa, Brazil, China, India and Mexico) and the G8 is a good start. The Security Council reform should be subjected to negotiation that should emphasize the effectiveness of the action of the Council and not be limited to the question of its composition.

Thank you for your attention.