

Authoritarianism, Democracy, and Development in Latin America and Spain, 1930–1990

Agustín E. Ferraro and Miguel A. Centeno

THE END OF AN ERA

In the serene atmosphere of Princeton University, a group of prominent experts on Latin America held a series of meetings in 1976 and early 1977. Events occurring at the time in Latin America infused the talks with a certain anxiety and distress. Some of the participants had recently escaped from military dictatorships that were displaying a new kind of vicious political violence in their countries. Friends and former students were in harm's way; terrible things seemed to be happening. The mood of the gatherings at Princeton was probably not very different from the one prevailing at meetings of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s, after the Nazis had risen to power in Germany, and the survivors began to reunite in New York as political exiles.

In one respect, however, the meetings at Princeton were less about the present, and more about how it came to be. All the social scientists at the meetings had been enthusiastic supporters of economic development for the countries in the southern hemisphere. The suspicion was now that the promotion of development could have inadvertently contributed to the chain of events that ended in ruthless military dictatorships. Did the social scientists partially have themselves to blame for the political catastrophe?

The cordial host of the group at Princeton was Albert O. Hirschman, one of the foremost experts on economic development in Latin America, and a well-known scholar and intellectual in the United States. In the paper he presented for discussion, Hirschman expressed his profound dismay at the suspicion mentioned above. He conceded that there was a general feeling of disenchantment with development as a political and intellectual project, because, after twenty-five years of efforts, the countries of the South remained comparatively “underdeveloped” and poor. However, the worst reason for the disenchantment was the particular suspicion that “the effort to achieve growth, whether or not successful, brings with it calamitous side effects in the political

realm, from the loss of democratic liberties at the hand of authoritarian, repressive regimes to the wholesale violation of elementary human rights.”¹

The wave of military takeovers in Latin America was depressing enough. But the source for Hirschman’s anxiety, regarding the unintended consequences of the social scientists’ own work, was a research paper written by Guillermo O’Donnell, one of the participants of the Princeton meetings.²

O’Donnell claimed in his paper that industrial development in Latin America was associated with the establishment, during the 1960s, of a new type of military dictatorship in the region: the “bureaucratic–authoritarian state.” One of O’Donnell’s best-known theoretical contributions, the bureaucratic–authoritarian state corresponded to a high level of modernization, and it was characterized, among other factors, by the “pivotal role” played by large bureaucracies, led by technocrats with specific “career-patterns and power-bases.”³ The role of “technocratic civilians” was so significant that the fact that the military “appear[ed]” to hold power could be considered “typologically inconsequential” for this kind of regime.⁴ In Latin America, the clearest instances of bureaucratic–authoritarian states were implanted in Brazil and Argentina during the 1960s.

The research paper by O’Donnell connected a specific stage of economic development with the emergence of bureaucratic–authoritarian states. The author affirmed that the instauration of such regimes corresponded to the “deepening” (*profundización*) of capitalism in countries that were already partially industrialized. The deepening of capitalism was a second, advanced phase of industrial development. During the first, or import-substitution phase, the national industry had been focused on producing consumer goods for the internal market.⁵ The first phase was characterized by a modest expansion of the elements of industrial production such as physical infrastructure and sources of energy; it was supplemented by moderate manufacture of industrial inputs such as steel and chemical components. Most of the industrial inputs, equipment, and technology required for national production during the first phase of industrialization had to be imported. The process of industrialization, therefore, resulted in increasing imports for an industrial output sold in the internal market, and this caused a structural imbalance of payments, that is to say, chronic trade deficits that led to an “increasingly serious crisis.”⁶

In order for the economy to regain stability and grow further, continued O’Donnell, a second phase or deepening of capitalism became indispensable.

¹ Hirschman, 1979: 61,62. ² O’Donnell, 1975. ³ O’Donnell, 1973: 95.

⁴ O’Donnell, 1973: 112. ⁵ O’Donnell, 1972: 11.

⁶ O’Donnell, 1973: 14. The issue of “persistent external disequilibrium,” that is, balance-of-payments problems, had been defined since the early years of the UN commission CEPAL as one of the main structural factors that hindered development in Latin America. See Chapter 2 in this volume. The issue had been extensively discussed again by economists and social scientists associated with CEPAL during the years immediately previous to O’Donnell’s paper. See Chapter 3 in this volume.

The second phase was aimed at the development of national industries that could begin “without delay a significant current of industrial exports,” and thus solve the critical difficulties associated with the imbalance of payments.⁷ To achieve this result, these countries had to substantially increase the production of manufactures that could be sold in export markets, as well as undertake extensive national production of capital goods – such as buildings, machinery, equipment, vehicles, and tools – to replace imports. The second phase of capitalism required massive investments, much more advanced technology, and sophisticated business organizations. For this reason, the second phase of industrial development could only be launched with active support and involvement by state institutions, and with considerable financial commitment by international investors.⁸

From the perspective of the social groups that were in the position to take control of the process, the bureaucratic–authoritarian state could substantially improve the chances of success for the costly and complex economic transformation involved with the deepening of capitalism. At times, O’Donnell designated those social groups that called for the imposition of the bureaucratic–authoritarian state “dominant classes,” following the terminology of the Marxist tradition in sociology but, as we will see, there was nothing “deterministic” in his analysis, which was indebted to diverse sociological traditions.⁹

The bureaucratic–authoritarian state was assumed to provide two main guarantees for the process of industrial deepening. First of all, since the goal of deepening was to begin massive industrial production for export markets, the bureaucratic–authoritarian state had to provide a solid continuity of public policy decisions, especially regarding key economic areas such as the promotion of industrial exports, and exchange rates.¹⁰ In fact, high previsibility was necessary in all areas of the macroeconomic and public policy framework, in order to make calculations on the return of long-term investments possible.¹¹ However, in Latin America, public institutions had been very erratic in their economic decisions. Due to the dominance of high-ranking technocrats, the new bureaucratic–authoritarian model was supposed to provide the necessary public policy continuity. O’Donnell theorized that the bureaucratic–authoritarian state could provide *insulation* to expert bureaucracies. Such insulation would protect the decisions of expert bureaucracies from political interference, including the interference of military officers in high-ranking government positions.¹² As mentioned above,

⁷ O’Donnell, 1975: 15. ⁸ O’Donnell, 1975: 16. ⁹ O’Donnell, 1975: 18.

