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## **The concept of democratic society on the example of Latin America**

**Abstract.** In modern realities, when the term “democracy” is particularly discussed and relevant on the agenda of the world community, the study of the political system of developing countries is the main issue of many political scientists. At the same time, researchers are particularly interested in the ongoing transformation processes and their historical background in Latin America. The purpose of this scientific article is to study the current state of the socio-political system of the Latin American region through a comprehensive approach of external and internal factors. The article also includes a comprehensive approach to the study of the current state and formation of a democratic society in the Latin American region. The theoretical significance of the work lies in the fact that many scientific works in the field of studying the political system of Latin America consider the current state of democracy in the region through the prism of historical events. However, it is necessary to consider such factors as external influence (neighboring countries, interventionist countries), the mentality of the local population, as well as current events in the world. The practical significance of the work lies in the application of the experience of some Latin American countries, by studying certain prerequisites of the current “democratic society” of the studied region.

**Key words:** democratic society; concept; signs of democracy; modernity; Latin America; political parties; democratization; human rights; community; non-governmental organizations.

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### **Introduction**

If the growth and influence of most developing states in the world dominated in the twentieth century, the end of the century was marked by the rise of civil society. However, this long-overdue recognition of the importance of civil society has too often turned into a simplistic equation of democracy with a strong civil society. The striking sample of the fight for civil society is Latin American continent, which has been struggling to deepen democracy under difficult circumstances.

What characteristics of civil society affect its ability to democratize? The answer cannot be found in the conventional wisdom that civil society should be “more social” or “more civilized”. Today we do have a picture of the reality when democracy in society is not a constant value and depends on external and internal factors. While history and culture build a legacy of civil society, arguments based only on cultural characteristics cannot explain some intriguing facts. For instance, Chile, which can be described as the most Europeanized country, granted by democratic heritage, has seen more human rights violations than Bolivia, which is economically less developed and

ethnically divided country, and has unstable neighborhood [1].

Therefore, the study of external and internal factors, not only historical ones, may be relevant in today's.

As the practical and theoretical value of the research work can be considered the fact that democratic society must be analyzed as set of external and internal factors, including socio-economic, political, and cultural-historical institutions, which has a great impact on the state. To be democratic, civil society must be representative, accountable, and pluralistic and must respect human rights [1]. The debate about the democratization of civil society in developing countries has important implications for public policy and international relationships.

The object of this research work is the study of main concepts of democracy in the world on the sample of Latin American region.

The subject of this paperwork is placing on defining of the concept of modern democratic society in Latin America through the prism of external and internal aspects.

The main goal of this research work is to define the main features and concepts of modern democratic society in Latin American region by set of complex factors. To accomplish said, there are several following tasks that is to be considered herein: 1) to find the main features of modern society in the region, 2) defining the external influencers on the development of the democratic society, 3) other domestic factors that can have an impact on the enhancing process in Latin America.

### **Materials and methods**

In this research work, the following methods were applied: general scientific methods, such as dialectical, logical, systems analysis and synthesis, as well as special methods, such as: formally - legal, historical-legal, comparative-legal.

The theoretical basis of this research work consists of the following scholars' research works: A. Brysk, A. Valenzuela, L. D'yakova, N. Baranov, D. Zovatto, C. Alvarez and others. Accordingly, following the new processes taking place in real life, scientists have changed the priorities of research. So, if in the 90s the most relevant was the recognition of the vulnerability of emerging development models, then in the first decades of the 21st century scholars started studying this process through different aspects. Moreover, while studying the previous scholars' research works, we can see that most of them were studying the process of democratization in Latin American region through the historical processes. For instance, N. Baranov and A. Valenzuela made their research work based on history of the region and did not give more specific examples. Saying about A. Brysk, this work is more detailed and covers some other aspects of the Latin American society.

### **Discussion**

Every Latin American country certainly has its specific characteristics: the security and corruption situation in Mexico is not like the situation in this area in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and other states; Uruguay and Costa Rica are characterized by a high level of civic culture, respect for the law and political institutions. As we mentioned above, to be called as democratic, the civil society must be representative, accountable, and pluralistic and must respect human rights [1]. Further we try to discuss each of these features and give some examples on this or that circumstances.

