



Democracy Building in Latin America and the Caribbean: Can the European Union Contribute?

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Abstract

In 2009, all the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries with the exception of Cuba have democratically elected governments as well as reasonable levels of civil and political liberties. Their governments are actively engaged, with varying but usually modest degrees of success, in promoting economic development, providing social welfare and reducing poverty. Multilateral regional institutions also have a strong commitment to democracy. However, democracy is still weak in many Latin American nations. This paper examines how European Union (EU) democracy promotion activities are perceived by LAC peoples and governments; how the EU could help to improve democracy in a region that, in spite of its many problems, is already mostly democratic; and on which sectors and countries the EU should focus its efforts.

Summary of Recommendations

At the region-to-region level, the EU could work with the Organization of American States (OAS), the oldest and most consolidated multilateral Pan-American organization which is officially devoted to democracy promotion. However, at the country-to-country level, the LAC-EU Strategic Partnership could become a wider forum for discussing and implementing democracy promotion. On issues relevant mainly to the Latin American countries, it might be convenient for the EU to make use of its institutionalized dialogue with the Rio Group. Given the wide array of existing policy instruments at the disposal of the EU, the best option could be to make coordinated use of these for democracy promotion.

Since the Caribbean countries are nowadays doing quite well in democratic terms, a reasonable option would be to focus primarily on the Latin American countries. Countries with high levels of domestic political conflict would benefit from efforts to mediate in those conflicts, as well as from electoral observation as a means of guaranteeing free and fair elections. Other countries could benefit from aid to: draw up their voters' registration and identification systems; strengthen their legislative branches and electoral bodies; pass and enforce transparency legislation; implement career civil

services through the recruitment and training of qualified personnel; sustain human rights and accountability among agencies; train their police forces, and so on.

Guaranteeing freedom of the press and protecting human rights can be achieved through international monitoring and, in domestic contexts, by granting technical and financial support to civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) devoted to these issues. The EU could also support NGOs devoted to transparency, fighting corruption, accountability, gender issues, and so on. Given the EU's important role as a collaborator with and a donor to many LAC countries, most of the aid or loans granted by the EU or its member states should embed a 'democratic component'. It is important that the EU and its member states do not apply double standards, but instead recognize in practice the right of people to choose their own ways to democracy and development. Curtailing aid for democracy promotion on the basis of economic self-interest on the part of the donors will assuredly backfire.

1. Democracy and Current Political Trends in the Latin American and Caribbean Countries

There are 20 independent States¹ in Latin America: former Spanish, Portuguese or French possessions that attained independence in the 19th century. The (non-Latin) Caribbean countries are 13 States that were British or Dutch possessions until the second part of the 20th century. When Latin American and Caribbean countries are referred to together, this paper uses the acronym LAC. (See Annex 1 for a list of LAC countries; note that the differentiation between Latin American and Caribbean countries is culturally and linguistically based, since geographically they intermix.)

Most Caribbean states have adopted European-style, parliamentary systems of government, often with the British Crown as Head of State.² While all of them are currently fully democratic, some have had non-democratic experiences in the past.³

All the Latin American nations except Cuba have presidential systems of government. The president and Congress are separately and popularly elected for their respective fixed terms. The judiciary is usually appointed in ways devised to guarantee its independence from both the executive and the legislative branch. The president cannot dismiss Congress under any circumstances,⁴ and Congress can only remove the president through an exceptional impeachment process.⁵ Cuba is the only remaining country with no free elections, and subject to a single-party Communist system of government.

¹ Puerto Rico is a Latin American entity but is not considered in this paper because it is not independent but a 'Free Associate State' of the USA.

² The only non-parliamentary Caribbean States are Suriname (which has a presidential system) and Guyana (with a semi-presidential system); these two and Dominica do not retain the British Crown as Head of State.

³ Jamaica suffered from acute political strife in the 1970's. Dominica was under a dictatorship for two years after its independence in 1978. Suriname had a military regime between 1980 and 1987 and again from 1990 to 1991. Grenada was invaded in 1983 by the USA, to depose a pro-Cuban military junta. Guyana held its first truly democratic elections in 1992, 16 years after its independence.

⁴ Although President Chávez of Venezuela did so at the beginning of his term in 1999, and President Correa of Ecuador managed to get rid of a hostile Congress in 2007.

⁵ This happened to presidents Color de Mello of Brazil in 1992, Pérez of Venezuela in 1993 and Bucaram of Ecuador in 1997.