¹⁰ O’Donnell, 1975: 17. ¹¹ O’Donnell, 1975: 18.

¹² Regarding the fragile bureaucratic insulation of key development agencies in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, see Chapter 7 and Chapter 5 in this volume. For a description of the comparatively better performance of insulated bureaucratic agencies in Chile, under democratic governments, see Chapter 5 and Chapter 12 in this volume.

O'Donnell made clear that the military only “appeared” to hold power in the bureaucratic–authoritarian state, under this institutional model the key decisions were supposed to be made by “technocratic civilians.”¹³

The bureaucratic–authoritarian state was assumed to provide a second guarantee for the process of industrial deepening. This second guarantee, according to O'Donnell, consisted of economic and political “peace and order,” and it was based on the violent repression of the workers’ movement, which had made significant social and political conquests during the first phase of industrialization in Latin America.¹⁴ The repression of the workers’ movement included the exclusion of ample groups of citizens from political participation, the targeting of individual leaders for repressive measures including clandestine detention, torture and murder, and the “restoration” of workers’ discipline in industrial firms.

In sum, O'Donnell’s analysis brilliantly showed that the process of industrial development had reached a stage, in Latin America, where the imposition of bureaucratic–authoritarian states became an “optimal” political solution from the perspective of certain political actors. Such actors expressed the social interests that had acquired vast economic and political power during the first stage of industrialization: business owners and top managers, experts with technocratic roles, high-ranking military officers, and international investors. As Hirschman sadly corroborated, when all was said and done, a necessary relation seemed to have established itself between industrialization and authoritarianism. Did the process of industrialization, that is to say the development process, have to end in political catastrophe?

Although certainly anxious about the mere possibility of these connections, Hirschman was not willing to accept outright O'Donnell’s analysis. In his own paper for the discussions at Princeton, as well as in personal correspondence, Hirschman tried to articulate two main counterarguments.¹⁵ The same counterarguments were further elaborated during the Princeton discussions by Serra and Kaufman.¹⁶

The first counterargument affirmed that O'Donnell’s thesis was excessively “deterministic.” In his contribution, Hirschman criticized any explanation that appealed to economic causes for political processes because of the influence of Marxism on the social sciences, which conferred to such explanations “an excessive aura of a priori plausibility.”¹⁷ Serra developed this same criticism in more detail. He admitted that there was a connection between industrial deepening and the bureaucratic–authoritarian state regarding, for example, the repression of the workers’ movement. He warned, however, that such processes were only “trends” happening in Latin America, and that social theory had to avoid exaggerating those trends, and “elevating them to the status of rigid, iron-clad ‘laws.’”¹⁸

¹³ O'Donnell, 1973: 112. ¹⁴ O'Donnell, 1975: 18. ¹⁵ Adelman and Fajardo, 2016: 16.

¹⁶ Serra, 1979; Kaufman, 1979. ¹⁷ Hirschman, 1979: 71. ¹⁸ Serra, 1979: 105.

The first criticism was potentially strong, but unfair, because O'Donnell had made very clear that his thesis did not involve any kind of determinism. Nothing about the industrial deepening of capitalism was "necessary," he stated, and there was, moreover, no real guarantee that the process was going to succeed. O'Donnell rather mocked in advance the Marxist impulse to postulate any kind of historical determinism about industrialization, stating that, certainly, "there was no metaphysical necessity for deepening as has been defined above, and neither was to be found, at the end of the process, the entry door to the club of central countries of world capitalism."¹⁹

The bureaucratic–authoritarian state was not necessary for the industrial deepening of capitalism, it just happened to be attractive, as an institutional design, for certain "social classes and sectors that consolidated their power by means" of this authoritarian model in Latin America, and expected to benefit substantially from its implantation.²⁰ The similarity of bureaucratic–authoritarian institutions in diverse Latin American countries was not the result of any "historical necessity," it was simply the result of the general appeal of this institutional design across the region, based on the fact that the model had already been tried in Spain, and had been very successful. In his paper, O'Donnell mentioned several times that the bureaucratic–authoritarian state had been consolidated as an institutional model in Spain, well before it was tried in Brazil, Argentina, and other Latin American countries.²¹

Instead of a historical necessity, the diffusion of the bureaucratic–authoritarian state in Latin America was rather a clear-cut case of the phenomenon we define, nowadays, as institutional transfer or isomorphism.²² Simply put, military dictatorships in Latin America were deliberately adopting the economic and political model of the Spanish military dictatorship under Franco.²³

The so-called "economic miracle" in Spain was obviously the model for the kind of process that O'Donnell described, in his research paper, as the strategy for industrial deepening. The process involved the reconversion of the national industry so that a substantial part of its production was oriented towards export markets, thus preventing the chronic trade deficits that affected developing economies for structural reasons. As an example, under the management of a group of "technocratic civilians" protected from political interference in Spain, the automobile industry grew considerably, with strong public support and guidance. From the production of 79,432 vehicles in 1962, with exports of only 1 percent of units produced, the Spanish automobile industry went on to produce 988,964 vehicles in 1977, with exports of more than 30 percent of units

¹⁹ O'Donnell, 1975: 15. ²⁰ O'Donnell, 1975: 15. ²¹ O'Donnell, 1975: 6, 45, 47.

²² For a general overview of theories on institutional isomorphism and institutional convergence, see Chapter 5 in this volume.

²³ For specific discussions of the Spanish developmental state under the Franco dictatorship, see Chapter 9 and Chapter 8 in this volume.

produced.²⁴ As described by O'Donnell, this process was made possible in Spain by carefully controlled state regulation, and massive investments by international firms.

