Presentation

Elections and social movements in Latin America

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In recent years, political processes in Latin America have seen the emergence of social movements seeking not only representation, but also influence in their countries' governments, attempting to make them more responsive to social demands, seeking accountability and questioning the political parties that have turned their backs on them.

These processes have renewed attention to the complex relationships between social movements, political parties, elections, governmental actions, the performance of legislatures and democratic governance. Elections and protests used to be seen as mutually exclusive, with institutional avenues of political participation through parties and elections on the one hand, and contentious politics, protests and social movements that bring large numbers of people onto the streets with their demands on the other. From conservative perspectives, protests were seen as threats to democracy and the party and electoral route as the only legitimate form of political participation.

However, these conservative perspectives have been overcome. It is particularly significant that the social movements so far witnessed in the 21st century in Latin America do not question democracy, but seek to act within the framework of democracy. The third wave of democratisation since the late 1970s[1], together with neoliberal policies created the conditions for social movements to try to influence electoral processes.

[1] John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change*, 2a. ed., New York, Routledge. 2015.

Social movements are made up of groupings of the *demos* that seek to make themselves heard and to influence the decisions of the government, of the *kratos*. They are best understood as a form of participation in public affairs, as a means of enriching the representation of the *demos* so that it is not reduced solely to those representatives who receive electoral authorisation, but also includes social representatives authorised by non-electoral means.[2]

This century's social movements in Latin America have challenged governments, legislative decisions, public policies and transformed party systems that had functioned with relative stability for decades. For example, in Honduras, Paraguay and Uruguay respectively, social movements, in alliance with political parties, have transformed the two-party systems that have been in place for over a century.

These phenomena show the need to consider movements and parties not in an exclusive way, as if they were the oil and water of politics, but in terms of their changing relationships and combinations; some movements give rise to the formation of new parties or electoral coalitions, [3] which, after winning the elections, joined the executive and legislative branches, and endeavoured to advance the agenda that led them to victory, but this did not lead to the dissolution of the social movement organisations that participated in the coalition, nor to the disappearance of the protests. These ruling coalitions eventually lose the next election and return to the opposition.[4] In other words, the actions of movements have consequences for political parties, governments, legislatures, street protests and subsequent electoral cycles.[5]

Similarly, the actions of political parties also have consequences for social movements, governments, legislatures, street protests and the subsequent

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2 Jorge Cadena-Roa, "Representación", in Prontuario de la democracia, April 21, 2021, at *https://prontuario-democracia.sociales.unam.mx/representacion/* (date of access: June 20, 2022).

3 Paul Almeida, Eugenio Sosa, Allen Cordero and Ricardo Argueta, "Protest Waves and Social Movement Fields: The Micro Foundations of Campaigning for Subaltern Political Parties", in *Social Problems*, vol. 68, no. 4, November 2021, pp. 831-851; P. Almeida and Amalia Pérez Martín, *Collective Resistance to Neoliberalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, in press.

4 Kathleen Bruhn, *Urban protest in Mexico and Brazil*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

5 Jorge Cadena-Roa, "State Pacts, Elites, and Social Movements in Mexico's Transition to Democracy", in Jack A. Goldstone (ed.), *States, Parties, and Social Movements*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 107-144; J. A. Goldstone (ed.), *op. cit.*

electoral cycles. So on and on, what one party does has consequences for the others.[6] This is why there is a need for more flexible and dynamic concepts that describe how one (movements, for example) transforms into another (parties and state powers). We require concepts that help us understand how forms of participation and representation combine, alternate, influence and transform each other[7] and, as a result of these combinations and influences, co-evolve.[8]

The articles included in this issue of the *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* (RMPE) aim to identify these relationships and processes of co-evolution. In particular, they analyse the relations between social movements, political parties, protests and elections in Latin America, and include specific analyses of the political processes in Bolivia, Chile and Honduras, as well as including other analyses of Brazil, Colombia, and the Chicanx struggle in the party and electoral environment of the United States (of populations with Latin American roots). We hope that reading them will help to understand the political processes in the region and their significance from the standpoint of democracy.

However, history is neither homogenous nor unidirectional in the region. Processes of enrichment and expansion of both democratic representation and participation run parallel to regressions in countries where, far from integrating social demands into government agendas, they are ignored and repressed, violating the human rights of those who protest.

The following contributions are part of a special collaboration between the Matías Romero Institute and the University of California's Alianza MX Program. Such collaborations between institutions of higher education in California and Mexico deepen cross border social science advances to find commonalities and new discoveries. In this case, the relationships between social movements, political parties, protests and elections.

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6 Sidney Tarrow, *Movements and Parties: Critical Connections in American Political Development.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2021.

7 Jorge Cadena-Roa, "Presentación", in Ernesto Castañeda and Cathy Lisa Schneider (eds.), *Charles Tilly: sobre violencia colectiva, política contenciosa y cambio social. Antología selecta,* Mexico, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales-UNAM, 2022, pp. 13-30.

8 Pamela E. Oliver and Daniel J. Myers, "The Coevolution of Social Movements", in *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, February 2003, pp. 1-24.