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Sanders, James E.
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"The Path of Dictatorship": The Erosion of Democracy and Capitalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico and Colombia*

James E. Sanders**

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ABSTRACT | The first erosion of democracy in Latin America did not occur in the twentieth-century, but, rather, the nineteenth. I will argue that in Mexico and Colombia a vibrant, democratic political culture had emerged by the 1850s; however, by the 1870s, a political movement that united Liberals and Conservatives began to suspect that the democratic politics they had once regarded as making them modern was instead hindering their societies' progress. Democracy was not promoting, but, rather, hindering economic progress. This essay will explore the historic relation between capitalism (as Latin America entered into a period of export-oriented capitalist growth) and democracy (in a nineteenth century in which most of the world's republics were in Latin America).

KEYWORDS | Capitalism; Colombia; democracy; Mexico; nineteenth century; political culture; republicanism

"El camino de la dictadura": erosión de la democracia y capitalismo a finales del siglo XIX en México y Colombia

RESUMEN | La primera erosión de la democracia en Latinoamérica no ocurrió en el siglo XX; ocurrió en el siglo XIX. Argumentaré que, para la década de 1850, había surgido una cultura política vibrante y democrática en México y Colombia. Sin embargo, en la década de 1870, un movimiento político que unía a liberales y conservadores empezó a sospechar que las políticas democráticas que antes consideraban modernas estaban, en realidad, entorpeciendo el progreso de la sociedad. La democracia no estaba promoviendo, sino, por el contrario, obstaculizando el progreso económico. Este ensayo explorará la relación histórica entre capitalismo (a medida que Latinoamérica entraba en un periodo de crecimiento capitalista orientado a la exportación) y democracia (en un siglo XIX en el que la mayoría de las repúblicas del mundo estaban en Latinoamérica).

PALABRAS CLAVE | Capitalismo; Colombia; cultura política; democracia; México; republicanismo; siglo XIX

"O caminho da ditadura": o declínio da democracia e o capitalismo no final do século XIX no México e na Colômbia

RESUMO | O primeiro declínio da democracia na América Latina não ocorreu no século XX, mas sim no XIX. Nesse sentido, argumento que, em 1850, uma cultura política vibrante e democrática surgiu no México e na Colômbia; contudo, na década de 1870, um movimento político que unia liberais e conservadores começou a suspeitar que as políticas democráticas que antes eram consideradas modernas na realidade estavam impedindo o progresso da sociedade. A democracia não estava promovendo, mas sim o contrário, obstaculizando o progresso econômico. Este ensaio explora a relação histórica entre o capitalismo (à medida que a América Latina entrou em um período de crescimento capitalista orientado à exportação) e a democracia (em um século XIX em que a maioria das repúblicas do mundo estava nessa região).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | Capitalismo; Colômbia; cultura política; democracia; México; republicanismo; século XIX

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** Ph.D. in History, University of Pittsburgh, United States. Professor in the Department of History at Utah State University, United States. Latest publications: "Decolonizing Europe." In *The First Wave of Decolonization*, edited by Mark Thurner, 95-117. New York: Routledge, 2019; *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. ✉ james.sanders@usu.edu

In turn-of-the-century Mexico, the editors of *La Gaceta Comercial* surveyed the accomplishments of the decades-long project of national regeneration called the Porfiriato. Dismissing criticisms that President Porfirio Díaz' long rule was undemocratic, they instead applauded the regime's obtainment of order, thus allowing material progress: "Men of experience care little or nothing if governments are republican or monarchical; what is important is that, under one name or the other, in this or that form, that they *realize the ends of the State—security and justice, progress through order.*"[1] In both Mexico and Colombia, the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed projects to restrict vibrant, if often disorderly, democratic cultures, undertaken with the goals of promoting capitalist economic development. This essay, after briefly exploring why we should consider mid-nineteenth-century Colombia and Mexico as democratic, will focus on what those in control of the state thought they had to do to secure this capitalist development. In other words, in the context of already vibrant democratic experiments, what did the quest for capitalist development tell us about the historical relationship between capitalism and democracy around the world? In both Colombia and Mexico, the correlation was negative. Both Liberal and Conservative political elites determined that too much democracy was inimical to capitalist development. Thus, both acted (Mexico successfully, Colombia much less so) to restrict democracy and promote capitalism (part of a broader erosion of democratic culture across the hemisphere, I will suggest). Both Mexico and Colombia provide heretofore-unutilized case studies—since Latin America is a region of the world not much considered in these scholarly arguments—for a long-running debate, both scholarly and popular, over the historic relationship between democracy and capitalism.

The historic relationship between democracy and capitalism is the rare debate that ignites both scholarly (across numerous disciplines) and popular interest. The philosopher and public intellectual Slavoj Žižek, in reference to China's present-day authoritarian capitalism, queried, "What if democracy is no longer the necessary and natural accompaniment of economic development, but its impediment?" (2009, A21). Following Žižek, most non-scholarly North Americans and many Western Europeans, especially politicians and public intellectuals, assume the relationship as positive, perhaps the two terms are perfect synonyms: capitalism supports democracy and democracy supports capitalism. Martin Wolf (2016), the chief economics commentator for the *Financial Times*, states, "A natural connection exists between liberal democracy…and capitalism."[2] Among historians and social scientists there is less consensus. Many assert, there exists a strong, positive connection between capitalism and democracy (if framed often as unintended consequences of capitalist development). Others see no correlation between the two processes or even argue that the two are historically antagonistic.[3] This project will explore how, in Mexico and Colombia, the massive expansion of capitalism (or at least the desire to join an Atlantic capitalist system) led to the erosion, if not complete destruction, of democracy in those two societies (and, I will suggest, weakened democratic culture across the hemisphere).

A new wave of research has reassessed the history of democracy in Latin America. An older master narrative gave Latin America no role in the world history of democracy, at least in the nineteenth century. While most Spanish American states were republics, these were largely seen as anarchic failures, pantomimes of true democracies. However, new research has re-examined nineteenth-century Latin America's political and cultural history, recovering a rich, vibrant experimentation with democracy and republicanism, promoted especially by popular actors. Whether measured through voting, constitutional guarantees for individual rights, daily democratic practices (attending legislative sessions in the galleries, demonstrations, political clubs), or Latin Americans' own sense of their societies' success in creating democratic republics, Spanish America appears at the vanguard of the world history of democracy, especially compared to the United States (due to racial restrictions) or Europe (due to class restrictions).

The vindication of democracy's history, however, necessitates a reconsideration of the interaction of capitalism and democracy as well. If Mexico and Colombia were democratic in the 1860s and 1870s, these democratic republics collapsed over the next two decades. Why? This collapse happened at the same time as the expansion of capitalism through the region, after decades of economic stagnation. Was this rise of capitalism and the fall of democracy simply coincidence or were causal factors at work? Finally, how do Mexico's and Colombia's histories fit into the larger debate on the historical relationship between capitalism and democracy?

1 "Gobiernos caros y gobiernos baratos." *La Gaceta Comercial*, 2 March 1900. Emphasis in original. All translations mine, unless noted. I have included titles and authors for newspaper articles when available; however, many articles in nineteenth-century newspapers carried neither title nor author, reflecting instead the general editorial slant of the paper.

2 Wolf was speaking of this historic relationship; he is much less sanguine about current prospects.

3 For both a review of the literature and one of the most sophisticated proponents of the positive link, see Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992).