That the military dictatorships implanted during the 1960s in Argentina and Brazil took inspiration from Franco's Spain was a well-known fact. There was a strong affinity between those military groups in terms of mentalities, organization, religious orientation, fierce anti-communism, and other elements. The concept of "authoritarianism," originally coined by Linz to define the characteristics of the Spanish military regime under Franco, was soon applied to military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina by O'Donnell and other scholars.²⁵ O'Donnell was the first to apply the concept of authoritarianism to Latin America, since this had been the subject of his graduate work at Yale in the late 1960s – with Linz himself as thesis advisor. However, the characterization of Latin American dictatorships as authoritarian regimes, following Linz, soon became commonplace.

In both Argentina and Brazil, there was a very deliberate attempt to transfer the Spanish blueprint of state management consolidated under the late Franco dictatorship since the early 1960s, which was designed in order for certain public policy areas to be entirely run by "technocratic civilians" without outside political interference. This institutional design was particularly evident in the areas of development planning and industrial policy, and here the Franco dictatorship had reached its best public policy results. Already in 1973, Jaguaribe had discussed such type of authoritarian regime as "Opus Dei technocratic neoliberalism," pointing out that this political and institutional design was first tried successfully in Spain, and later on emulated by the Medici dictatorship in Brazil, 1969–1974, and the Onganía dictatorship in Argentina, 1966–1970.²⁶ Jaguaribe mentioned the Opus Dei, because all three military regimes were eager to hire, for top management positions, experts from this right-wing, technocratically-oriented Catholic organization.²⁷

In sum, the first counterargument introduced by Hirschman and Serra, against the thesis by O'Donnell, was certainly unfair. There was no determinism in the latter's thesis, it was instead a case of the phenomenon we would call today institutional convergence or isomorphism. The misunderstanding probably resulted, in part, from Hirschman's and Serra's lack of attention to the Spanish case, which they did not mention at all in their contributions to the Princeton discussions.²⁸

The second criticism of O'Donnell's thesis was introduced by Hirschman during the Princeton meetings, and it was further developed by Kaufman.²⁹ This second criticism was certainly much more accurate than the first. It pointed

²⁴ García Ruiz, 2001: 158.

²⁵ Linz, 1964: 251–283; see also O'Donnell, 1973 and Germani, 1978.

²⁶ Jaguaribe, 1973: 532–533. ²⁷ Casanova, 1983: 27–50; Rock, 1993: 201.

²⁸ Hirschman, 1979; Serra, 1979. ²⁹ Kaufman, 1979: 165–167.

out something that O'Donnell actually seemed to have missed in his analysis of the bureaucratic–authoritarian state in Latin America or, to be entirely fair, that could not be perceived clearly when he created the concept. The Latin American instances of this institutional design were not behaving as the model predicted. By the time of the Princeton discussions in 1976 and 1977, bureaucratic–authoritarian states were not applying developmental policies consistently, or with much stability. According to O'Donnell, this type of regime had been established to promote a second phase of industrialization but, as Hirschman observed, some of its instances were applying the exact opposite of developmental policies. Authoritarian regimes in Latin America were implementing a kind of orthodox, *laissez-faire* economic liberalism, and they were hiring for top public policy positions, instead of development experts, members of a new generation of “Latin American economists who had received graduate training at the University of Chicago.”³⁰

Hirschman did not discuss specific national cases in his contribution, he only referred in general terms to “authoritarian regimes” in Latin America. But the phenomenon he described was already well known. The Pinochet dictatorship, as the foremost example, was infamous at the time for its rigid adherence to neoliberal prescriptions, which had plunged the country into a severe recession.³¹ Other bureaucratic–authoritarian states, such as Argentina or even Brazil, were also introducing neoliberal measures into their previously developmental policy framework, sometimes in erratic fashion, with predictably negative results. As early as 1964, the Castelo Branco dictatorship in Brazil was applying an economic plan that Skidmore defined as “quasi orthodox,” and which included sharp reductions in the level of public spending, and in the rate of growth of the money supply.³² The result was a recession in the industrial heartland of São Paulo, and a decline in industrial output of 5 percent for 1965.³³

After the military coup of March 1976, the Videla dictatorship in Argentina adopted an economic policy framework of “orthodox inspiration,” based on a “neoliberal agenda.”^{34,35} The dictatorship’s economic plan included a series of austerity measures, cuts in wages, strict monetary policy, and a radical strategy of trade liberalization; but the plan failed to take control of inflation, and devastated the national industry.³⁶ As a percentage of GDP, the manufacturing sector in Argentina went from over 29 percent in 1974 to 22.1 percent in 1981; industrial production as a whole dropped 17 percent from 1975 to 1981.³⁷ The dictatorship’s economic plan was ill-conceived, but perhaps even worse was the fact that policy measures were applied in a very erratic, and sometimes contradictory fashion. Lack of public policy consistency was the result of constant pressures and interference on the Ministry of

³⁰ Hirschman, 1963: 76. ³¹ Edwards and Edwards, 1991: 34. ³² Skidmore, 1988: 29.

³³ Skidmore, 1988: 44. ³⁴ Torre and de Riz, 1991: 160. ³⁵ Arceneaux, 2001: 132.

³⁶ Riggirozzi, 2009: 92. ³⁷ Smith, 1989: 253.