Both as a form of government and a way of living, democracy is not yet fully consolidated in Latin America. The executive office is overwhelmingly powerful compared to the legislative and judicial branches of government, which makes provisions allowing – or not – for presidential re-election controversial. In some cases, acute social and/or political conflicts pose a risk to the normal workings of democracy. In several others, civil and political liberties are to some extent curtailed. In virtually all, popular support for democracy is lower than in other regions of the world.⁶

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Throughout the largest part of its history, political instability and authoritarianism have been integral to Latin America. The region experienced a democratic wave during the 1980s and the 1990s. Transitions to democracy were mainly ‘from within’, processes started by popular reaction against military dictatorships and other forms of authoritarian regimes.

The new Latin American democracies have in many cases been unable to substantially enhance economic development and/or provide social justice for their people. The 1980s were known as ‘the lost decade’ for development and the 1990s were not much better. Moreover, corruption, ineffectiveness and a lack of accountability pervaded many governments. Strikes organized by trade unions and street movements against unpopular economic policies were common. Consequently, some countries became politically unstable, although they were able to retain their democratic institutions.

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Box 1. Classification of Latin American Governments by Ideological Orientation, at the beginning of 2009⁷

Communism: Cuba, the only government in the region to follow strict Marxist-Leninist principles, is staunchly critical of US policies in the region

Radical socialism: Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua; follow Chávez’s socialism of the 21st century and usually challenge US policy

Moderate left to centrist: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Haiti, Paraguay, Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Most

follow social democratic principles, distancing themselves occasionally from the USA but trying to maintain a good relationship

Conservative or right of centre: Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico and Honduras; seek some social reform from a liberal or conservative perspective and are allies of the USA, with the recent exception of Honduras.

⁶ In a 2001 poll of 18 Latin American countries, on average, only 25% of respondents ‘trusted democracy’ and 48% ‘supported democracy’. In the same year, similar polls achieved higher averages in East Asia, India, Africa and the EU (Emmerich, 2004: 74).

⁷ In the first months of 2009, El Salvador elected a leftist president and Panama a right-of-center one, thus modifying this classification.

The beginning of the 21st century was a turning point in economic and political terms. Economic conditions improved in all the LAC countries and there were slight reductions in poverty and unemployment, which can easily be reversed by the current international economic crisis. At the same time, left wing political parties and movements began to win presidential elections in many countries, in what has been labelled a ‘pink wave’. Several of these new left-leaning governments adhere to moderate, social democratic principles, while some others follow the radical ‘socialism of the 21st century’ of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.⁸ In this way, present-day Latin American governments can be classified in four blocks by their ideological orientation: Communism, radical socialism, moderate left to centrism and conservative or right of centre (see Box 1).

2. Regional Organizations in the Americas

There is an opposition between the Pan-American and Latin-American approaches to regional integration: the former includes the USA and excludes Cuba, while the latter includes Cuba and excludes the USA. More recently, there has been a trend to include some Caribbean countries in Latin American integration and cooperation schemes, and vice versa, which has led to the inception of a new LAC organization. Consequently, regional institutions in the Americas can be classified as: (a) Pan-American; (b) mainly Latin American; (c) mainly Caribbean; and (d) a planned LAC organization.

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Pan-American institutions

The Organization of American States (OAS) was founded in 1948 and is the prototypical Pan-American institution. All 35 independent countries of the Americas have ratified the OAS Charter and belong to the Organization. Cuba remains formally a member, but its government has been excluded from participation since 1962. In Latin America, the radical left governments and part of public opinion tends to regard the OAS as too influenced by the USA.

Democracy is a necessary precondition for participation in the OAS and a foundation for all of its activities. The OAS is the principal multilateral forum for strengthening democracy, promoting human rights and confronting shared problems such as poverty, terrorism, illegal drugs and corruption (OAS, 2008). The Protocol of Washington, ratified in 1997, gives the OAS the right to suspend a member state if its democratically elected government is overthrown by force. The 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter states that: ‘The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it.’

The OAS Secretariat for Political Affairs: (a) promotes democracy by observing elections, advancing sound practices in political financing and supporting political party reform and legislative modernization; (b) promotes good governance by helping to in-

⁸ President Hugo Chávez used this expression for the first time in 2005, without defining it precisely. His view and his governmental practice seem to be that of a mixed economy with a strong state-owned sector alongside a closely regulated free-enterprise sector; additionally, Chávez urges LAC countries to unite against ‘imperialism’, which he equates with US dominance in the region.

still democratic values in societies, promoting decentralization and state modernization, and improving transparency and civil society participation; and (c) prevents crises by identifying problems at an early stage, taking action to help defuse them, and supporting member states to resolve bilateral disputes.

Many EU member states are permanent observers at the OAS. The EU's democracy promotion activities could therefore find support and be followed up through the institution.

The Summit of the Americas Process has, since 1994, periodically brought together all the OAS Heads of State and Government. The Fifth Summit, 'Securing our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability', will be held in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009.