The Debate

Whether capitalism foments democracy (or vice-versa) or whether capitalism restricts democracy (or vice-versa) has engendered reams of debate (Almond 1991; Noble 1985). The argument most accepted by the public, at least in the North Atlantic, is that the two are mutually reinforcing. This argument does not lack for scholarly defenders, the grandfather of whom was Schumpeter, who argued "historically, the modern democracy rose along with capitalism, and in causal connection with it" (1975 [1942], 296); Schumpeter was not making a general statement, he was referring to "bourgeois democracy," of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (he then argued that in the post-war future, majorities will use democracy to press for socialism) (1975 [1942], 297). Perhaps the most ardent proponent has been Milton Friedman: "History suggests only that capitalism is a necessary condition for political freedom" (Friedman and Friedman 1962, 10). He claims, "The kind of economic organization that provides economic freedom directly, namely, competitive capitalism, also promotes political freedom..." (Friedman and Friedman 1962, 9). Peter Berger agrees, arguing that "capitalism creates 'escape hatches' from political power" that prevent totalitarianism; therefore, "Capitalism is a necessary but not sufficient condition of democracy" (1986, 80-81).[4]

Friedman's ideas have not faded over time but been modified by other scholars. David Landes echoes Friedman: "...freedom is a necessary if not sufficient condition of development" (1999, 432). In a 2010 survey of the history of capitalism, Joyce Appleby agrees with Friedman on the congruity between democracy and capitalism, but she sees the two as mutually reinforcing, instead of democracy arising from capitalism. For her, democracy foments capitalism; English political freedoms and open political culture led to the cultural values that fostered capitalism (Appleby 2010, 87-120).[5] She then proceeds to argue that capitalism's attacks on tradition and listless aristocracy, and its openness to talent and positive view of change, helped promote democracy. She concludes that the culture of capitalism in the West "is also the culture that nurtured natural rights, democracy, and a humanitarian sensibility" (2010, 162).[6]

Most of these studies do not consider Latin America at all (a problem we will discuss more below), but one of the most influential, Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens' *Capitalist Development and Democracy,* does. The authors' sophisticated analysis does not just make assumptions about the two institutions' compatibility, but carefully considers how capitalism changes societies and how these changes affect democracy's chance for success. They argue, "Rather—we conclude—capitalist development is associated with democracy because it transforms class structure, strengthening the working and middle classes and weakening the landed upper class" (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 7).[7] One of the most widely used texts on Latin American politics, by Peter Smith, also sees a strong correlation between economic development and the initiation of democratic regimes in the early twentieth century (2005, 50).[8]

Other scholars, following Marx' classic texts, argue the opposite, that capitalism is inimical to democracy. Marx argued that capitalism and democracy would enter into a "comprehensive contradiction": either workers will use their greater numbers to obtain power via democracy and then restrict capitalist exploitation, or capitalists will have to subvert democracy to contain such a threat (1895 [1850], 69). Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh (2000) have shown how hostile eighteenth-century capitalists were to any democratic movements by the poor. Curiously, conservative economists and political scientists, especially Milton Friedman, have argued that modern welfare democracy is a threat to capitalism, as the state erodes capital's independence and free market operation (Almond 1991, 470-472).

This side of the debate, that questions the positive correlation of capitalism and democracy, has found much more reception among Latin Americanists. Guillermo O'Donnell's pioneering work on bureaucratic authoritarianism described the "marked elective affinity" between capitalist modernization and dictatorships (but focused on the second half of the twentieth century) (1979, 198). As Jeremy Adelman notes, "In contrast to Anglo-America, the cradle of many theories about the mutually reinforcing relationship between capitalism and democracy, South America is often portrayed as an inversion, the region in which the structure of capitalism undermined democracy or where democratic activity strangled capitalist development" (2003, 280). Adelman argues that democracies were never strong or legitimate enough in Latin America to survive changes to the economic moment in which they were conceived, falling apart under economic stress (Adelman 2003). While Adelman focuses on contingency,[9] for other

4 See also Fukuyama (1992, 107-108).

5 Engerman and Sokoloff (1997) argue that greater equality promotes markets, which allows capitalist industrialization.

6 Later in the book, she qualifies this claim, given China's rise (Appleby 2010, 162, 159-162, 174, 362, 366, 433-434).

7 Huntington (1991, 59-72, 311) also sees a positive correlation between economic development and democracy. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, 32-33) come to a somewhat similar conclusion, arguing that capitalist industrialization creates a non-landed elite more willing to tolerate democracy (and more fearful of provoking a revolution) than an elite whose economic base is land.

8 He sees such correlation breaking down later in the century.

9 Contingency and ambiguity also seems to be the approach of many scholars of capitalism (and democracy) in

Latin Americanists, such as Atilio Boron (following O'Donnell), it is accepted that the military coups of the 1960s and 1970s proved that capitalist development could not tolerate democracy (1995, 2).

A third group (to which Adelman partially belongs) sees no intrinsic, necessary relation between capitalism and democracy (Karl 2018).[10] Phillipe Schmitter and Terry Karl do see a general "long-term compatibility between democracy and capitalism," but not an essential relationship (1991, 86). John Mueller argues that they are "quite independent: each can exist without the other" (1999, 231). A 2000 study by political scientists concluded that there was no direct link between the establishment of democracies and economic development, but that once established, high economic development all but ensures democracies' survival (Przeworski *et al*. 2000, 269-278). As with most of the social science studies mentioned, no attention was paid to pre-twentieth-century political experiments.

As with this last study, a central problem for this paper is that very few of these works consider Latin America at all, and when they do, they only examine the twentieth century. Nineteenth-century Latin America is basically not considered in these arguments, and the assumption has been that it has not been democratic (or, at times, capitalist). Friedman sees political freedom as developing in and a product of the "Western world" (Friedman and Friedman 1962, 9). Latin America, not part of the West in this vision, is thus not very interesting for the study of the relationship between democracy and capitalism. As Niall Ferguson bluntly stated, the only relevant question is "Why did capitalism and democracy fail to thrive in Latin America?" (2011, 119).

Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America

Ferguson is wrong about both democracy and capitalism in Latin America. However, he is in good company, at least until recently. As noted above, few scholars interested in the question of the world history of capitalism and democracy have included nineteenth-century Spanish America in their studies, casually dismissing the region's nineteenth-century history as enjoying no democracy. Samuel Huntington asserts Latin America "has had a corporatist, authoritarian culture" (1996, 46) which was "opposed to the capitalism and democracy of the West" (1996, 149). Deborah Yashar is succinct: "Until recently, democracy has appeared elusive in Latin America" (2003, 302). Paul Cartledge (2016), in his comparison of ancient and modern democracy, does not even mention Spanish America (with the standard focus on Britain, the United States, and France). John Mueller also assumes that democracy has no long history in Latin America; historically, he sees the United States promoting democracy in the region (largely false, of course) against a balky Latin American pupil (1999, 217). Thomas Bender contrasts U.S. political development with Latin America: "Still, the practice of politics—the political culture—was friendlier to democratization in North America than in South America. Social and political developments in the United States—driven in part by competing elites and a two-party system—were within decades opening opportunities for white males, but such was not the case in the newly independent South American countries" (2006, 100). As we will discuss below, this is incorrect.

Even the careful Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens do not largely study the nineteenth century, as they see no effective democracy there, due to a limit of state consolidation; "initial democratization" in the region took place in the twentieth century (1992, 197).[11] Indeed, their assertion that contestation had to be institutional, and not armed resistance, seems logical. However, they do examine the nineteenth-century United States and Europe (and twentieth-century Latin America), when states faced much armed resistance (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 83-132). As I will argue below, Mexico and Colombia seem to fit their definitions of democracy (at least as well as, if not better than, many European states for which they do consider nineteenth-century developments). While Smith criticizes scholars for their "shortsightedness" of only looking at the past few decades when studying Latin American democracy, he begins his own in-depth study, his first cycle of democracy, in 1900 (2005, 12 [quote], 20-22).

Perhaps this is not surprising, for until the late 1990s, the scholarly consensus among Latin Americanists themselves was that the nineteenth century was decidedly undemocratic. Howard Wiarda sees democracy as essentially alien to Latin America's founding principles, which were feudal, statist, and corporatist (2001, 8).[12] Ronald Schneider also understands democratic practices as essentially "alien" to the nineteenth-century Latin American character and experience, in which patron-client politics and violence ruled (2007, 6). Lawrence Harrison simply dismisses any history of democratic republicanism in the region until the late twentieth century (1997, 2).[13] Miguel Centeno sees Latin American states as basically "despotic," if

twentieth-century Mexico and Colombia (Karl 2018; Gillingham and Smith 2014; Walker 2013; Offner 2019; López-Pedreros 2019).