Most countries, which are still in the transitional stage or less socio-economically developed, do have the populations misbelieve in their government nowadays. We can see such misbelieve from the political activity in the region. Mass student and youth performances of 2010–2015 in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Ecuador showed that modern young people still take a very active civic position, which, however, manifests itself differently than at the end of the 20th and even at the beginning of

the 21st century. The period of 2010–2015 is a time of rapid growth in the popularity of informal youth associations, created with the support of social networks.

Young people actively participated in protest movements and expressed dissatisfaction with both the existing rules of the political game and the existing system of values.

Besides, political scholars began to write about the emergence of a new protagonist of politics, which is called as the “fighting generation” (“generación militante”) [2]. Therefore, we can say that the “fighting generation” is no longer characterized by the confrontation and passiveness of the beginning of the neoliberal era; patience, tolerance, and the ability to compromise are also sounds as something unfamiliar. The influence of this factor on the political stability of democratic regimes, on the prospects for democracy has not yet been fully assessed and may turn out to be very contradictory [3]. As we see that it is only few examples of the politically active young generation. Therefore, currently we can be confident about the political future of those countries of the region. Moreover, such an activity and freedom of those movements can be witnessed one of the main concepts of democratic society.

According to most people, they do have the strong position of that democratic society is the less of governmental intervention, more freedom for people. But the reality is that the government and the society must collaborate with each other, in order to enhance the democracy and build healthy atmosphere in the country. Moreover, the population in less-developed post authoritarian countries, need more attention from the government. For instance, in Ecuador, women's groups seeking help for the “silent majority” of women experiencing domestic violence in that country adopted the slogan “Democracy in the household of the country” [1]. Thus, we do see that the concept of democratic society is not the limitation or weakening the state’s power, it rather means the collaboration of both sides. Mostly, the state does not have the obligation before the population to provide it with everything being asked. The state simply provides the possibilities and create institutions for people to build a democracy. However, people who went through authoritarian and totalitarian regimes used to rely on the state, to have got the answer on “what do they need” and how to get that. This factor can be considered as the braking mechanism for democracy.

Democracy rests on pluralism, and respect for universal human rights enhances both experience and the pursuit of pluralism. For this and other reasons, the growing international consensus subordinates all political actors to universal human rights standards. Even citizens who engage in purely private behavior must respect human rights, although the state has the ultimate responsibility for regulating their behavior. However, the last years in most Latin American countries there were the great impact of the oligarchy on governing. In some countries the governors could not make decisions or take the legislation without the support of wealthy layer of population. Notwithstanding, there seem to be some signs of change. Through social media, Latin American citizens have better access to information, organization, and mobilization against government’s abuse. Recently in Mexico, community activist groups have been promoting a “three out of three” bill that requires government officials to disclose their assets, tax returns, and declare potential conflicts of interest. Thanks to a social media campaign, the bill gathered around 600,000 signatures in less than three months. Moreover, civil society groups in Colombia and Chile have demanded similar anti-corruption laws. In Guatemala, social media protests presidential misconduct resulted in members of Congress stripping President Otto Perez Molina of immunity. The impeachment of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was preceded by protests over suspicions of taking bribes. Street protests have also led to the creation of anti-corruption bodies in Honduras and El Salvador [4].

At the same time, protest movements, often organized by young people, took place in 2019 in Venezuela, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Bolivia, Haiti, Chile, and Colombia. In most cases, the authorities responded to their activity with repression instead of creating mechanisms to facilitate dialogue and resolve the problems of the protesters. The repression in Venezuela was particularly severe. The security forces of the government of Nicolas Maduro not only committed widespread human rights violations, but also committed crimes under international law - extrajudicial executions,

arbitrary detentions, excessive use of force - all of which can constitute crimes against humanity. In Chile, the army, and police also deliberately maimed protesters, killing at least four people and

seriously injuring thousands more. In total, at least 210 people have died in protests in the Americas: 83 in Haiti, 47 in Venezuela, 35 in Bolivia, 31 in Chile, eight in Ecuador and six in Honduras. Latin America is once again the most dangerous region in the world for human rights defenders [5].