Box 2. OAS Compacts and Institutions Devoted to Human Rights

The 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the first international expression of human rights principles, and the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights (1969).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights provides recourse for individuals who have suffered violations of their rights, and works with states to help strengthen laws and institutions on human rights protection.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, based in San José, Costa Rica, is an autonomous judicial institution for the application and interpretation of the American Convention on Human Rights.

The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights; the Inter-American Commission of Women; the Inter-American Children's Institute; and the Inter-American Indian Institute.

Mainly Latin American Institutions

Latin-Americanism started with 'Bolívar's dream',⁹ the idea of joining together all the former Spanish colonies. It evolved to include Brazil, Haiti and, more recently, the Caribbean countries. Among the array of Latin American institutions and schemes, the most important are:

The Rio Group is a political coordination mechanism. Created in 1986, it currently has 21 members.¹⁰ The Rio Group has an institutionalized dialogue with the EU – the 14th Ministerial Meeting between the Rio Group and the EU will be held in Prague in early 2009.

The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was created in May 2008, at the initiative of Brazil, to join the 12 South American nations following the EU model.¹¹ It has a commitment to democracy and was active in restoring calm to Bolivia after

⁹ Simón Bolívar, a Venezuelan, was the main leader of the Independence War against Spain in the early 19th century.

¹⁰ Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

¹¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Suriname, and Venezuela.

disturbances in September 2008. Its headquarters are in Ecuador and Chile holds its first *pro tempore* presidency.

The Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration date back to the 1950s; they include some of the poorest and smallest countries of Latin America, for which state capability-building is an imperative.

The Andean Community, of which Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia form part (Venezuela withdrew in 2006) and the Andean Development Corporation date back to the 1970s. It has been unsuccessfully negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU.

MERCOSUR (Common Market of the South) is an economic compact formed in 1991 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, which Venezuela is joining. It is slowly developing into a political body and has a 'democratic clause' that excludes non-democratic countries from membership; this clause was instrumental in 1995 in preventing a coup d'état in Paraguay. In 1998 its four original members and two associate states (Chile and Bolivia) signed the 'Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment'.

ALBA (the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) is an economic and social cooperation scheme that includes Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Ecuador is close to becoming a member.

Mainly Caribbean institutions

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), established in 1973, unites 20 Caribbean countries and territories.¹² CARICOM has close links with the EU. In October 2008, the EU approved an Economic Partnership Agreement with CARIFORUM,¹³ the membership of which is that of CARICOM plus the Dominican Republic.

The Proposed LAC organization

In an unprecedented move towards a new LAC institution, in December 2008 four Summits were simultaneously held in Brazil: the Mercosur countries agreed to absorb all the exports of Bolivia, a country that some months before had been sanctioned by the USA with the elimination of preferential tariffs; the UNASUR countries agreed to form a South American Defence Council, in part to devise a common defence policy independent from that of the USA; the Rio Group formally welcomed Cuba as a full member; and the First LAC Summit, which brought together all 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries, agreed to meet again in Mexico in February 2010 to create the new LAC organization.

The Administration of US President Barack Obama could bring fresh ideas and policies to the US relationship with Latin America. Obama has stated that: '... in spite of the tensions existing in recent years between the United States and Latin America, we are ready to turn the page and write a new chapter in this history'.

¹² Its full members are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. Five non-independent territories are associate members to it: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

¹³ Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

Mexico will host the 21st Rio Group Summit, also scheduled for February 2010. Mexican President Felipe Calderón has declared: 'I hope at our next meeting we can move towards an organization including all the states in the region, and I hope it is called the Latin American and Caribbean Union'.

3. The Role of External Actors in Democracy Building in Latin America

The *USA* was the predominant external actor in Latin America for most of the 20th century. The USA has systematically supported Latin American governments supportive of US economic or geopolitical interests, on many occasions disregarding their lack of democratic credentials. Consequently, part of Latin American public opinion tends to be diffident towards the US role in the region. According to a public opinion survey, 'favourable' and 'very favourable' opinions of the USA fell on average from 73% in 2001 to 58% in 2008 in the 18 Latin American countries polled (Latinobarómetro, 2008: 19).

In recent years, the US role in Latin America has been contested by several left-leaning governments. For decades, Communist Cuba was the sole consistent opponent of the US role in the region. Today, the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua are also challenging the USA. Moderate left-leaning governments, like those of Argentina and – to a lesser degree – Brazil, and even the centrist, liberal government of Honduras have distanced themselves from the USA. The Administration of US President Barack Obama could bring fresh ideas and policies to the US relationship with Latin America. Obama has stated that: '...in spite of the tensions existing in recent years between the United States and Latin America, we are ready to turn the page and write a new chapter in this history' (Reforma, 2009).