10 Barrington Moore 1966 traces how capitalism (and a strong bourgeoisie) could lead to democracy under certain conditions (a weak peasantry and a compliant aristocracy), but to fascism under others.

11 See also Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, 18).

12 See also Duncan (1976, 17-18) and Worcester (1992).

13 See also Fernández-Armesto (2003, 133-134).

very weak (2002, 10). Even scholars who reject simplistic notions that Latin American culture was anathema to democracy, only see democracy arriving late to the scene. The popular idea of three waves of democracy in Latin America (beginning in early twentieth century from above, then populist movements, then post-military coup re-establishments) dominated. Most of the critical studies of democracy, capitalism, labor, and the state that appeared before the late 1990s take their starting point as 1900 or later (Collier and Collier 1991). Thus, any examination of the relationship between capitalism and democracy in Latin America would have to start in the twentieth century, since Latin America was not democratic in the nineteenth.

However, in the last twenty years there has been a major re-examination of the power, efficacy, and importance of democracy and republicanism in nineteenth-century Spanish America. These new political cultures emerged during the Independence era, strengthening around mid-century, for example, in Colombia with the Liberal Party's election in 1848. In Mexico, the same culture was more disrupted by foreign and domestic warfare, but began (in earnest) in 1854 with the period known as La Reforma and accelerated in the battle against Maximilian's invading French army (who allied with Mexican conservatives [1861-1867]). The epoch of greatest democratic experimentation (after many radical experiments during the Independence Era) was thus a period of Liberal rule; Liberals in both Mexico and Colombia sought to increase individual freedom—politically (expanding citizenship, enacting a broad array of rights), economically (abolishing slavery in Colombia, terminating monopolies), and culturally (embracing a vision of American democratic republicanism against European despotism).[14] As we will see below, popular groups, both urban and rural, embraced their own visions of these reforms; indeed, it was popular groups who often created and promoted this democratic culture, prodding along their elite Liberal allies, who accepted democratic changes as the price necessary to secure popular allies as voters and soldiers (in the numerous civil wars against Conservatives). Conservatives, however, were much more suspicious about changes they dubbed "savage democracy."[15] Exploring how democratic Latin America was in the nineteenth century is an on-going project, involving scholars in Latin America, North America, and Europe (Sanders 2104b; Sabato 2006 and 2018; López-Alves 2011; Cárdenas Ayala 2010; Aguilar Rivera 2019; Thomson 2007; Sala de Touron 2005; Vanegas Useche 2010). I will quickly argue that in the mid-nineteenth century, Latin America was as democratic as the United States and far more democratic than Europe, which are the regions regularly considered as the heartlands of democracy (and capitalism).

What is meant by democracy, however? There is some, if incomplete, consensus. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens define democracy as the state responding to representative rule, regular free and fair elections, freedom of expression and association, and the extent of the suffrage (1992, 10, 43). In a much-cited essay, Schmitter and Karl define democracy as involving accountability in the public realm of government to citizens, who elect representatives, in a competitive and cooperative environment (1991, 76). Peter Smith defines democracy by three principles: participation (no large part of society is excluded from politics), competition (fair elections), and accountability (rulers must justify their actions to their citizens) (2005, 7). Democracy had a much more catholic and expansive meaning in nineteenth-century Spanish America itself, focusing on popular sovereignty and mass participation (the importance of popular pressure was critical), but also suggesting broad enjoyment of numerous rights (by all adult men, regardless of race and class), citizenship, and notions of liberty, equality and fraternity. Let us quickly see how nineteenth-century Mexico and Colombia fit these definitions, which involve institutions, daily political practice, and political culture.

Institutionally, Colombia and Mexico's constitutions of the period granted citizenship and voting rights to a wide swath, even universal at times, of the adult male population. Colombia eliminated all property and literacy rights for the suffrage in 1853, enacting unrestricted adult male suffrage (Pombo and Guerra 1986, 8-10).[16] Mexico came close to doing so in 1857, only demanding "an honest way of making a living" (*Constitución Federal* 1857, 37; Arroyo García 2011). Voting is but one aspect of democracy, but it does allow easy comparisons to the deep restrictions on suffrage in the United States (due to racial restrictions) and to Europe (due to class restrictions). Indeed, the vast majority of European states only adopted universal manhood suffrage after World War I (Tilly 2004, 214). Historians have at times justified ignoring such impressive suffrage rights in Latin America due to the high levels of fraud in nineteenth-century elections.[17] However, fraud was hardly only endemic to Latin America. As Boss Tweed himself declared, "The ballots made no result; the counters made the result" (Brands 2010, 348). Yet, few historians dismiss the United States as undemocratic, even with fraud determining the outcomes of national elections, such as in 1876. Even with

14 For the independence era, see Lasso (2007) and Guerra (1992). For liberalism, see Hale (1989) and Jaramillo Uribe (1964).

15 Vicente Cárdenas to Sergio Arboleda, Quito, 19 November 1878, Archivo Central del Cauca (Popayán, Colombia) (hereafter ACC), Fondo Arboleda, signatura 1,506.

16 The 1863 Colombian constitution allowed states to determine citizenship requirements.

17 Sabato critiques such historians (2018, 50-79).

fraud, these institutional advances were not sterile, but reflected vibrant popular political activity. Popular groups vociferously defended their right to vote, protesting fraudulent maneuvering. Indigenous people from small villages near Popayán, Colombia complained that local politicians illegally denied them the "right to vote that the law allows Granadan [Colombia was then known as Nueva Granada] citizens;" by doing so, these politicians "cheat the republic, rip apart our principles, [and] undermine republican truth."[18]

Yet the right to vote is distinct from actual voting. As discussed above, the standard assumption is that mass participation in electoral politics (and thus democracy) did not begin until the 1940s. However, this is mostly just an assumption, as we still lack many local studies of voting patterns (Sabato 2018, 68). Yet, in Colombia, we have some evidence that belies this notion of limited participation. In the 1856 Colombian presidential elections, for which solid election data exists, 40 percent of eligible voters (all adult males, Colombia had enacted universal adult male suffrage) cast their ballots (Bushnell 1971, 242). In 1865, in Cali, Colombia, elections for the national congress enjoyed a voter participation rate of over 57 percent (Sanders 2004, 127). While rates were generally significantly lower, one can no longer argue that elections were only of interest to the elite few. More important, however, is that studies of popular republicanism and democracy have shown that elections alone did not define nineteenth-century democracy, but that democratic culture was tightly linked to a broader popular republicanism (Vanegas Useche 2010, 11-46; Malamud 2007, 19-30).

Indeed, the repertoire of politics went far beyond voting; more important than looking at constitutions or elite opinion on democracy were the daily actions and regular discourse of the subaltern majority. Scholars have examined popular groups' wide-ranging appropriation of democratic and republican politics, via voting, petitioning, marching in demonstrations, serving in citizen militias, pressuring legislators from galleries, participating in local councils, attending political clubs, and generally debating the political issues of the day through the public reading of newspapers, listening to political oratory, and conversing among themselves, creating a democratic public sphere in town squares, village markets, churches, cockfighting pits, and taverns.[19] While Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens see capitalist development as helping to foment civil society (a key support of democracy), Mexico and Colombia had relatively thriving civil societies before large-scale capitalist activity (1992, 6, 274); instead, later in the century, Mexico's Porfiriato (1876-1911) and Colombia's Regeneration (1870s-1890s) both worked to erode and debilitate civil society (especially any that had direct political ends).[20] Before these restrictions, popular actors engaged in quotidian politics in support of Liberal and Conservative Parties, both at the ballot box, in the town square to sway public opinion, and, during civil war, on the battlefield (the citizen-soldier was seen as key to republican citizenship). Bender argues that Latin America differed from North America since the American Revolution empowered popular groups, while in the south, "Strong military force was maintained with armies that were able and willing to return these groups to a condition of powerlessness" (2006, 99). This was not the case in the slightest, as popular groups wielded great influence in the face of weak Latin American states. Indeed, it would be popular groups' power and influence, and the state's weakness, that would turn many elites towards projects of national Regeneration (which entailed restricting democracy). But before this moment, whether measured by participation or by competition, Mexico and Colombia were demonstrably democratic.