Economy, coming from different political sectors inside the military. Economic actors became increasingly alarmed by erratic public policy decisions. In August of 1979, a group of business representatives went as far as meeting with President Videla to demand “the need for a coherent policy in the economic sphere,” and in the following year, an association of industrial firms issued a strong statement declaring that “more than four years after assuming power, the economic team still owes industry its opinion on the industrial plan towards which it wishes to arrive.”³⁸

Meanwhile, in Brazil, the Figueiredo administration began to implement in 1979 similar orthodox policies to those applied by the neoliberal military regimes in Chile and Argentina, with the declared goals of achieving financial stability, and reducing inflation.³⁹ The policies of financial and monetary adjustment, described at the time as “shock therapy,” were notoriously unsuccessful, and in the year 1980 inflation reached 110 percent in Brazil, a (then) record for the century; while industrial output dropped by 5.5 percent in 1981, and, for the first time since 1942, GDP as a whole showed a decline in Brazil, of 1.6 percent.⁴⁰ Macroeconomic policy was again erratic, the administration of Figueiredo “alternated between recessionist and growth policies,” and such lack of consistency was one of the main factors that resulted in two further years of depression until 1983, with an overall decline in GDP per capita more severe than during the Great Depression in the 1930s.⁴¹

Arbitrary and erratic public policy decisions were applied even to areas which, until then, had grown very successfully in Brazil, such as the computer industry. Public policy in the field of computer electronics had been established since 1972 by an independent commission, led by experts in the field, and protected from political interference, under the name of CAPRE (Comissão de Coordenação das Atividades de Processamento Eletrônico). As a result of long-term “greenhouse” development strategies, by 1982 more than a hundred domestic firms manufactured 67 percent of the computers installed in Brazil, providing 18,000 jobs, and including initiatives of hardware and software innovation that were competing successfully with international firms.⁴² Nevertheless, shortly after assuming power, the Figueiredo’s administration decided to reassert presidential authority, and to put an end to the bureaucratic autonomy of CAPRE. The commission was simply dissolved, and replaced by a new Secretary of State under the name SEI (Secretaria Especial de Informática), directly under the authority of the president. Most of the top and medium-level managers and experts of CAPRE were fired, and replaced by political appointees. The SEI took erratic policy decisions from the beginning, showing support for the greenhouse strategy and then contradicting itself, sometimes reversing decisions after sudden interventions from

³⁸ Arceneux, 2001: 134. ³⁹ Skidmore, 1988: 217, fn. 21. ⁴⁰ Skidmore, 1988: 230–231.

⁴¹ Fernandes, 1996: 99. ⁴² Centeno and Ferraro, 2017: 75–76.

Figueiredo's office. After a few years, erratic policies and bad public governance decimated the Brazilian computer industry.

Of the three contributions critical of O'Donnell that were presented at the Princeton discussions, the paper by Kaufman focused specifically on the phenomenon we just described above, that is to say, the lack of policy consistency of bureaucratic–authoritarian states in Latin America. The paper analyzed economic policy under the military dictatorships in four countries: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Kaufman willingly conceded that O'Donnell's model of bureaucratic–authoritarian regimes was fundamentally accurate.⁴³ Nevertheless, he had to observe that, against the commitment to industrial deepening of bureaucratic–authoritarian states assumed by O'Donnell, it was visible some years later that “there was often little consensus within these regimes about any specific developmental strategy.”⁴⁴ The dictatorships of Chile and Uruguay, in particular, seemed to be focused on “economic stabilization,” with the result that they applied orthodox austerity measures, and abandoned developmental policies – Kaufman's paper was written before the Argentinean and Brazilian dictatorships began to apply the same kind of neoliberal policies, in the usual erratic way.

O'Donnell had been proven wrong in expecting for bureaucratic–authoritarian states, in Latin America, to provide a solid continuity of public policy decisions in economic or other matters.⁴⁵ The bureaucratic–authoritarian model was supposed to protect the decisions of expert bureaucracies from political interference – including the interference of military officers in high-ranking government positions. This was the blueprint that the Latin American military were deliberately trying to imitate. It had been very effective in Spain, where the military dictatorship had delegated decisions on developmental policies to high-ranking “technocrats,” with great success in the area of industrial promotion, and in other public policy fields. O'Donnell had simply expected for the Latin American military to be able to establish bureaucratic–authoritarian states in a consistent, orderly fashion. But the military failed badly at this task in Latin America, since top officers in government could not restrain themselves from interfering constantly with public policy decisions for political reasons, changing or reversing course, dissolving successful public agencies to reassert the “authority” of the commander-in-chief, or other similar arbitrary interventions.

Of course, as Arceneaux has observed regarding economic policy under the Argentinean dictatorship after 1976, even if the neoliberal economic program had been consistently implemented as “originally envisioned,” nothing indicates it was going to be successful – the opposite would have been the most likely case.⁴⁶ But the “inconsistency of what was implemented eventually disadvantaged nearly every sector” and destroyed any confidence

⁴³ Kaufman, 1979: 248. ⁴⁴ Kaufman, 1979: 248. ⁴⁵ O'Donnell, 1975: 17.

⁴⁶ Arceneaux, 2001: 141.

in the economy.⁴⁷ The Argentinean model showed a combination of badly conceived public policy with constant political interference, which resulted in erratic implementation. In other cases, however, as shown by the decimation of the Brazilian computer industry under Figueiredo, the military were also prone to interfere and wreck well-conceived and successful developmental policies.

Hirschman was right in stating that, by 1976–1977, the concept of the bureaucratic–authoritarian state did not seem to apply very well to the realities on the ground, because this model, as actually implemented in Latin America, was entirely authoritarian, but not really bureaucratic. High-ranking experts were not insulated from the short-term politicization of public policy decisions by the government. For the implementation of developmental policy, those authoritarian regimes could never be successful. And this demonstrated conclusively that the bureaucratic–authoritarian state was not “necessary” in any way for the further development of the industrial sector, or any other area of the economy in Latin America – the opposite was rather the case. O’Donnell had never affirmed that any such necessity existed, but the issue had to be discussed at Princeton. O’Donnell’s mistake was the belief that the Latin American military were going to be able to imitate the blueprint of technocratic authoritarianism in late Francoism, and thus successfully promote industrial development – eventually gaining political legitimacy for a negotiated transition to democracy. It happened that the Latin American military were much more incompetent at governing than he anticipated.