Most LAC countries have long wished – mainly to no avail – to engage the *European Union* as a strategic partner in economic and political matters. They see the EU model of regional integration with social cohesion as a way out of poverty and extreme inequality. The EU's diversified political landscape is inspirational in that it demonstrates alternatives to the purely capitalistic model promoted by the USA. Increased trade with, as well as investment and technology from the EU would alleviate Latin America's economic dependence on its most powerful neighbour. In Latin America, the EU approach to world affairs is considered more consensual and balanced than that of the USA, which is often prone to unilateralism. As the Guatemalan Minister for Foreign Affairs stated recently: 'With the USA there are only free-trade agreements. With Europe, integration involves a political component and a cooperation component; that is why we can understand each other better' (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2008).

Feelings of this kind explain why Latin American governments that firmly reject engaging in free-trade agreements with the USA are simultaneously looking for similar

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Latin American governments that firmly reject engaging in free-trade agreements with the USA are simultaneously looking for similar kinds of agreement with the EU, in the hope that the latter will be more equitable... The EU could be more credible, and therefore more effective, than the USA and other extra-regional actors in helping to consolidate democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The presidents of China, Russia and Iran have separately visited several Latin American countries, seeking to gain economic and political influence in Latin America without regard for any considerations of democracy and democracy promotion.

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However, not everything about the LAC-EU relationship is positive. Problems persist relating to migration, trade and the sale of weapons. Most Latin American countries deplore the EU's increasingly restrictive immigration policy, particularly the 'return directive' adopted in June 2008, which allows for the prolonged detention of illegal immigrants. They consider such measures a potential violation of human rights, as well as historically unjust given that Latin America has always been open to European immigration. Only Mexico, Chile and the Dominican Republic have reached free trade agreements with the EU. The countries of Central America resent the huge tariffs on their banana exports, imposed to favour former European colonies in Africa. Spain, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany sell military equipment to a number of South American countries.¹⁵ In December 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France visited Brazil to sign a huge weapons contract. Even if levels of defence expenditure are low in Latin America compared to other regions of the world, weapons deals are fostering a small-scale arms race in South America, increasing suspicion among neighbouring countries and diverting resources from development. It is in this context that in 2008 the *Latinobarómetro* found 'favourable' and 'very favourable' opinions of the EU in Latin America among 59 per cent of respondents – just one percentage point higher than the US score (*Latinobarómetro*, 2008: 18).

On the EU side, some countries – especially Spain – resent the expropriations or nationalizations that have affected Europe-based corporations with businesses and assets in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela. Nationalizations have particularly affected public utilities, banks, airlines and oil companies.

Three other external actors must briefly be considered. *China* is reaching trade and investment agreements with several Latin American countries. *Russia*, after selling significant amounts of weapons to Venezuela, in November 2008 sent a small fleet to Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba. *Iran* is looking for cooperation agreements, particularly in the oil and construction sectors, like those it has signed with Venezuela. The presidents of these three countries have separately visited several Latin American

¹⁴ However, effectiveness depends in part on the aid being appropriate and on adequate follow-up. For instance, Spain donated an electronic voting system to Guatemala's Chamber of Deputies, which it was unable to put into use.

¹⁵ The USA has historically been the main seller (or donor) of weapons to Latin America, but several Latin American countries are buying weapons in Europe. Some examples in the past five years include: Spain has sold military planes and helicopters to Venezuela, and afterwards the same kind of equipment to Colombia; after Chile acquired missile-launching frigates from the UK and submarines from France, Peru purchased the same sort of frigates from Italy; Venezuela asked for submarines from Russia and other naval equipment from Spain; and Brazil is to build its own submarines (including a nuclear-propelled one) with French support. Argentina has reactivated its own (civilian) nuclear programme, which had been suspended. The Netherlands and Germany have sold refurbished fighter planes and tanks to Chile. From outside the EU, the USA sells weapons mainly to Colombia, and Russia mainly to Venezuela and Cuba.

countries, seeking to gain economic and political influence in Latin America without regard for any considerations of democracy and democracy promotion.

4. The Role of the EU in Democracy Building in Latin American Countries

Argentina and France are the *pro tempore* co-presidents of the EU-LAC Strategic Partnership. An EU-LAC Foundation has been set up to tackle issues related to poverty and sustainable development.

The Iberian-American Summit process, which started in 1991, involves Spain and Portugal as well as all the Latin American countries including Cuba.¹⁶ In this context, Spain, Portugal and France, due to their cultural and linguistic links to diverse Latin American countries, could have a role as main interlocutors or privileged partners.