Furthermore, popular groups clearly expected their participation to matter (accountability). Two petitions from indigenous peoples reveal how popular groups embraced the idea that in a democratic republic they were sovereign and the state had to respond to them. Indians from Huimilpan in central Mexico wrote to the state officials in 1856 to reclaim some land unjustly taken from them. Their strongest argument was that the Governor or President was beholden to them as a servant of the nation: a "republican magistrate" should dedicate himself "to serve the *Pueblo* who elevated him."[21] Similarly, Indians from Mocondino, in the Cauca region of Colombia, expressed confidence that an "essentially democratic government," in defense of which "we have shed so much blood," would accede to their wishes not to have their communal lands divided.[22] These indigenous villagers assumed the state would listen to them and act on their wishes, that they were citizens (which they legally were and which stands in stark contrast to the supposedly more democratic nineteenth-century United States), and that their citizenship mattered.

Culturally, and perhaps as important as this institutional and practiced democracy, mid-nineteenth-century

18 The undersigned residents of Silvia and Indians of Ambaló to Governor, Silvia, 8 August 1856, ACC, Archivo Muerto, paquete 62, legajo 45.

19 This literature has grown too vast to cite comprehensively. For a bibliographic review, see Sanders (2014a).

20 For civil society, see Forment (2003) and Uribe-Uran (2000).

21 Trinidad García and 5 others to Ecsmo. Señor, Mexico, 30 August 1856, Archivo General de la Nación (México), Instituciones Gubernamentales: Época Moderna y Contemporánea, Administración Pública Federal Siglo XIX, Fondo Justicia, Justicia, volumen 547, expediente 13,106.

22 El pequeño cabildo de Indíjenas de Mocondino to State President, Pasto, 18 February 1866, ACC, Archivo Muerto, paquete 94, legajo 54.

Spanish Americans thought of themselves as leading the world in democratic and republican practices. Indeed, they thought such practices defined their societies as modern, in contrast to a backward, monarchical Europe and a United States struggling with slavery and racism. In 1868, Mexico City's *La Opinión Nacional* argued that "our triumphant democracy" in Mexico had far surpassed Old World accomplishments.[23] Similarly, the capital's *La Chinaca* declared that the future of democracy lay in the Americas: "today we sustain the banner of the democratic idea" against European tyrants.[24] *El Globo* posited that while Europe and the United States measured progress through industrial and military might, Mexico insisted that its "republican virtue," and democratic constitution best defined nineteenth-century civilization.[25] In Colombia, President José María Obando celebrated the 1853 Constitution as "the most democratic code that has governed any pueblo."[26] If celebrating democracy and its values is an important part of actually having a democracy, in the 1860s, Mexico and Colombia, along with other American societies, were the most democratic countries in the world.

Therefore, using Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens's, Schmitter and Karl's, and Smith's definitions (participation, competition, accountability), Mexico and Colombia were certainly democracies from the 1850s to 1870s (with the only caveat being regular elections, as elections were often interrupted by foreign and domestic war). Indeed, in regard to the extent of the suffrage (participation), Colombia and Mexico were two of the most democratic nations in the world, surpassing the United State (due to its racial restrictions) and most of Europe (due to class restrictions). Indeed, in a world where democracy and republicanism were tightly linked (but, of course, not synonymous), the vast majority of the nineteenth-century world's republics were in Latin America—in 1847, Europe only counted one (Hobsbawm 1996, 312). Yes, these were messy democracies, often weakened by fraud, and with active plebeian voters and citizen soldiers, over whom fragile states struggled to keep order. The weakness of the national state actually made governments more accountable, which perhaps reflected popular groups' critical criteria for democracy. Competition is more complex, as the party in power tended to dominate elections; however, there was intense electoral competition—indeed, competition was so intense that it regularly spilled over into civil wars. Colombia and Mexico fit or surpass the standard definitions of democracy—it is simply a lack of order that often marks them as non-democratic. However, order itself is not inherently democratic—indeed, authoritarian regimes pride themselves on securing order. Yet conceptions of order were vitally important. My argument will hinge on how disorder came to define democracy in elite minds; therefore, to secure order and capitalist development, popular democracy had to be undone.

Capitalism and Democracy's Erosion

By the 1870s, ruling Liberals in both Mexico and Colombia, having defeated Conservatives on the battlefield and at the ballot box, began to question their own project to promote democratic republicanism as the best path to creating modern societies (and their alliances with popular liberal voters and soldiers). They had long expected their political program would lead to economic success—freeing people politically would also free them economically. However, in the 1870s, Liberals in both Mexico and Colombia began to have severe doubts; democracy, especially popular democracy, did not seem to be leading to the same type of industrial capitalist success as was becoming increasingly evident in the United States. In fact, many began to suspect that not only was democracy not engendering capitalism, it was actually hindering it. Disorderly, demanding plebeians, civil wars, and general uncertainty prevented internal investment, but, more critically, given the relative paucity of liquid capital in both Mexico and Colombia, deterred foreign capital. (Indeed, while I want to stress commonalities across the Americas, the need for foreign capital, rather than an ability to rely on domestic capital as in the United States, made the restriction of democracy and the assurance of order even more critical in Mexico and Colombia). Independent or moderate Liberals in both societies now turned to new projects, called the Regeneration in Colombia and the Porfiriato in Mexico (although also called the Regeneration in the latter too), which would seek to rein in democracy and promote capitalist economic growth.[27]

As with democracy earlier, we need definitions. Seth Rockman has noted that, in the new histories of capitalism, "Few works in the field begin with an explicit statement of what the author means by capitalism" (2014, 442). Since capitalism is such a slippery concept, this is a tempting approach; however, I will use "capitalism" as a system in which capital has the ability, perhaps

23 *La Opinión Nacional*, 1 April 1868.

24 *La Chinaca*, 30 June 1862.

25 *El Globo*, 5 July 1867.

26 José M. Obando, "Mensaje del Presidente," Bogotá, 1 February 1854, Archivo General de la Nación (Bogotá) (hereafter AGNC), Fondo Archivo Histórico Legislativo Congreso de la República, 1854, Cámara, Correspondencia Oficial IV, 2.

27 For economic histories, see Cosío Villegas (1965), Coatsworth (1981), Ocampo (1996), Kourí (2004), Palacios (1983), Valencia Llano (1988), and Knight (1986). For an interpretation that stresses relations to the coffee export sector, rather than views of democracy for understanding Colombian politics, see Bergquist (1986).

predominant, to transform society.[28] The culture of capitalism is essential to understanding its evolution, as Appelby argues that "...people think that because economies are about material things, only material forces operate in it when in fact economies involve human beings who don't do anything without an idea in their heads" (2010, 89). In the case of Mexico and Colombia, it is perhaps this desire for this transformation, the effort to attract capital, that is most important, rather than the effects of capital proper. I will therefore focus on the decisions (to restrict democratic culture and institutions) made by political actors, and how these actors, and the broader culture in which they lived, understood the relationship between capitalism and democracy. [29]

As with studies of world democracy, late nineteenth-century Latin America is often left out of histories of capitalism, in spite of how capital was remaking those societies (Appleby 2010, 248). Indeed, this was not Mexico's first capitalist moment. The Bajío region, especially in the late eighteenth century, was the most economically dynamic part of the Americas, with capital transforming relations of production in the silver mines and haciendas there (Tutino 2011). Yet Hidalgo's rebellion (1810-1811) destroyed much of these changes, and it is hard to find much evidence that capital, which, while not unimportant, was transmogrifying society between the 1820s and the 1870s. Instead, great contests of politics and religion were by far more important. This changed beginning in the 1870s, as political and cultural elites began a program to reshape their societies in the hope of promoting capitalism.