While we were saying that the young generation became more and more politically active, the current political parties are being "old-fashioned" and weak-powered. The crisis of the parties "responsible" in a democracy for the most important characteristic of the regime is a serious problem. Currently, classic parties, which include most of the region's moderate-center organizations (both left and right), are often viewed as conservative and stuck in the past political groupings, while society is increasingly interested in new patterns of behavior. This applies to such concepts as quality and lifestyle, environmental protection, environmental education, gender equality, cultural and ethnic tolerance. The well-known Spanish researchers Manuel Alcantara, Flavia Freudenberg and Ludolfo Paramio have repeatedly written about the current social phenomena, which are not considered by the traditional Latin American parties. The latter believes that "parties develop by itself, forcing them to do what they have always done, and not to adapt to new challenges" [6].

However, according to the Spanish researcher Malamud, it is obvious and general that the whole "Latin America needs more state. For it to be able to effectively carry out its functions, appropriate laws and institutions are needed; the state should stop being a simple instrument in the hands of presidents" [7]. In general, it is quite common to believe that civic consciousness in Latin America is growing faster than the quality of political institutions. Therefore, we can see that the process of democratization of society does not necessarily mean the democratization of the entire state. It is simply part of that continuous and hard-working process.

As it was noted by the Spanish political scientist Javier Chinchon Alvarez, instead of traditional apprehensions associated "with the region's doom to be either in permanent stagnation of formal democracy, or under the threat of a return of authoritarianism" [8], an interest in real democratic practice arose and became firmly established. In this regard, much attention is paid to the analysis of the quality of political institutions. First, to the consideration of the role, and prospects of development of the institution of the state. Argentine political scientist Daniel Zovatto notes that the inefficiency and weakness of the state in realizing its most important tasks (primarily ensuring the safety of citizens), problems of governance and corruption give rise to disrespect for the law, are fraught with exacerbation of conflict situations and the spread of violence [9]. We cannot disagree with those two quotations about the necessity of strong and powerful apparatus of the state. However, to create a strong one simultaneously with creation of democratic society seems for the politicians as something nonrealistic. Because there should not be too much freedom for the population, which can lead to holocracy or anarchy; the powerful and strong government can make governors too much powerful and authoritarian.

The complex internal problems are equally dangerous, which the famous Mexican political scientist Jorge Castaneda called "frightening weaknesses" of democracy [10]. We are talking about the insufficient development of political institutions, as well as the expansion of the zone of interstate and internal political contradictions: between the South and North, the Atlantic and the Pacific coast. On the one hand, between left radicals and moderate centrists (the latter's influence is increasingly being questioned), on the other hand, there are a few weaker political parties. According to J. Castaneda, Latin American states have less and less "common voice" - common positions on several key issues of world politics [10].

Time may have changed, but foreign powers are still very active in Latin American affairs. A related to the autonomy concern is a reliance on international support, as recently highlighted by Mexico's restrictions on international funding and visits to civilian organizations in the conflict zone in

Chiapas. Likewise, at some point El Salvador prohibited registered non-governmental organizations from seeking foreign support. However, while states may invoke a potential threat to sovereignty from international civil society ties, this objection is valid only if states themselves refuse foreign aid, and only insofar as foreign aid threatens the state's monopoly of coercion. More often, global civic ties simply affect the state's monopoly on information, development resources, or representation. This diversification of access to information, resources and organization is a critical component of democratization. The foreign aid can be also considered as an intervention into the country's life. We do assume that most "helping" countries do have only positive and charity like purposes when they do meddle into the foreign country. Even though they wish to help, some of their activities cannot be appropriate for this or that state. As we told before, each country has its own features and expectations about democracy. Therefore, the foreign aid is not always the right thing to be done towards another state.