Some Preliminary Policy Options

Latin American and Caribbean peoples have fought hard to attain democracy. It may be imperfect, but it is *theirs*. It is up to the citizens to strengthen these young democracies, which makes a ‘from within’ approach to democracy promotion the most welcome among LAC populations where impositions from abroad tend to cause popular consternation. To be well received, any EU initiative for promoting democracy should have a non-intrusive character, seek true multiregional partnership, and be in line with LAC aspirations for liberty with prosperity and social justice within a framework of international cooperation rather than intrusion.

In promoting democracy in the LAC countries, it would be advisable for the EU decide from the outset to answer the following questions:

1. *Which organizations should the EU engage with as the main regional partners in democracy promotion:* the OAS, a Pan-American institution, or a Latin American or LAC body? In this respect, a multi-tiered strategy would be advisable. At the region-to-region level, the EU could work with the OAS, the oldest and most consolidated multilateral Pan-American organization which is officially devoted to democracy promotion. However, at the country-to-country level, the LAC-EU Strategic Partnership could become a wide forum for discussing and implementing democracy promotion. On issues relevant mainly to the Latin American countries, it might be convenient for the EU to make use of its institutionalized dialogue with the Rio Group.
2. *What kinds of policies are most apt for democracy promotion in the region?* Policies could range from an overarching EU commitment to the region’s overall social and

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An overall focus could reduce effectiveness and dilute the potential results, while focusing on just some countries could be considered undue foreign interventionism. A mix between an overarching effort and a focus on specific countries could therefore be the best option.

¹⁶ Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.

economic development to specific aid programmes. Given the wide array of existing policy instruments at the disposal of the EU, the best option could be to make coordinated use of these for democracy promotion.

3. *Where geographically should the EU's democracy promotion efforts be focused:* throughout the LAC region in general, or on selected countries? Since the Caribbean countries are nowadays doing quite well in democratic terms, a reasonable option would be to focus primarily on the Latin American countries. However, a similar dilemma arises: should the focus be on all the Latin American countries, or just on the small number where democracy is absent or under severe threat? Either option is risky: an overall focus could reduce effectiveness and dilute the potential results, while focusing on just some countries could be considered undue foreign interventionism. A mix between an overarching effort and a focus on specific countries could therefore be the best option.

5. An Overarching Approach to Specific Aid Policies and Programmes

Social and economic development is the best guarantor of a functioning democracy. Stronger economic ties with the EU could foster development in the LAC countries. Those ties, in turn, could be strengthened by the signing of free trade agreements or economic partnership agreements that are wider in scope and contain deeper cooperation than those already in place between the EU or its member states and the LAC countries. The EU's policy of including a 'democratic clause' in all its agreements and treaties with third countries is a practice already accepted by most of the LAC countries.¹⁷

Similarly, given the EU's important role as a collaborator with and a donor to many LAC countries, most of the aid or loans granted by the EU or its member states to LAC countries should embed a 'democratic component'. For instance, when discussing a clean water programme or the building of a bridge, the EU should ensure that affected citizens have a say in defining and implementing such projects. In addition, when assisting a police force, assistance should include education on human rights for the officers involved, and monitoring should take account of future performance on human rights.

Most Latin American countries have proved able to subject the military to civilian control – a crucial aspect of democracy. Militaries have been reduced in size, and in Central America their budgets and political importance have reduced and they have been trained to respect human rights. Conversely, in South America military expenditure has been rising since 2000, increasing tension between neighbouring countries.¹⁸ If the EU were to make the sale of weapons conditional on the professionalization of the military and its restructuring along democratic lines, as well as on the implementation of mutual confidence-building measures among the buyer

Some LAC countries with few resources, scant qualified personnel and weak state and governmental institutions are in dire need of technical cooperation on capability-building.

¹⁷ The democracy and human rights clause in EU agreements with third countries made its first appearance in a cooperation agreement with Argentina, at this country's request.

¹⁸ For instance, Chile and Peru/Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, Ecuador and Colombia, Colombia and Venezuela, and Colombia and Nicaragua hold old geopolitical grudges and/or territorial disputes, on which ideological differences have of late been superimposed.

countries, this would not only reduce geopolitical tensions but also allow the buyers to redirect more of their domestic budgets to economic development and social justice.

The suggestions outlined above are potential overarching EU policies that could indirectly promote democracy by improving social and economic conditions in the region or by introducing democracy building to EU programmes targeted towards other goals. At the same time, the EU should also directly focus on specific areas of democracy building. These areas would vary across countries but should include, among other things: domestic conflict resolution; electoral observation; capability-building among states, including strengthening electoral institutions and Congresses, minimizing corruption, and promoting transparency and accountability; guaranteeing freedom of the press and human rights; and strengthening civil society organizations and NGOs.

