

The old Latin America is no more, according to *Riordan Roett* in his contribution to this issue of INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND SOCIETY. Global changes have had a considerable impact, even in this apparently detached region of the world – mainly silently, as *Joachim Knoop* asserts, but by no means without drama.

From a geopolitical point of view, South America is now drifting into fields of gravitation that originate outside the hemisphere – an inevitable consequence, one might say, of the growing economic importance of the »emerging countries« and the development of a more multipolar world. China is now the main buyer of South American raw materials and economic growth in the region depends on it. Brazil itself has become a rapidly growing economic power, actively engaged in the advocacy of emerging-country interests in the structures of global governance – often in confrontation with the large industrialized nations. It is using its growing weight to create its own South American sphere of influence, pushing back the USA (see the contribution by *Britta Joerissen* and *Jochen Steinhilber*).

However, at the level of inter-state relations alone the transformation processes in Latin America cannot be fully apprehended. In this region, the drama that began with the Industrial Revolution is continuing to unfold, the drama of the immense global prosperity gap which has become the key challenge for the industrially less developed countries and their societies. Industrial underdevelopment – a politically incorrect word these days but apt nevertheless – is the background against which social and political processes in Latin America must be seen. Ultimately, social power structures have repeatedly hindered sustained economic development there – in contrast, for example, to East Asia. At the same time, political dynamics have been substantially determined by the constant challenge posed by underdevelopment.

These dynamics have drawn their particular energy from a problem which is closely connected to the issue of development, namely poverty and social inequality. The quest for a recipe for successful development has been filtered, so to speak, by the quest for social inclusion. But even distinctly left-wing governments seem to make progress only to the extent that economic development opens up new scope for redistribution. The issue of why political participation by the poor has not yet led to their social inclusion is addressed by *Hans-Jürgen Burchardt*, who highlights the veto that privileged groups have always – even in democracies – been able to exercise against effective and lasting redistribution.

The Cuban revolution had broken this veto and achieved a high degree of social inclusion, even without durable economic progress. But the Castro regime, too, has been unable to prevent a new social polarization, which has a great deal to do with its ideologically grounded inability to get the country on a track of sustained economic growth, despite all its investment in education and science. This is the subject of *Uwe Optenhögel's* article.

Cuba has long followed its own path. In contrast, »mainstream« Latin America has now, against the background of a favorable economic situation which has remained relatively unscathed by the global crisis (see *Joachim Knoop's* contribution), once more switched the political points in the direction of social inclusion. After the fiasco of the neoliberal Washington Consensus the political pendulum has swung markedly to the left. This change – a landslide indeed – is the topic of the contributions by *Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser* and, with specific reference to the particularly dramatic Bolivian case, *Pablo Stefanoni*. The fact that in Bolivia the structure of political representation was practically »re-invented« indicates how profound the loss of legitimacy was which the old »bourgeois« democracy had suffered.

How will economic development and social inclusion move ahead, now that politics has changed direction? This question is taken up in several contributions, and it appears that little has changed in this respect. With the notable exception of Brazil all countries continue to pin their hopes on raw materials and agricultural products, as well as – in the Caribbean – cheap labor. Little emphasis is being laid on education, scientific research and innovation. This is the paradigm that lies behind over 100 years of underdevelopment. As *Pablo Stefanoni* suggests at the end of his article: it is not just a matter of getting political priorities and the underlying ideas right. Important, too, is the extent to which the polity permits the right priorities. *Hans-Jürgen Burchardt's* thesis concerning the veto power of the established classes points in the same direction.

While all this puts government and the struggle for its control at the center, *Joachim Knoop* points towards a tendency that can make government itself irrelevant: in the Caribbean, the state is eroding while the private power of the armed transnational drugs trade is advancing. In this way, the drug cartels gain – temporarily? – some protection from strong states which have declared war on them and are unlikely to tolerate such protected spaces for long. Two questions arise in this connection. First, how much longer will there be room for very small peripheral states with

very modest resources? Second, how long can the repressive international drugs regime be maintained? *Juan Gabriel Tokatlian* and *Ivan Briscoe* demand and predict its imminent end in their article.

For years, articles in *INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND SOCIETY* have been focusing on the demise of the nation-state as the relevant space of economic regulation and on labor's struggle to come to terms with this challenge. In the present issue, *Torsten Müller*, *Hans-Wolfgang Platzler*, and *Stefan Rüb* take stock of the organizationally well established, but rather powerless global trade union federations, while *Wolfgang Kowalsky* discusses the trade unions' growing disenchantment with the project of European integration, which has taken an ever more labor-unfriendly course.

Finally, this issue contains a contribution on the ongoing theme of »war and peace«: *Ian Anthony* discusses the diminished importance which nuclear weapons will have for NATO in the coming years.

Social democracy in Europe is the main topic of the next issue of *INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND SOCIETY*.