

TWO WEEKS NOTICE: A LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS BLOG

ABOUT ME

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My Latest Book



Understanding Latin American Politics
Gregory Weeks (F



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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 05, 2014

Fostering Lower Intensity Democracy in Latin America

Following up on [my last post](#) about trying to understand the trends we see from the 2014 Latin American Public Opinion Project data, here is a basic visual, which because of blogger is even cruder than I would've liked:

Democratization
Econ. growth
Regional autonomy
Access to technology

Leads to:

Increased crime
Steady Corruption

Leads to:

Emigration
Less trust in local govt.
Decrease in democratic legitimacy
Less democratic stability

Leads to:

??

What we have is what appears to be a paradox—the things in the top column represent some positive examples of what Latin America has experienced in the past decade. Yet we see some really troubling results—this does not mean correlation, but they do coincide. What we can say for sure is that democracy and growth clearly is not resolving some entrenched problems, which in some cases are getting worse.

System support has been gradually on the decline (53% in 2006 vs. 50.7% in 2014) while belief in the courts has decreased even more sharply, with 47.3% seeing them as fair in 2006 vs. 44.1% in 2014. There are all sorts of similar examples at the local level. Even with democratic consolidation in so many countries, people are seeing government as *less* responsive over time.

If you're wondering, this transcends ideology. Estimated stable democracy attitudes are high in Argentina and Costa Rica, and lower in Bolivia and Paraguay. You can see similar sorts of distributions on other questions as well. Both in academia and in the media, we tend to get too narrowly focused on ideology, but there are more universal issues that are driving these perceptions.

I was asked after my panel about what I thought the result would be. That is the question mark at the end. I don't have a great answer but my sense is lower intensity democracy. I don't see coups on the horizon, but a generalized sense that problems are not being solved. This has the potential to open door for populism, but it can also just mean strikes, protests, etc. Sadly, this is the direction things are moving.