Countries with high levels of domestic political conflict, such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela would benefit from efforts to mediate in those conflicts, as well as from electoral observation as a means of guaranteeing free and fair elections. (Latin American countries usually resort to other countries in the region or to the OAS when in need of mediation efforts, but international electoral observation is nowadays quite accepted in Latin America.)

At the same time, some LAC countries with few resources, scant qualified personnel and weak state and governmental institutions are in dire need of technical cooperation on capability-building. Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and several Caribbean countries could benefit from aid to: draw up their voters' registration and identification systems; strengthen their legislative branches and electoral bodies; pass and enforce transparency legislation; implement career civil services through the recruitment and training of qualified personnel; sustain human rights and accountability among agencies; train their police forces, and so on.

For example, the Swedish Agency for International Development (Sida), within a programme for alleviating poverty in Central America, is supporting Guatemala to improve its civil registry and personal identification systems; the German political foundations¹⁹ are helping several countries by promoting a democratic culture and the consolidation of political parties, and also supporting graduate studies in social areas; the Dutch Institute for Multi-party Democracy is promoting multi-party systems in Bolivia and Guatemala; and Spain finances grants for Latin American professors, researchers and students.

The introduction of democracy to the one remaining country still without it and its preservation and strengthening in the others where it is threatened would be a highly visible and inspirational success for democracy promotion.

Finally, guaranteeing freedom of the press and protecting human rights can be achieved through international monitoring and, in domestic contexts, by granting technical and financial support to civil organizations or NGOs devoted to these issues. The EU could also support NGOs devoted to transparency, fighting corruption, accountability, gender issues, and so on. For instance, Sweden supported the setting up of the watchdog Security and Defense Network of Latin America (RESDAL).

¹⁹ The Adenauer, Böll, Ebert and Naumann foundations.

6. A Focus on Seven Nations

The introduction of democracy to the one remaining country still without it (Cuba), and its preservation and strengthening in the others where it is threatened (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela) would be a highly visible and inspirational success for democracy promotion. Therefore, such countries merit special consideration when it comes to devising democracy building policies.

Cuba's government is strongly resistant to any interference in its domestic affairs, something that many in the region deem a symbol of sovereignty and national dignity. Sanctions such as the embargo and the Helms-Burton law imposed for decades by the USA have not brought democracy to Cuba. Nor has EU policy on democracy and human rights in Cuba, which has swayed from engagement to pressure over the years. Amnesty International stated in 2008 that:

Restrictions on freedom of expression, association and movement remained severe. At least 62 prisoners of conscience remained imprisoned [since 2003] and political dissidents, independent journalists and human rights activists continued to be harassed, intimidated and detained (Amnesty International, 2008).

Nonetheless, there have been some openings since Fidel Castro handed power to his younger brother Raúl. The latter has recognized deficiencies in the Cuban administration and adopted some measures to alleviate the many shortages afflicting the population. He has also expressed an interest in meeting President Barack Obama on neutral ground.

EU dignitaries visiting Cuba could meet with opposition groups and ask for the release of political prisoners. Future steps could include freedom of the press and, ultimately, free, multi-party elections. The EU should ensure that its policies are distinct from those of the USA.

In May 2008, the Spanish Foreign Minister became the first EU foreign minister to visit Havana since 2003. At the occasion, Raúl Castro accepted the creation of a Bilateral Consultation Mechanism with Spain, which includes a formal Human Rights Dialogue (AI, 2008). Raúl's administration appears partly receptive to a strategy promoting, as a first

step, increased civil liberties and the legalization of opposition or dissident groups. EU dignitaries visiting Cuba could meet with opposition groups and ask for the release of political prisoners. Future steps could include freedom of the press and, ultimately, free, multi-party elections. Of course, Cuba would expect some form of quid pro quo from the EU, such as in the areas of technical cooperation, financial aid, trade and investment, and tourism. The EU should ensure that its policies are distinct from those of the USA. Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, a former revolutionary and current oppositionist who is advocating a change in US policy towards Cuba, from confrontation to a policy of diplomacy, compromise and commitment, says: 'What does not help in contributing to Cuba's democratization is a confrontational line' (*La Jornada*, 2009).

In Bolivia, promoting democracy means: a) electoral observation of the upcoming presidential election; b) promoting compromise between government and opposition; and c) trying to keep the country united and reduce secessionist tendencies in its Eastern region.

There is political deadlock in *Bolivia* between a left-leaning government elected in 2006 and a rightist opposition. President Evo Morales has introduced a series of measures that favour the indigenous population, which amounts to 60 per cent of the population, and the poor. Internationally, Morales relies on the support of Venezuela and Cuba through ALBA, and in 2008 he expelled the US ambassador. Opposition to his policies comes mainly – but not solely –

from Eastern Bolivia, where the indigenous population is less prevalent and the economy is more capitalistic and prosperous than in the rest of the country.