Political elites in both Colombia and Mexico engaged in a titanic effort to redefine democracy, sovereignty, state power, and order in the public sphere. Democracy, once celebrated as a marker of Mexico and Colombia's success in crafting modern societies, now became associated with the disorder, chaos, and rowdy plebeians that impeded economic development.[30] Mexico's *La República* stated succinctly, "If we want to progress, we must avoid anything that could disturb the public order. Peace is necessary and indispensable for the fomenting of material improvements of a nation."[31] In Colombia, the problem of "public order" was equally central; only with order could Colombia develop "its industries," foment "railroads and every type of material improvements," and thus obtain "true civilization."[32] This point seems obvious: without peace and order, who would risk capital in railroads, mines, plantations or factories? Yet, disorder had become strongly linked with democracy by the 1870s and 1880s. Securing order was not simply a matter of strengthening the state (although this was critical), but of redefining the political culture from one of popular sovereignty and democratic contestation, to one of order and authority.

For these Regenerations to work, the pueblo had to be forced to understand that their visions of and faith in democracy were no longer valid. In Colombia, Juan Ulloa argued "there is much work to be done in order to make the masses understand what real and true liberty and democracy are."[33] Needless to say, what Ulloa thought democracy meant was quite different from what the pueblo believed. In Mexico, the most sophisticated public proponents of the new Díaz system were the editors of *La Libertad* (including Justo Sierra, Mexico's premiere late-century public intellectual). They argued that Mexico had to forget its democratic past, and face a future defined by the hard realities of capitalist development instead of "an unrealizable democracy." The poor should no longer place their hopes in a "promised land" of politics, but only in labor and work. [34] In Colombia, President Miguel Antonio Caro argued in 1892 that constant "political activity" had left society in a state of "permanent upheaval," "robbing minds and arms from industry and work" (Caro 1932, 56). Cali's aptly named *El Ferrocarril* vociferously complained about "these too frequent elections" that "totally impede the progress of the country." By ending the practice of constant elections, "citizens can dedicate themselves to their professions, without being distracted." Indeed, "Epidemics, locusts, droughts, floods, hurricanes, storms, earthquakes, and famine; all these calamities...since they are transitory, pale in comparison to that great calamity of our elections."[35] Democracy, once a source of pride, was now simply a disaster or utopian dream. Economics, not politics, was the way forward.

A central factor that elites blamed for economic stagnation were the constant civil wars and upheavals that disturbed the peace in both Mexico and Colombia and

28 Thus, this work follows an earlier, more culturally-centered Marx, versus a later modes of production-centered Marx (1964). For a somewhat similar definition, see Appleby (2010, 6-7 and 118).

29 My methodology is the humanistic (or historical) method, somewhat akin to what political scientists call "process tracing."

30 I am not arguing that disorder actually impeded economic development (it probably had less effects than assumed), only that elites thought it did (and acted on that supposition). For a critique of those assuming that order was key, see Deas (2011). For the surprising success of the economy in Michoacán in the early part of the century, see Chowning (1999).

31 *La República*, 29 August 1890. For positivism, see Hale (1989) and Peludo Gómez (2010).

32 "Hagamos algo serio (primer artículo)." *El Deber*, 1 October 1878.

33 Juan E. Ulloa to Salvador Camacho Roldán, Palmira, 19 June 1879, AGNC, Sección Academia Colombiana de Historia, Fondo Salvador Camacho Roldán, caja 13, carpeta 166, 6.

34 *La Libertad*, 27 December 1884.

35 *El Ferrocarril*, 16 May 1879.

deterred investment, both domestic and foreign. These civil wars were seen as tightly linked to, and perhaps the inevitable outcome of, the democratic politics of the previous decades. Bogotá's *El Conservador* complained about Colombians' pride in their democratic republic: "Talking incessantly about liberty, and with the presumption of being the freest nation in the world," had reduced Colombia "almost to the level of barbarians." Colombia was a "pueblo whose industry" was not advanced enough to break the bad habits of "anarchy" and "disorder" that plebeians had learned during civil wars.[36] Colombian elites complained about plebeians' unwillingness to labor and the "demoralization of the masses accustomed to life in the army camps."[37] Democratic politics simply lead to civil wars and disorders—an "abominable anarchy" or the spread of "the virus of anarchy."[38]

Capital and industry could correct such evils. Politicians in both Colombia and Mexico hoped that a focus on labor would civilize the poor, "distracting them from sterile political discussions."[39] *El Ferrocarril* argued that railroads created peace and prosperity, since by demanding cargo, they expanded agriculture and mining. Instead of being involved in politics, citizens "will try to become rich" and "being property holders and educated, will come to constitute one of the best elements of order."[40] Mexico's *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* echoed this sentiment, declaring that with the spread of commerce following the steam engine's tracks, "the agitated spirit of political contests will direct and apply its activity to other enterprises and labors."[41] Democracy impeded capitalism; but, as *El Conservador* suggested and Díaz explicitly stated in an interview, perhaps one day, capitalist development might allow for more democracy (Creelman 1908).

As with the passage from *La Gaceta Comercial* that opened this essay, more and more politicians and intellectuals began to declare that it really did not matter if a society's form of government was democratic or republican or even monarchial, but that it kept order and promoted economic growth. While Liberals had formerly celebrated revolutions that installed democratic governments, *El Ferrocarril* vociferously objected: "We declare ourselves against all revolutions, because we are convinced that the worst government is better than the most perfect revolution."[42] What mattered in a government was for rights and property to be respected, regardless of its form. Bogotá's *El Deber* argued that the world did not admire Colombia for its republicanism, but instead saw its disorder as a "scandal" that threatened property rights; thus, securing such rights was the most important aspect of government, not whether its form was that of a monarchy or republic.[43]

Others went even further, openly advocating for a dictatorship that would emerge in all but name under the Porfiriato in Mexico. In Colombia, the Independent Liberal (a faction of Liberals aligning themselves with Conservatives) Foción Mantilla wanted a government that would "only attend to the salvation of order, even at the cost of a dictatorship."[44] Eliseo Payán, once a fervent democrat but later President of Colombia under the Regeneration, in 1880 declared that due to chronic instability and "the violent attack on property" that Colombia had suffered, "capital had fled or is hidden," while "industry is annihilated;" therefore, to correct these evils, "the path of dictatorship is considered justifiable as the way to obtain order and peace."[45] The needs of capital could justify a dictatorship.

Mexico followed the "path of dictatorship" most successfully. José Ramón Leal, in a series of letters published in México's influential *El Siglo Diez y Nueve,* praised the Díaz regime as "the future." He argued that Mexico had to turn away from internecine politics to instead focus on trade and industry: "the time has arrived to leave behind all other concerns in order to unite in a reciprocal and common interest, through relations of industry, contract, and commerce, that is the urgent necessity of modern life." Instead of the old republican hostility to Spain, Mexico should imitate its "moderate monarchy." Mexico's past of democratic politics mattered not. Today "civilization" was defined as a "workshop;" those nations not active and working would soon be passed by in the race to progress. Key to this progress was that Mexico adopt technologies like the telegraph and railways, but also take advantage of

36 *El Conservador*, 21 March 1882, found in the papers of Sergio Arboleda, ACC, Fondo Arboleda, Signatura 174.

37 C. de la Cadena to Salvador Camacho Roldán, Cali, 1 November1878, AGNC, Sección Academia Colombiana de Historia, Fondo Salvador Camacho Roldán, caja 6, carpeta 61, 14.

38 For first quotation, see *El 21 de Abril*, 18 May 1879; for second quotation, see *El Correo Nacional*, 7 January 1891.

39 Francisco Marulanda to Julián Trujillo, Popayán, 20 November 1880, AGNC, Sección Colecciones, Fondo Enrique Ortega Ricaurte, Serie Generales y Civiles, caja 93, carpeta 342, p. 18,184; for Mexico, see *La Libertad*, 8 November 1884. See also, Weiner (2004, 25-47).

40 *El Ferrocarril*, 1 March 1878.

41 *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* reprinted in *El Aguijón*, 10 June 1872.

42 *El Ferrocarril*, 31 October 1879.

43 "Sistema Representativo." *El Deber*, 18 March 1879.

44 Foción Mantilla to Salvador Camacho Roldán, Popayán, 4 December 1878, AGNC, Sección Academia Colombiana de Historia, Fondo Salvador Camacho Roldán, caja 9, carpeta 104, 1.