Hirschman was without question one of the best-trained observers of development in Latin America for detecting precisely that problem with O’Donnell’s theoretical conceptualization. For Hirschman, the erratic implementation of development policies, as a result of the lack of bureaucratic autonomy of developmental agencies, was not a new phenomenon. Analyzing developmental projects since the 1950s in the region, he had realized early on that constant pressures and interference on public policy decisions, for short-term political considerations, was an ingrained problem. Therefore, the influence of developmental and planning agencies on public policy fluctuated wildly, as Hirschman confirmed in his contribution for the Princeton discussions: “Strangely, the planning agencies which had been set up to impart greater stability to governmental action in the economic field were themselves subject to considerable instability.”⁴⁸

The building of developmental states began during the 1920s and 1930s, in Latin America and Spain, with the creation of specific institutions for the planning and implementation of public policy strategies, and those institutions were supposed to take public policy decisions with a substantial degree of autonomy from partisan political considerations.

The bureaucratic–authoritarian state, as defined by O’Donnell, was certainly not the first case of institutional transfer or isomorphism in the region. The issue

⁴⁷ Arceneaux, 2001: 141. ⁴⁸ Hirschman, 1979: 84.

of institutional design, and the attention paid to successful models and blueprints already applied elsewhere, had been a serious concern from the beginning. But which blueprints should Latin America have adopted? We noted in the first volume of this series how the region had been searching for institutional models since independence. But it failed to find any that would make the right transition to stable, inclusive liberal democracies. Similarly, in the second third of the twentieth century, Latin American military dictatorships looked for institutional models and thought they had found the right one in Franco's Spain. However, as we have seen in the first section above, the military drew the wrong lessons, focusing on authoritarianism rather than on the consolidation of independent, professional bureaucracies. Latin America's experience indicates that the Spanish developmental achievements may have had less to do with Franco as a dictator, and more with his regime's decision to reconstruct and strengthen the capacities of the Spanish state bureaucracy, which had originally been developed during the era of social and political modernization in the country, between 1914 and 1936. State modernization under the Spanish bureaucratic–authoritarian regime since the early 1960s was intended only as a first step towards a (controlled) transition to democracy, but it happened to also be a foundation for the extraordinary developmental achievement of the next three decades.⁴⁹

Other institutional models that had been tried previously in Latin America also held much promise, until quashed by the same ideological rigidities that characterized the 1960s in the continent. In the next and last section of this conclusion, we will go back to the origins of the developmental era, and reconsider the promise for a better and more democratic governance than those original models contained.

DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT ABANDONED

Ten years before the Princeton discussions, Hirschman finished the last volume of his trilogy of studies on economic development.⁵⁰ Somewhat neglected at the time of publication, the studies became classics in the field. Among other subjects, Hirschman examined institutional and policy models, and he conceded, somewhat grudgingly, that no development project seemed acceptable in Latin America, unless its blueprint was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and if possible, the project was certified expressly by David Lilienthal himself.⁵¹

Created in 1933, TVA was one of the most emblematic among the public agencies that carried out the New Deal's strategies for economic and social modernization in the United States. Its long-time director until 1946, Lilienthal

⁴⁹ See Chapter 8 in this volume for a detailed discussion of state modernization in Spain during the early 1960s.

⁵⁰ Hirschman, 2015. ⁵¹ Hirschman, 2015: 19.

has been described as one of the leaders of the New Deal that better articulated the movement's confidence and optimism. His best-seller book *TVA: Democracy on the March*, published in 1944, was considered as a "manifesto that expressed the scale and scope of New Deal liberalism."^{52,53}

TVA promoted effectively the economic and social development of a vast geographical area in the United States, which was afflicted at the time by dismal poverty, even for Great Depression standards. The programs of TVA not only reduced poverty drastically, they came to redefine working-class living conditions in the whole country. The mass consumption of electric appliances was originally conceived by TVA as an industrial and commercial strategy, in order to encourage the use of the energy produced by its growing network of hydroelectric dams along the Tennessee Valley. This strategy had to be pushed through against the resistance of the industry, which until then had mostly targeted upper-class residences for the sale of electric products.⁵⁴ The working-class home kitchen, amply provided with electric appliances, became one of the global icons for the American way of life. Furthermore, TVA was one of the first federal agencies that applied community organization methods as a technique for the implementation of public policy programs, that is to say, citizens' participation in public policy. Lilienthal discussed in his book the notion of participatory public policy as a principle connecting public management, economic and social development, and democratic values and practices.⁵⁵ TVA's contribution to democratic practices was another reason for its widely positive reputation, both in the United States and abroad.

The creation in 1944 of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), and Truman's "Four Point Program," announced with his inaugural address in 1949, led to the widespread diffusion of the concept of economic development. Truman's address was the first time on record that development was defined as a dynamic process and contrasted to "underdevelopment."⁵⁶ Truman's notion of development was explicitly based on the TVA experience; his proposals for vast programs of foreign assistance were oriented towards the creation of similar developmental agencies in poor regions of the world.⁵⁷

The influence of TVA in Latin America began in the late 1930s.⁵⁸ According to the prestigious Chilean economist Pinto, the central development agency of Chile, Corporación de Fomento de la Producción (CORFO), created in 1939, was "particularly" inspired by the "great energy and global project of the Tennessee Valley."⁵⁹ Additionally, TVA sources reported that "a number of engineers and technicians" of CORFO visited TVA "during the first years" after

⁵² Lilienthal, 1944. ⁵³ Smith, 2006: 255. ⁵⁴ Tobey, 1996: 12, 19.

⁵⁵ Hargrove and Conkin, 1983. ⁵⁶ Rist, 2008: 73. ⁵⁷ Ekblad, 2010: 99.

⁵⁸ The adoption of TVA as a blueprint for development agencies in Latin America is considered in chapters 4, 5, 7, 11, and 12 in the present volume.