In August 2008 a recall referendum confirmed Morales, his vice-president and most of the prefects in their respective offices, leaving the political deadlock unresolved. In September 2008 there was rioting against Morales in Eastern Bolivia and the central government arrested an opposition prefect who allegedly ordered a massacre of Morales's supporters. These events led the country to the verge of civil war, which was avoided only by the intervention of UNASUR. Strongly divided along social, ethnic, political and geographic lines, Bolivia held a referendum on a new constitution in January 2009, which, among other things, allows Morales to stand in anticipated general elections in December 2009.

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Colombia suffers from high levels of activity by guerrillas and drug cartels. The police have dismantled the main drug cartels and the USA is giving significant aid to fight drug trafficking, but Colombia is still the world's main producer of cocaine and drug money flows into politics. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the main guerrilla group, suffered several blows in 2008. The storming by the Colombian Army of a FARC camp within Ecuadorean territory caused a crisis between Bogotá and Quito, and additionally between Bogotá and Caracas and Managua; the intervention of the Rio Group and the OAS eased tensions, but Quito is still refusing to re-establish diplomatic relations with Bogota, which were broken in the aftermath of the incident. In a separate event, the Colombian Army rescued a group of FARC hostages, including Ingrid Betancourt who had been kidnapped while running for president. Many members of FARC have voluntarily demobilized, gaining asylum in France under an agreement between Bogota and Paris.

Promoting democracy in Colombia would imply: (a) an international campaign for the immediate release of all hostages held by FARC; (b) setting the conditions for a peace dialogue between the government and FARC and other guerrillas, in which France would be a credible intermediary; c) easing tensions between Colombia, and Ecuador and Venezuela, including an end to EU, Russian and US shipments of weapons; and d) electoral observation of a referendum that could take place in 2009 to allow the re-election of its president.

In *Ecuador*, President Rafael Correa was inaugurated in 2007 on a left-leaning, nationalistic platform. In April 2007 he called, and won, a referendum on constitutional reform. Elections for a Constituent Assembly were then held, one of the first acts of which was to dismiss Congress. A new constitution was approved in a referendum in September 2008 and general elections will be held in April 2009, in which President Correa will run for re-election and a new Congress will be elected.²⁰ In Ecuador, democracy promotion

In Ecuador, democracy promotion would imply electoral observation and work to ease the tensions with Colombia. Democracy building priorities in Haiti would be: (a) state-capacity building; (b) training and equipping a domestic police force; and (c) alleviating poverty.

²⁰ The elections were peacefully held and President Correa was overwhelmingly reelected; however, there were suspicious delays on the releasing of the legislative elections results.

would imply electoral observation and work to ease the tensions with Colombia referred to above.

Poverty stricken and chaos-ridden *Haiti* needs urgent help with state capacity-building and poverty alleviation. Haiti is an example of a 'failed state'. The police, the army, public services and most of the country's infrastructure are virtually useless. Since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned in 2004 amid rioting, a United Nations Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) led by Brazil has been the only guarantor of law and order. In 2006, the United Nations organized elections, which were won by René Garcia Prével. Democracy building priorities in Haiti would be: (a) state-capacity building; (b) training and equipping a domestic police force; and (c) alleviating poverty.

Nicaragua held contested municipal elections in November 2008. The Supreme Electoral Council did not allow national or international observers to observe the election. The governing Sandinistas claimed victory in most municipalities, including the capital, Managua, but the opposition denounced electoral fraud and organized street demonstrations. Both the EU and the USA suspended aid to Nicaragua. President

Daniel Ortega was inaugurated in 2007, having been elected with just with 38 per cent of the vote. He had previously served as President between 1985 and 1990. It is alleged that his administration is attempting to curtail external funding for Nicaraguan NGOs. Democracy building in Nicaragua implies: (a) supporting power-sharing agreements between the government and the opposition; (b) procuring freer and fairer elections in the future; (c) providing funding to independent NGOs and (d) state capacity-building.

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The political situation in *Venezuela* remains tense. President Chávez was first elected in 1998 amid a breakdown of the Venezuelan party system. After his inauguration in 1999 he dismissed Congress and the justices of the Supreme Court and called an election for a Constituent Assembly, which his supporters won. The Constituent Assembly passed a new constitution allowing for presidential re-election, which was ratified by a referendum. Chávez was re-elected in 2000 and a National Assembly was elected. In 2002 Chávez was deposed by a coup d'état, allegedly supported by the USA, but reinstated days later. In 2004 he won a recall referendum called at the request of the opposition. In 2005 a new National Assembly was elected but the opposition did not participate claiming that the conditions did not exist for free elections, so all its members are Chávez supporters. In 2006, Chávez was again re-elected, and again the

National Assembly granted him legislative powers. When the National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment calling for socialism and removing the limit on the number of presidential terms of office, however, this was defeated in a referendum held in December 2007. In November 2008, state and municipal elections gave Chávez's supporters one million more votes than the opposition, although the latter showed significant advances. Almost immediately afterwards, Chávez called a referendum, held in February 2009, which removed the limit on the number of presidential terms.