45 Speech of Eliseo Payán to Congress, Bogotá, 8 April 1880, *Rejistro Oficial* (Popayán), 1 May 1880.

"the marvels of credit."[46] Credit was essential: it was "the motor force of modern life."[47] But to do so, it would have to abandon its old democratic concerns: "Political science knows nothing more lamentable than those Republics where everyone leads and no one obeys…" Leal closed his argument by noting that if necessary, to secure order and develop the economy, "a healthy dictatorship" would be the most propitious path.[48] Leal's essays show the tight connection between dismissing democracy and the promotion of capital as the main "motor force" in society.

Justo Sierra was not as blunt as Leal in his promotion of dictatorship, but he associated the Porfiriato even more closely with capitalism. In his survey of Mexican history, Sierra contrasted the great political gains made under the liberal President Benito Juárez and the Reform in the 1850s and 1860s, with the poor state of Mexico's economy and society. Sierra argued that the Reform's promotion of "democracy," and its handmaidens of liberty and equality, had not magically produced "wealth and credit and material progress" (1948a, 173). He approvingly noted that under Díaz, "Mexico's political evolution has been sacrificed to other phases of its social evolution" (Sierra 1977, 396). While too suave to call Díaz a dictator, Sierra dismissed voting irregularities and Díaz' multiple terms in office (1977, 393). In order to secure the "order and peace" necessary for industrial development (and Sierra was explicitly comparing Mexico to the United States), Díaz often had to turn to "fear, the ultimate resort of government" (1977, 386, 389). Díaz had to be re-elected constantly and assume "the maximum amount of authority in his hands," in order to protect Mexico's foreign credit, "without which it would not have been possible to find the necessary funds in order to complete the great works of the future"—the railroads and infrastructure necessary for capitalist development (Sierra 1977, 393). Sierra plainly stated that Díaz' project represented "the Mexican bourgeoisie" (1977, 388).

By the 1880s, politicians and *letrados* had succeeded in both Colombia and Mexico in redefining, in the public sphere, the importance and meaning of democracy. Yet as important as this discursive assault was, it was accompanied (if more slowly and often less successfully) by a change in the institutions of political life. In Colombia, this was marked by a new constitution in 1886, which rolled back many of the rights of previous constitutions. Independent Liberals had long sought to restrict access to politics, as "every political man should be wise;" they claimed that only Radical Liberals still believed in "popular sovereignty."[49] Independents and Conservatives urged for the new constitution to restrict citizenship and suffrage. *La Nación*, in an article probably written by the former progressive Liberal, José María Samper, argued that a "democratic republic" was only possible in a well-educated people with a "unity of race," conditions that "Hispanic America" lacked. "That which we have in Colombia is a social mass (nine tenths of the total population) that does not know nor understand a single word of republic, of democracy, of principles, of rights or duties, of what civilization and progress is, because it is generally ignorant, coarse, half-savage." Colombia's mistake was to insist on democracy, when in reality only a small group of men should be involved in politics, men of "intelligence, enlightenment, wealth, and temperament."[50] He proposed that voting was not a "right" because if it were, then women, children, criminals, drunkards, foreigners, and the insane could vote. Therefore, it was "the state, and only the state, that can grant the suffrage." Colombia had adopted "universal suffrage" in the 1853 Constitution, an "error" that did not take into account "that we did not have a people able to exercise that supposed right with diligence, with independence, and with morality." Samper argued that "to vote well" men must be intelligent, informed, and have an "independent" life, in other words, they must be propertied.[51]

The 1886 Constitution hewed to these arguments. Most notably, it established literacy and property requirements for citizenship, reduced the frequency of elections (as *El Ferrocarril* had implored), reinstated the death penalty, and outlawed popular political organizations. Colombia's Regenerators had struck hard at the vibrant democratic life of the mid-century. More laws followed. In 1888, Colombia's press law forbade any "subversive publications," which included printing anything attacking the Church, offending civil or ecclesiastical authority, insulting the military, information that might depreciate money, obscenity, "attacking the legitimate organization of property," "inciting some social classes against others," and "taking the name and representation of the pueblo."[52] A public order law, enacted later that year, gave the president the power to imprison or exile anyone who was a threat to order or had committed "attempts against public or private

46 José Ramon Leal. "Cartas íntimas a mi amigo Don Emilio Castelar: Séptima." *El Siglo Diez Y Nueve*, 15 September 1884.

47 José Ramón Leal. "Cartas íntimas a mi amigo Don Emilio Castelar: Undécima." *El Siglo Diez Y Nueve*, 13 October 1884. The Colombian paper, *La Luz*, argued, "we want to consolidate the foundation of every civilized society, which is credit…" "La paz." *La Luz*, 1 March 1881.

48 José Ramón Leal. "Cartas íntimas a mi amigo Don Emilio Castelar: Séptima." *El Siglo Diez Y Nueve*, 15 September 1884.

49 "Hagamos algo serio (segundo artículo)." *El Deber*, 4 October 1878.

50 "La revolución y la república." *La Nación*, 17 November 1885.

51 "Sistema electoral." *La Nación*, 3 November 1885.

52 Law of 17 February 1888 (#151) in *El Heraldo*, 4 July 1889.

property."[53] The laws made clear the link between restricting popular democracy, increasing state power, and protecting property and capital. Capital had to be sacrosanct and the poor had to be quiescent.

Ironically, Colombia's Regeneration, in spite of its sharp institutional delineation between the old order and the new, never succeeded in maintaining order (the brutal civil War of the Thousand Days would convulse the country from 1899-1902) or fomenting as much capitalist development as in Mexico.[54] Only after the War of the Thousand Days was a program as coherent as Mexico's Porfiriato initiated (and much foreign capital invested) (Bergquist 1986, 195-246).

In Mexico, Díaz had not come to power with an anti-democratic or pro-capitalist plan. His Plan de la Noria (issued in 1871 in a first, failed attempt to oust the Juaristas) was, in fact, largely a promise to reinvigorate and respect a popular liberalism that had flourished in Mexico over the previous two decades, especially during the war against Maximilian and the French (Mallon 1995, 129-133). Even years later, this is how poor farmers and ex-soldiers understood Díaz' program (Sanders 2014b; McNamara 2007). However, once in power, Díaz not only pursue distinct policies (that were anti-democratic and pro-capitalist), he and his supporters created a whole new justification for state power and the relation between the pueblo and the state. Mexico's Regenerators did not create a new constitution, in spite of Sierra's urge to abandon "universal suffrage" in favor of literacy tests to exclude the "ignorant multitude" (Sierra 1948b, 147-148). Elections continued apace. But Díaz would rule Mexico from 1876 until 1911, with one brief interregnum when his handpicked successor was President. After this interregnum, as Díaz took office again in 1884, it became clear where true power lay and elections became more and more of a sham. Indeed, as late as 1910, the massively influential *científico* José Yves Limantour was still convinced that forty years of the Porfiriato had not prepared the people for democracy; it had not succeeded in educating the "masses from their ignorance about the most elemental rights of citizenship…[and] the manner to exercise those rights" (1965 [1921], 155). There was often not even the pretension of a democracy or a republic. Thus, while the official institutions changed slowly (centrally appointed *jefes políticos* gained much more power over local life, the country lawyers who helped the poor craft petitions and make demands of the state were banned in 1891 [Schaefer 2017]), the change in political culture was more rapid and stark. While the politics of political alliances and local power may have taken decades to evolve under the Porfiriato (Mallon 1995, 319), the anti-democratic and pro-capitalist rhetoric emerged impressively quickly.[55]

In both Mexico and Colombia, these institutional and discursive shifts away from democracy also involved an embrace of state power in order to foment change (especially the ability to attract capital) and to act independently of popular (or even elite) groups. Regenerators had long chafed over plebeians' assumption they should be able to influence the state. *El Ferrocarril* argued that the state must be strong enough to prevent anarchy and to guarantee the right of property above all else.[56] Regenerators asserted that property rights were the basis of all "social order," and that the state had to ensure that "property is inviolable."[57] In both Colombia and Mexico, elites were greatly concerned about popular groups' demands for land, to the point that in Colombia some worried that popular politics "had sowed in the poor populations the seed of communism."[58] The state's assurance of property rights against democratic pressure would be central to attracting capital to agriculture. Independent Liberals and Conservatives were particularly horrified by democratic efforts to redistribute land in Cauca; they argued "the necessity to maintain the idea of the right of property, above all of landed property, as sacred and inviolable. This is the cornerstone on which the progress of modern societies is built." Only with secure property could Colombia "inspire confidence in order to attract…the support of foreign industry and capital."[59]

Strong states could protect property and resist the democratic influence of popular pressures, with a focus on repressing democratic plebeians in order to attract capital. Francisco de la Fuente Ruiz praised Díaz' newly potent state; he marveled at how the "popular masses" were no longer interested in politics; indeed, "they seem to have spontaneously renounced" the political life.[60] *La Libertad* argued, "The State is not a servant of the nation to whom it owes services in exchange for

53 "Ley 61 de 1888," Bogotá, 25 May 1888, *La Nación*, 12 June 1888. See also Delpar (1981, 144) and Bergquist (1986, 37-38).