⁵⁹ Pinto Santa Cruz, 1985: 23.

the creation of the Chilean corporation, and some of them remained at TVA for periods of six to twelve months.⁶⁰ Chile's President Gabriel González Videla visited the United States in 1950, and he spent two days at TVA's headquarters in Knoxville, Tennessee.⁶¹

President Miguel Alemán of Mexico was the first Latin American chief of state to visit TVA, in 1947. He met Lilienthal, and inspected operations of TVA in the Tennessee Valley.⁶² In the next years, four regional commissions were created in Mexico according to the institutional blueprint of TVA: the Papaloapan, Tepalcatepec, Fuerte, and Grijalva River Commissions.⁶³

Brazil's Comissão do Vale do São Francisco (CVSF), created in 1948, also followed the institutional and public policy models of the TVA, as was pointed out during the parliamentary debates leading to the creation of the Brazilian agency.⁶⁴ In what was already becoming something of an official ritual, President Eurico Dutra of Brazil visited TVA's hydroelectric dams in 1949.⁶⁵

Even considering the general interest for the TVA model in Latin America, Colombia represented a special case.⁶⁶ During 1954 and 1955, Lilienthal traveled several times to Bogotá for consultations on the design of a regional developmental agency, the Cauca Valley Corporation, which was created in 1955 closely following his proposals.⁶⁷ The initiative to work in Colombia came originally from Lilienthal's friend and associate Lauchlin Currie.⁶⁸ One of the main architects of the New Deal in the United States, Currie was chief economic advisor to President Roosevelt from 1939 to 1945.⁶⁹ A member of the team that drafted the charter of the World Bank at Bretton Woods, in 1944, Currie became a leading intellectual supporting the transformation of the Bank, from a traditional financial organization – as it was originally conceived – into a developmental credit institution for relatively poor regions of the world.⁷⁰ The first international mission of the World Bank was sent to Colombia in 1949, with the task of preparing a general development strategy for the country, and helping with its implementation. Currie was head of this mission.

The three leading American development experts, Lauchlin Currie, David Lilienthal, and Albert Hirschman, were to meet and work together in Bogotá during the early 1950s. As it happened, Hirschman and Currie never much liked each other.⁷¹ By association, Hirschman didn't much like Lilienthal either – Currie and Lilienthal were friends.⁷² This is all purely anecdotal, however.

⁶⁰ TVA Technical Library, 1952: 29. ⁶¹ Watson, 1951; González Videla, 1975: 884–885.

⁶² *The Times Recorder*, 1947.

⁶³ Barkin and King, 1970: 93; Cole and Mogab, 1987: 311; Robinson, 2007: 80.

⁶⁴ Hirschman, 1963: 53. ⁶⁵ TVA Technical Library, 1952: 16.

⁶⁶ Due to the rigorous application of the TVA model, and other factors, Colombia was seen as a "showcase" of development, as discussed by Karl in Chapter 4 in this volume.

⁶⁷ Neuse, 1996: 261–262. ⁶⁸ Schwarz, 1993: 338. ⁶⁹ Sandilands, 1990: 96.

⁷⁰ Alacevich, 2009. ⁷¹ Sandilands, 1990: 175. ⁷² Neuse, 1996: xvii.

Much more serious was the actual reason for the three of them working together in Colombia at the time. With all their personal commitment to international development, the fact of the matter is that they had to leave the United States in the wake of a campaign of vicious personal attacks, whose target were all those liberal experts and intellectuals who had planned and directed New Deal programs and policies.⁷³ The campaign was supposedly a hunt for Communists. In truth, the three leading American development experts were political exiles in Colombia.⁷⁴ The attacks on these men reflected a changing political climate in the United States. After the end of World War II, southern members of the Democratic Party in Congress became increasingly willing to vote together with Republicans in order to support an aggressive, militaristic foreign policy orientation.⁷⁵ Southern support had been politically necessary for the New Deal to have any chance of implementation in the 1930s, but by the end of the war liberal Democrats found themselves with only a minority of votes in Congress, against a new conservative bloc formed by Republicans and southern Democrats. As Katznelson observes, the ultimate reason for this historic political shift was the fact that southern members of the Democratic Party came to perceive the New Deal's economic and social progress as a potential threat for the system of white racial hegemony in the South.⁷⁶

The idea that all liberal New Dealers, such as Currie, Lilienthal, or Hirschman, concealed a deep affinity to Communism, has an interesting intellectual history, which found its parallel in much of the anti-intellectualism of the Latin American dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s.

⁷³ Schrecker, 1998: 110.

⁷⁴ Both Currie and Lilienthal were publicly accused of being Communists, or outright Soviet spies. Lilienthal was a powerful public speaker, and he made his opponents in the Senate look ridiculous, confronting head-on their accusations of being a Communist sympathizer during the hearings for his confirmation as head of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1947. See Neuse, 1996: 186–187. Currie was not as gifted as a public speaker, and he had the added weakness of being a naturalized American citizen, born in Canada. Although no charges were ever brought against him, innuendo propagated by associates of Senator McCarthy was enough to have Currie deprived of American citizenship in 1954. See Boughton and Sandilands, 2003: 73–99. As with many other thousands of government employees, Hirschman's political opinions were secretly investigated by the FBI while he was working for the Federal Reserve Board from 1946. See Adelman, 2013: 284. The professional career of Hirschman began to suffer mysterious obstructions, and by the end of 1951 he realized that it was better for him to leave government service altogether, and even to leave the country. A few months later, he and his family had moved to Colombia. See Adelman, 2013: 281. Meanwhile, the attacks on Lilienthal continued relentlessly during his tenure as head of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Congressional investigations and hearings targeted at Lilienthal, and at the staff of AEC, based on secret political investigations about their loyalty, resulted in day-to-day operations at AEC being practically paralyzed by 1949. Feeling “tired, disheartened, and burned out,” Lilienthal decided to resign the AEC chairmanship, retire from public life in the United States, and seek employment and business opportunities abroad. See Wang, 1999: 235–236.

⁷⁵ Katznelson, 2013: 16. ⁷⁶ Katznelson, 2013: 474.