There are many new aspects of the initiatives to strengthen the democracy building dimension of the EU's development policies for the LAC countries and worldwide. They are searching for better coordination on the part of the EU; they are based on consultations with regional and global partners; and they are collaborative rather than intrusive in character.

7. Conclusions

There are many new aspects of the initiatives to strengthen the democracy building dimension of the EU's development policies for the LAC countries and worldwide. They are searching for better coordination on the part of the EU; they are based on consultations with regional and global partners; and they are collaborative rather than intrusive in character.

At present, the EU and each of its member-states provide development cooperation through many agencies and channels, and based on diverse criteria. This diversity is unavoidable, since it is based on sovereign decisions by EU member states, but it is also valuable in that it broadens the scope of cooperation.

That said, the establishment of a single set of general but well-defined criteria by the EU could lead to concerted programmes and thereby increase the functionality of the cooperative efforts. This might be particularly true when it comes to democracy promotion, where indicators of success cannot be as clear and measurable as those involved, for instance, in the building of an irrigation system or in a vaccination campaign.

Consultation would not imply creating new institutions, but a concerted effort and a shared commitment to compromise. The institutions and channels for political and high-level diplomatic dialogue already exist, in particular the EU-LAC Strategic Partnership, and the institutionalized dialogue between the EU and the Rio Group. The EU and most of its member-states already have specialized agencies for devising, funding and administering their respective international development programmes. The proposed EU-LAC Foundation could also have a multilateral role in this respect. It would be advantageous for the EU to cooperate with its global, regional and national partners and to use existing institutions and agencies to devise worldwide democracy building programmes. The experience and understanding of local conditions that these institutions and agencies have should enable them to contribute to consensus building in order to make these programmes successful.

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With respect to collaboration rather than intrusion, it is important that the EU and its member states do not apply double standards, but instead recognize in practice the right of people to choose their own ways to democracy and development. In recent times, many LAC countries have elected left-leaning governments – a trend that it is possible will persist in the near future. Like any government in any democratic system, these governments face legitimate opposition from both within and outside their respective nations. The EU, as well as other foreign actors, should respect the actions of these governments and their decisions, to the extent that they are taken in accordance with applicable domestic and international law and along democratic lines, even if some such actions and decisions go against the immediate interests of the EU or its member states (e.g. the nationalization of assets or defaulting to re-pay the foreign debt). Curtailing aid for democracy promotion on the basis of economic self-interest on the part of the donors will assuredly backfire.

In sum, the EU can promote democracy in the LAC countries by focusing on the less developed countries, and on where democracy either does not exist or is under threat.

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Gustavo Ernesto Emmerich (Argentina) is a political scientist and a professor at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), Mexico City, where he coordinates its graduate programme on Social Studies (www.izt.uam.mx/poes). He is also a member of Mexico's National System of Researchers. A specialist in Latin American studies, his main research themes are the relationship between politics and public policies, and current political processes and elections. Professor Emmerich recently led a democratic audit of Mexico using the methodology developed by International IDEA. An abridged Spanish version of the resulting report is published in *Araucaria*, 21 (2009) (www.institucional.us.es/araucaria). Professor Emmerich co-edited *Tratado de Ciencia Política* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2007). At present, he is working on a joint research project with Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, on the diverse social and political aspects of transnationalism. He holds a doctorate in political science from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (1988).

Annex 1: A listing of The Latin American and Caribbean countries

The Latin American countries	Latin American, but located in the Caribbean	The Caribbean countries
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Argentina 2. Bolivia 3. Brazil 4. Chile 5. Colombia 6. Costa Rica 7. Ecuador 8. El Salvador 9. Guatemala 10. Honduras 11. Mexico 12. Nicaragua 13. Panama 14. Paraguay 15. Peru 16. Uruguay 17. Venezuela 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Dominican Republic 19. Haiti 20. Cuba* 21. Puerto Rico** 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antigua and Barbuda 2. Bahamas 3. Barbados 4. Belize 5. Dominica 6. Grenada 7. Guyana 8. Jamaica 9. Saint Lucia 10. Saint Kitts and Nevis 11. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 12. Suriname 13. Trinidad and Tobago

*Excluded from OAS

** Not an independent country, but a 'Free Associated State' of the USA; not a member of the OAS