54 Even though it largely failed, the assumption was that the Regeneration would lead to great gains in mining, agriculture and industry. "Algo sobre industria II." *La Nación*, 1 December 1885.

55 Other scholars take the opposite tack, seeing no difference between the Porfiriato and Juárez regimes (and thus not recognizing any democratic elements in Mexico). See Boron (1995, 9, 16-18) and Córdova (1973). One problem with this interpretation is that most Mexican Regenerators themselves would have thought this ridiculous, seeing their project as a decisive break with the past.

56 *El Ferrocarril*, 1 August 1879.

57 "Hagamos algo serio (artículo cuarto)." *El Deber*, 15 October 1878 (first quote); Alejandro Micolta to Deputies, Popayán, 7 September 1879, ACC, Archivo Muerto, paquete 146, legajo 3 (second quote).

58 "La paz." *La Luz*, 1 March 1881.

59 Speech of President Julián Trujillo to Congress, Bogotá, 11 May 1878, *La Reforma*, 18 May 1878.

60 Francisco de la Fuente Ruiz. "La situación política." *El Cosmopolita*, 8 May 1884.

taxes. The State does not offer services, but, rather, exercises its own functions, since it is a special body with society and superior to society."[61] Thus sovereignty was defined as residing in the state itself, not in the pueblo, whose democratic demands the state could now ignore. And under Díaz, if less so in Colombia, the state did become much more powerful: using railroads, the telegraphs, and a stronger army, as well as Foucaultian knowledge of Mexico's peoples and landscapes, to crush popular rebellions if needed (Craib 2004). Furthermore, if capitalist markets failed to transform Indians and *campesinos* into hard-working proletarians, the state would use its power to do so (Weiner 2004, 33-42). Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens argue, "Consolidation of state power was an essential prerequisite for democratization"[62] (1992, 9). However, in Mexico and Colombia, the consolidation of state power destroyed or eroded existing democratic culture, especially the accountability of officials and popular sovereignty.

The relationship between state power, capital, and popular political influence was made clear in the 1884 protests over payments of old Mexican debts to England. Foreign debt is often seen as forcing Latin American states into a dependent relationship with Europe and the United States, thereby determining local politics (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). While important, this is only part of the story, as the debt question was only part of a larger, *internal* debate in Mexico and Colombia about the nature of the state and its relation to democratic pressure.[63] In Mexico, Francisco Cosmes supported paying the debt, in order to attract foreign capital. However, massive protests emerged in and around Congress, which was debating a deal to repay the debt. Cosmes declared that when the legislators debating the issue became influenced by the "ignorant mob" and the "tumult in the streets," then state authority will have collapsed. "The law of the riot" had replaced constitutional order. Cosmes insisted that "the passion of the masses" had to be ignored.[64] For plebeians, the central notion of democracy was popular sovereignty, the idea that their voice mattered. For Cosmes, this democracy threatened state power and capital—it had to be muzzled. The protests were eventually crushed, with violence. *La Libertad* dismissed concerns that some protestors had been killed: "We lament that the merchant loses money, that the passer-by, his watch." The paper stressed it was the duty of the state to guard "the lives and interests of honorable citizens," even at the cost of the protestors' lives. The paper rebuked those who claimed the protestors had a right to march, declaring the Mexican workers were not yet ready to enjoy such rights responsibly—they would be too tempted to engage in attacks on property. These protestors were not to be allowed to "force merchants to close their shops."[65] The question of what weighed more, democracy or capitalism, had been settled.

This new attitude of state power and popular rights applied to labor relations as well. After workers at a Puebla textile factory went on strike, *La Libertad* reminded the local governor that, "The supreme law is public security, and therefore you should punish the promoters of the strike." The state was not beholden to rights, but to a higher call for order, necessary for industrial progress. The workers had pleaded their case to Díaz, whom the paper advised to tell the strikers to go back to their labors, as only by working could they improve their lives.[66] Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens argue that if capitalism helps democracy, it is by strengthening the working class and weakening anti-democratic landlords (1992, 269-271). However, in late-nineteenth-century Mexico and Colombia, capitalism (or its contradictions) did neither; it weakened the political influence of nascent middle sectors and lower-class citizen-soldiers and increased the power of the landed elites, as the Porfiriato promoted agricultural exports.

In short, in Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Colombia (where some harbored hopes for a nationally led industrialization), Regenerators hoped to vitiate democracy in order to make local investors feel secure and to attract foreign capital.[67] A writer from provincial Colombia celebrated the Regeneration as putting Colombia on the right path that would attract "capital for its development."[68] Colombia's Regenerators urged a buttressing of state power to ensure order: "with stability, finally, we will have domestic and foreign credit" and the country will attract "foreign capital."[69] Rafael Núñez, in a speech to the 1885-1886 Constitutional Convention,

61 *La Libertad*, 2 October 1884.

62 They do recognize that too strong a state can crush lower-class democratic efforts.

63 While I am interested in broader, internal political issues of the debt question raised, debt repayment itself was also an important internal, rather than only foreign, question. See Tenenbaum (1986).

64 Francisco G. Cosmes. "La ley motín." *La Libertad*, 22 November 1884.

65 *La Libertad*, 22 November 1884; see also, Piccato (2010, 160-161, 225).

66 "La huelga de Puebla II." *La Libertad*, 2 October 1884.

67 Foreign capital played much less a role in Colombia, at least until after 1900. Regenerators hoped to stimulate domestic industry, via a National Bank and some (although insufficient) protectionism (Bergquist 1986, 40, 44; Bushnell 1993, 145). Contrarily, after 1900, Mexico's científicos began to pay more attention to domestic capital (Knight 1986, 22-23). There is considerable debate over the Porfiriato's conscious promotion (or lack thereof) of domestic industry. See Gómez-Galvarriato (2000).

68 Letter of A.J.B. Carmen. *La Nación*, 22 May 1888.

69 "Razón y objeto de este periódico." *La Nación*, 15 September 1885.

argued that Colombia's anarchic political system should be replaced by one that was more "authoritarian;" he justified this by noting how the nation's disorder has led to "the absences of foreign credit that keeps us paralyzed due to a lack of railroads."[70]

In Mexico, Sierra argued that by establishing a utopian democracy before the Porfiriato, "democracy without limits," Mexico had not "maintained public security in order to attract foreign immigrants or capital" (1948a, 174). But under Díaz, foreign capital, order, and progress were tightly intertwined. In Mexico, capitalists noted this connection as well; they confidently adopted a language of material "paths of Progress" and "the future," as opposed to past economic stagnation, when petitioning for favors.[71] Cotton producers on Mexico's Gulf Coast, requesting aid in adopting North American methods and machinery, claimed that by encouraging foreign immigration, attracting capital, putting fallow fields under production, and exporting cotton, they could increase production, help domestic industry and thus serve "the cause of civilization." They explicitly used a language of attracting "capital" and "foreign capital and workers."[72] Surveying Díaz' regime at the turn of the century, *La Gaceta Comercial* could approvingly note that by ending "our bloody discussions,"—politics in other words—Díaz had attracted the admiration of "all the world's peoples." Now, "the country is wrapped in a network of innumerable telegraphs and railways." Most importantly, with order and peace, Mexico "attracts foreign capital."[73]

Conclusion

In sum, the Colombian and Mexican cases both confirm and partially contradict the classic work of Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens. As per their model, it was landed agrarian elites and an incipient bourgeoisie that were most hostile to democracy in Colombia and Mexico (1992, 5-6, 8). However, while they assert that capitalist development increases the opportunities for democracy (1992, 7), in nineteenth-century Mexico and Colombia, the desire for capitalist development (and in Mexico the reality of a quite impressive capitalist expansion) resulted in the destruction of two of the most democratic republics in the nineteenth-century world. In both countries, state makers sought to rein in vibrant mid-century popular democratic cultures in order to create the conditions necessary to foment internal investment and attract foreign capital.