The insinuation was originally made by James Burnham in his classic book of 1941, *The Managerial Revolution*.⁷⁷

The suspicion of hidden Communist sympathies, or also “creeping socialism,” became a powerful weapon against the New Deal, and against public strategies for economic and social development in other countries, and especially in Latin America. Burnham provided a strong rhetorical weapon against developmental programs: his redefinition of the concept of “technocracy” as a hidden authoritarian trend shared by the New Deal and Soviet Communism.⁷⁸ Until then, the word “technocracy” had been associated in the United States with a benevolent, paternalistic political orientation, which called for a system of national planning for industry and infrastructure, to be coordinated by engineers.⁷⁹ With Thorstein Veblen as its best-known leader, the aim of the technocratic movement was to combine scientific planning with democratic ideals, although engineers were expected to be in charge of technical decisions.⁸⁰ By the early 1940s, the movement had lost all influence. Burnham redefined the concept of technocracy as a subtle form of authoritarianism, and as part of a global conspiracy against capitalist democracies.

However, as Lilienthal and Currie had shown during the New Deal, and they were to make clear again with their work in Colombia, there was nothing remotely “technocratic” with their public policy styles and proposals. The New Deal, and more specifically TVA as its flagship agency, were firmly opposed to the paternalistic orientation of the old technocratic movement. The New Deal, for example, did not grant engineers a particularly eminent position.⁸¹ Lilienthal was a lawyer and public intellectual, who not only opposed any kind of technocratic “superiority” for experts, he promoted at TVA a whole new approach to encourage citizens’ participation in public policy decisions, which he characterized as “grass-roots” administration.⁸² He advocated for such participatory practices in his book *TVA: Democracy on the March*, where he also described many experiences of citizens’ participation in the implementation of public policy programs initiated by TVA.⁸³ For Lilienthal, grass-roots administration was not only more democratic, it led to better results: “results depend chiefly upon the people’s participation. Getting that participation was to be almost wholly on a voluntary basis. To get a job done in this way . . . required the invention of new devices and new methods.”⁸⁴

Both Lilienthal and Currie would follow in Colombia the same democratic, grass-roots inspiration of the New Deal. Under the encouragement and leadership of Lilienthal, the Cauca Valley Corporation (CVC) developed a model of administration based on citizens’ participation and horizontal

⁷⁷ Burnham presented the connection between Communism and the New Deal as a profound sociological process, part of an underground revolutionary trend towards the imposition of “technocracy” by a new ruling class, the managers. James Burnham, 1941.

⁷⁸ Burnham, 1941. ⁷⁹ Akin, 1971: 184. ⁸⁰ Burris, 1993: 28. ⁸¹ Ndiaye, 2007: 228.

⁸² Selznick, 1949: 28. ⁸³ Lilienthal, 1944. ⁸⁴ Lilienthal, 1944: 199.

public policy implementation. The full deployment of this design had to wait, however, until after the end of the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla (1953–1957). The World Bank mission to Colombia, led by Currie, had begun in 1949 under a democratic administration in the country. The military coup of 1954 was an unfortunate setback for liberal development experts, and Currie immediately ceased any kind of collaboration with the government, retiring to live and work on his dairy farm thirty miles west of Bogotá.⁸⁵ Lilienthal tried to keep development projects going, but he got into increasing trouble with the dictatorship, and he resigned as CVC consultant in 1956, the whole board of CVC following suit with their own collective resignation in 1957.⁸⁶ After the democratic transition, CVC was legally reestablished in 1960.⁸⁷ The goals of the corporation included now the promotion of *acción comunal* (community participation), and the corporation's board was integrated by representatives of diverse social and political actors, such as business and civic associations. The design of the board encouraged the creation of a coalition of political support for CVC, and it followed the horizontal approach to public policy that Lilienthal had defined as “the very essence of TVA's method.”⁸⁸

Lilienthal and Currie have been considered as the early architects of the wide *acción comunal* or community participation programs that represented a fundamental organizational mechanism for rural and urban development in Colombia.⁸⁹ In their early study of CVC, Posada and Posada described *acción comunal* simply as the “translation” to Colombia of the grass-roots practices that were one of the main institutional features of the Tennessee Valley Authority.⁹⁰ The same authors observed that CVC had been quite successful at promoting community participation in the Cauca Valley, and they further underlined the fact that CVC agronomists always worked in systematic consultation with diverse local actors, such as civic boards, government officials, priests, and directors of public health.⁹¹

One of the most significant contributions of Currie to developmental theory and practice was the focus on urban planning as a key component for any general strategy for economic and social development.⁹² In Colombia, following the guidance of Currie, the Centro Interamericano de la Vivienda y Planeamiento (CINVA) was created in 1951 under the auspices of the OEA. This center has been described as “the most influential institution for urban planning in Latin America,” and it promoted from the beginning techniques of community organization and advocacy planning in urban development, on the basis of New Deal experiences, and in particular of the TVA model.⁹³

⁸⁵ Adelman, 2013: 309; Sandilands, 1990: 176. ⁸⁶ Neuse, 1992: 262.

⁸⁷ Ministerio de Agricultura (Colombia), 1985: 14. ⁸⁸ Lilienthal, 1941: 37.

⁸⁹ Valencia, 2009: 37. ⁹⁰ Posada and Posada, 1966: 12. ⁹¹ Posada and Posada, 1966: 216.

⁹² As shown by Fischer in Chapter 15 of the present volume, the phenomenon of urban informality had a very negative impact on the consolidation of egalitarian citizenship regimes in Latin America during the developmental era.

⁹³ Peña Rodríguez, 2008: 187–188.

Currie stayed in Colombia for the rest of his life, working as an economist, university teacher, and government consultant. After the return to democracy in 1958, he was awarded Colombian citizenship by newly elected liberal President Lleras Camargo. López has described Currie as simply one of the “most important economists” in the nation’s history, and Vélez remarked that Currie was the “definitive” economics professor for the training of a whole generation of economists in the country.⁹⁴ As mentioned above, after resigning from the Atomic Energy Commission chairmanship in 1950, Lilienthal never worked again in public service in the United States. In 1954, he created a consulting firm, Development and Resources Corporation (R&D), which worked almost exclusively with projects abroad. The projects of R&D were located “in more Latin American nations than in any other world region.”⁹⁵ As regards Hirschman, after spending more than four years in Colombia, the worst of McCarthyism had passed, and he was able to return to the United States with his family in 1956, although he never worked for the American government again. He became a prestigious scholar of development, teaching at several US American Universities for relatively short periods of time, until he was hired by Princeton in 1974, where he remained until the end of his career.

