



Center for Inter-American Policy & Research

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A collaboration between Tulane University and CIAPA

The hallmark of Latin America's progress over the last thirty years has been its dual transition to democratic politics and market economics. All of the countries in the region, save one, have institutionalized free and fair elections to select their representatives. Many have also instituted, and broadly employed, mechanisms of direct and participatory democracy. At the same time, most of the countries have embraced free trade and reformed their productive and financial sectors. Some, like Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, have developed innovative social programs which, for the first time in decades, are lowering the ranks of the poor and, however modestly, positively impacting inequality. These developments have allowed the region to capitalize on high international prices in agricultural, commodity, and energy markets generating several years of sustained growth and healthy financial indicators for most of the region.

Still, Latin America is not free from challenges. As poverty and inequality continue to be unacceptably high in many countries, important sectors of the population are excluded from the political and economic mainstream. In some places, the corruption and incompetency of traditional politicians have opened the way for political mavericks that appeal directly to the people, raising the stakes of political competition and heightening political instability. In the economy, the failure to diversify production and the continued reliance on a few primary products has enhanced vulnerability to external price shocks. Slow progress in enhancing the rule of law and the transparency and credibility of government has hindered the prospects for productive investment.

As the world braces for the impact of an epochal financial crisis, the extent of the region's vulnerability looms large. Although the particular impact of this or any other crisis can be hard to predict, it brings forth broader questions about the potential effects of external crises. How well suited is the region to deal with external shocks? What implications can such shocks have for the region's democracy? What lessons can be derived from previous historic crises?

Francisco González will explore these issues on November 13th as we continue the 2008-2009 CIPR Seminar Series. Dr. González is a political scientist and scholar of Latin America. He currently holds the Riordan Roett Chair in Latin American Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. He has written extensively on democracy and democratization and he has recently published *Dual Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Institutionalized Regimes in Chile and Mexico, 1970-2000* (Johns Hopkins University Press). Described as an analytically sophisticated and heavily documented study, this book explores the consequences for democratic transition of the institutional traits of authoritarian regimes.

We are excited to continue Tulane's tradition of research and scholarship in Latin America by presenting Dr. González and hope that you will join us as part of a select group of scholars and community leaders invited to participate in this activity. In keeping with the spirit of the Seminar Series, it has been structured as a closed event to foster an engaged discussion after the presentation. We look forward to greeting you at Tulane.