These cases completely contradict Friedman's model. In Mexico and Colombia, the desire for capitalism led to a combination of economic and political power to greatly limit political freedom, instead of ensuring it, as Friedman asserted. Perhaps needless to say, a similar repression of democracy would happen a century later in Pinochet's Chile, a favorite of Friedman's economic school. Likewise, Mueller (1999) theorizes a bit about how it is possible to have democracy without capitalism (and vice-versa), and how democracy might support capitalism, but he doesn't think much about why capitalists might not want, and actively seek to undermine, democracy.

On the other end of the political spectrum from Friedman, Jodi Dean argues that democracy is perfectly compatible with, and indeed promotes, capitalism, by asking, "Why does the left continue to appeal to democracy?" "Real existing constitutional democracies privilege the wealthy. As they install, extend, and protect neoliberal capitalism, they exclude, exploit, and oppress the poor…" (2009, 76). This assertion would have been nonsensical in the late nineteenth century, when democracy (embraced by and associated with the poor) was seen as the prime threat to capitalism.

I do not want to suggest that the Colombian and Mexican cases demonstrate an incompatibility between capitalism and democracy in some regions, such as Latin America (whether due to the type of colonialism, timing of industrialization, dependency theory), and not in others, such as Europe or the United States. For the nineteenth century, it makes little sense to argue that capitalism and democracy were compatible in the North Atlantic, since democracy remained so contested and beleaguered in Europe during this time period. For the United States, the record is also not as clear as assumed. While the U.S. did not experience the extreme reversals Mexico and Colombia endured, scholars have noted how the late nineteenth century was a period that witnessed the erosion of democracy in the United States. Of course, there had long been tension between democracy and capitalism, since the northern Republic's founding. As Bender notes, "The men who went to Philadelphia were also concerned about protecting property from a covetous democracy that seemed rampant in the state legislatures" (2006, 104). However, the contradiction became more evident after the Civil War.

H.W. Brands convincingly argues that during the Gilded Age, "after almost a century during which the tide of democracy had risen ever higher, an ebb was setting in"

70 Rafael Núñez. "Exposición sobre reforma constitucional," Bogotá, 11 November 1885. *La Nación*, 13 November 1885.

71 Manuel María Alegre to President, México, 7 May 1885, Universidad Iberoamericana, Acervos Históricos (México) (hereafter UI), Colección Porfirio Díaz, legajo 10, caja 10, #4670.

72 Manuel María Alegre to President, México, 7 May 1885, UI, Colección Porfirio Díaz, legajo 10, caja 10, #4670.; Manuel María Alegre to Minster of Development, no place, [1885], UI, Colección Porfirio Díaz, legajo 10, caja 10, #4671.

73 "El Nuevo Siglo: Seguro Porvenir." *La Gaceta Comercial*, 31 December 1900.

(2010, 407).[74] This democratic retreat was marked by the end of Reconstruction (and freedpeoples' demands for land and citizenship), the innumerable scandals of the post-bellum years, the machine politics that dominated urban public life, and the generally pitiful reputation and abilities of both Presidents and Congress (Brands 2010). As in Colombia, suffrage was restricted, only mostly based on race in the United States, instead of class, as in Colombia. Francis Parkman, in the *North American Review* in 1878, declared, "the failure of universal suffrage." He blamed capitalism, for creating an ignorant urban poor and nefarious ideas of equality (Brands 2010, 413). The tension between democracy and capitalism was felt across the Americas.

A key difference, I might hypothesize, is that the capitalist system was eroding democracy in the United States, while the desire for attracting the capital to create such a system was eroding democracy in Spanish America. One was the actions of thousands of businessmen and the politicians they bribed or with whom they shared ideological sympathies, the other was the project of a relatively few politically powerful men. Thus, while in the U.S., the attack on democracy was diffuse and sometimes behind the scenes, in Spanish America it was more open and stated. Also, the U.S. did not need to radically reform its republican government to crush industrial labor and ensure the safety of the capital; its elected representatives were more than willing to do this. In Colombia and Mexico, a much more aggressive rejection of democracy took place, perhaps because popular democracy was much more vibrant before its repression while the state was weaker. While the United States could rely on internal capital, Colombia and Mexico hoped to attract foreign capital. It was precisely in the 1870s that British capital especially began to seek more foreign concessions, "and demanded even greater guarantees" for profitable returns and risk minimization (Veeser 2013, 1138). Yet the Latin American experience cannot be reduced to dependent states dancing to the tune of foreign capitalists; the decisions were made locally, and, for the most part, the restriction of democracy took place before much foreign investment.[75]

While foreign capital is important (and would grow increasingly so), I think the similarities in the Americas are equally germane (Veeser 2002). Foreign capital also played a role in the Panic of 1873 in the United States; the subsequent long depression created political instability that began to undermine the Reconstruction's democratic possibilities (White 2017, 253-287). Both the U.S. and Spanish American states would use force to secure order for capital; U.S. federal and state governments did not hesitate to violently repress striking workers, such as in the Homestead Steel and American Railway Union strikes. As Brands notes, "capital would protect its prerogatives, by force if necessary" (2010, 519). The United States, Colombia, and Mexico were all experiencing an erosion of the power of democracy; as Rockman notes for the United States, "The logic and law of business spilled over from the realm of economic exchange to organize society and its politics..." (2014, 453).

John Markoff and Samuel Huntington track a number of "reverse waves" or "antidemocratic waves" that undid previous waves of democratization. For Huntington, the first of these reverse waves ran from 1922-1942 (1991, 16). Markoff is much more sophisticated, but while recognizing ebbs in democracy in the nineteenth century (mostly in Europe and the United States), his first great "antidemocratic wave" is also in the 1920s (1996, 1, 37-67, 76). I would like to propose that the late nineteenth century was another reverse wave of democratization, not only in Latin America, but the United States as well.

With further exploration, this late nineteenth-century "reverse wave" of democracy may help illuminate the world historic relationship between capitalism (as Latin America entered into a period of export-oriented capitalist growth) and democracy (in a nineteenth century in which most of the world's democratic republics were in Latin America). However, until the democratic cultures of nineteenth-century Spanish America are recognized by those interested in the history of capitalism, this exploration will not happen. Given that many explanations for the success or failure of democracies rely on ideas of democratic culture or legacies, ignoring Spanish America's own rich democratic tradition seems fatal to these supposed explanations.[76] My own brief conclusion is clear: this study refutes those who insist that the relationship between democracy and capitalism is always positive and reinforces theorists who stress the contradictions between capitalism and democracy. At least in late nineteenth-century Mexico and Colombia, striving for capitalism worked to actively undermine, erode, and even erase a democratic political culture.[77] Capitalists, politicians, and letrados thought democracy caused too much disorder and gave popular groups too much influence over the state; the needs of capital, not of voters and popular soldiers, should be paramount.

74 See also, White 2017.

75 The dependency argument is far stronger for the twentieth century (although even then local concerns were often more important than simplistic narratives allow). See Cardoso and Faletto (1979), and O'Donnell (1979).

76 This includes sophisticated and nuanced models, such as Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992, 274-275); and those less so, such as Ferguson (2011).

77 I should emphasize than I am not concluding this was always the case in the twentieth century or the present; however, the nineteenth-century case is clear.

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