The work of Currie, Lilienthal and Hirschman had a strong positive influence in Colombia. However, some characteristics of public governance in the country, which are not unusual in Latin American and Spanish institutional contexts, resulted in it going relatively soon from “showcase” to “failure” of international development.⁹⁶ As head of the World Bank mission to Colombia, Currie recommended the creation of a National Planning Council, which was established in 1952 as the main public agency coordinating national development strategies – Currie and Hirschman served on the council together.⁹⁷ In 1958, a Planning Department was also created, as an administrative division of the executive power. However, the 1962 election of President Valencia created serious problems for this institutional structure. According to the “National Front” agreement of 1958 between the Conservatives and the Liberals, the two parties were to rotate in power every four years, and 1962 was the turn of a Conservative to assume office. The expectation of the Conservatives was to benefit from massive political appointments, extending the rotation in office to the bulk of public employment. As a result, just in the first 100 days of the Conservative administration, 80 percent of professional employees at the National Planning Council and the Planning Department quit their jobs – or were fired.⁹⁸ Deprived of professional advice and planning competence, during the following years the

⁹⁴ López Acero, 2011: 24; Vélez Álvarez, 2013: 233. ⁹⁵ Neuse, 1996: 1298.

⁹⁶ In Chapter 4 of the present volume, Karl describes this process in detail.

⁹⁷ Alacevich, 2009: 52; Sandilands, 1990: 174.

⁹⁸ As stated by Karl in his chapter, Colombia’s planning capacity simply “disintegrated” as a consequence of the bureaucratic purges.

administration took key public policy decisions in a predictably erratic manner. The Colombian agreement to rotate in office between the two main parties was not unheard of, a very similar agreement had existed between Conservatives and Liberals in Spain, at the end of the nineteenth century, known as *turno pacífico* (peaceful turn). Both agreements stipulated not only that each political orientation would be assigned the presidency in advance, after a stated period, but also that spoils of office were to be shared by turns, so that the party in power would appoint its members to public jobs en masse, firing the other party's at will.⁹⁹ Public policy planning, or even the most basic stability of public policy decisions, were almost impossible under such kinds of arrangements. The case of Colombia during the developmental era, or Spain at the end of the nineteenth century, show that the willingness to compromise and reach political agreements is not always good for public governance.

When all is said and done, probably the most effective public agency in Latin America during the whole developmental era, and certainly the most stable, was the Chilean Corporación de Fomento de la Producción (CORFO) created in 1939. The creation of CORFO was the result of a national political compromise.¹⁰⁰ But instead of an agreement on sharing the spoils of office, the two main political orientations in Chile reached an agreement on keeping this key developmental agency out of partisan politics. Therefore, the agency was staffed and run by career civil servants, instead of amateur political appointees. The agreement was finally broken by President Alessandri in 1958, and management positions in the public bureaucracy – not only in CORFO – began to be assigned increasingly on the basis of political loyalty, instead of professional competence.¹⁰¹ This had a very negative impact on the quality of governance in Chile, and eventually on democratic stability. Nevertheless, a stable run of almost twenty years under professional management was a considerable achievement for CORFO, and it was reflected in the very positive results of developmental policies in the country.

The case of CORFO shows the possibilities, but also the limits of institutional transfer, that is to say, the international translation of institutional blueprints. The TVA institutional model had a considerable influence on CORFO, in particular regarding the managerial and financial autonomy allowed to both public agencies. However, the principle of keeping certain areas of public governance out of short-term partisan conflict, and excluding the institutions in those areas from the spoils-system, was not an innovation in Chile at the time of the creation of CORFO. The practice went

⁹⁹ Varela Ortega, 2001: 422.

¹⁰⁰ The political compromise that was the basis for the creation of CORFO is analyzed by Silva in Chapter 12 of the present volume. See also Orihuela's Chapter 5.

¹⁰¹ Centeno and Ferraro, 2017: 79–81.

back to the nineteenth century in the country, when nonpartisan experts began to be hired on a long-term basis for leading public policy roles. In some celebrated cases, those public policy experts were also foreigners, and this reinforced their nonpartisan reliability.¹⁰²

In sum, the institutional blueprint of TVA as a model developmental agency could not work if a new public agency was to be considered part of the spoils, so that, with the next change of administration, most of the agency's management and technical staff were fired, and replaced by political appointees. The model didn't work under military dictatorships, either, because Latin American top military officers in government positions could never restrain themselves from interfering constantly with public policy decisions, and they were certainly very hostile towards citizens' participation in public policy.¹⁰³ The TVA blueprint for a successful developmental agency turned out to be most useful and productive in a democratic political environment that supported a stable framework for professional public governance, such as in Chile. If state institutions were conceived as professional, nonpartisan champions of the public interest, instead of being part and parcel of the spoils of office, the TVA model had the potential to provide a key contribution for institutional design.

FINAL REMARK

Let us briefly summarize the comparison between Spain's developmental success and Latin America's reputed failure. First, as noted in the previous chapters, the Latin American developmental states actually accomplished a great deal. It was only when public institutions stopped being consistently developmentalist, and turned instead to arbitrary, erratic, and authoritarian policy styles, that they completely failed to live up to the promise of the institutional blueprints provided by TVA, CEPAL, and Spanish professional bureaucracies. The problem was not that Latin American states were too involved in the economy, but that they never cohered as stable, democratic institutional actors preserved from partisan conflict. False readings of this legacy would have long-term negative repercussions for the reform of Latin American state institutions in the following decades. Among others, we discuss the issue of recent state reforms, and their results, in the last book of the present three-volume series on state and nation making in Latin America and Spain. The focus of research in the third volume is the neoliberal state and its aftermath, from 1990 to the present.

¹⁰² Centeno and Ferraro, 2013.

¹⁰³ See the first section above, as well as Chapter 3 and Chapter 7 in this volume.

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