According to the external factors, we can look at Chile's example of democratic development. The evolution of the Chilean population views was largely influenced by the process of peaceful democratic transformation in Spain and Portugal [11]. In addition, the processes in the USSR during the "perestroika" period, as well as the crisis and subsequent collapse of the world socialist system, became an important catalyst for the ideological evolution of Chile.

Since the rule of F. Roosevelt between Latin American region and the USA were made a Good Neighbor policy [12], which had to have a lot more positive condition. And in fact, it had. However, as we mentioned before some "good" neighbors can have a lot more in their aid rather than they claim. We mean that, under the useful and necessary help can be hidden the whole great policy.

There is no doubt that the United States is behind the story of pushing for a change of power in Venezuela. And the existence of some "secret plan" is very likely.

France continues to colonize the South American mainland (French Guiana), while the United States and Britain continue to control the islands in the Caribbean. Many believed that UNASUR (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas) was actively trying to undermine Hugo Chavez's government in Venezuela; Chavez himself, of course, thought so. In the conditions of slipping, the idea of a power scenario, the United States and its most consistent like-minded followers took actions aimed at ousting the government of Nicolas Maduro. Most likely, the sanctions pressure on Caracas would have been increased. The heads of state of the conservative camp were continued to host well-known Venezuelan oppositionists, and as a result of these meetings, they are calling for a change of power in the South American republic. One of the most recent initiatives directed against Caracas is now being discussed by five countries at once - Argentina, Chile, Peru, Paraguay and Colombia [13]. Even though, time have changed and the region is strengthening its democratic features, and moving forward to enhance socio-economic situation in the region.

Moreover, many Latin American countries, especially South American countries, have benefited from the rise of Asia, and in particular China, as a global economic power. Due to rising commodity prices, the region experienced a golden year cycle from 2004 to 2011 with an average real growth of 4.3 percent per year [14]. The 2009 crisis resulted in a 1.5 percent contraction, but thanks to Asia's appetite for the region's raw materials, many countries were able to quickly emerge from the crisis.

Assessment of the successes and prospects of modern democracy in Latin America is closely dependent on the mood of social pessimism, spreading in various strata of society. Instead of a positive feeling of uplift and limitless opportunities that accompanied the "good years" [15], society reflects on the traditional (seemingly inevitable) economic and socio-cultural backwardness from Western countries and comes reconciliation with the uncertainty of the political and social future. This psychological "step backward" is a very dangerous trend for democracy.

Democratic consolidation requires addressing the challenges of strengthening government capacity, accountability, representation, and governance. State capacity is associated with the need to strengthen the institutions of power themselves in terms of their ability to provide public services and

their ability to enforce established norms and rules and maintain public order. Accountability implies full implementation of the rule of law with transparent standards that apply to everyone, regardless of status. Representation presupposes the fundamental fairness and efficiency of electoral systems and

the stability of political parties as a vehicle for expressing citizens' preferences. Governance refers to the ability of state bodies, represented by the executive and the legislature, to transform the wishes of various parties into effective policies based on government, exercised either by the majority party or by a coalition of parties.

### Conclusion

Summarizing this research work, we can make the conclusion that the main concept of democratic society in Latin American region now based mostly on people's freedom, their struggle towards getting and protecting their rights. In this era of pervasive regime transformation, democratic consolidation, uneven globalization and institutional malaise, civil society is more important than ever. However, democracy depends not only on civil society, but also on a more democratic civil society. Which is based exactly on the factors above, that says about the collaboration of state and population. It is not necessarily limiting the state power, enlarging the people's freedom at one time.

While history, culture, and resources hold back the building of civic democracy, there is no fixed legacy or pre-built stock of civic culture or social capital. Promoting civic democratization is an active institution-building process that can be improved through clear analysis and coherent policies. The experience of Latin America over the past two decades has shown that strengthening government capacity, accountability, representation, and governance - or more generally, the quality of government institutions and policy development and implementation are important factors in achieving economic and social goals and enhancing the quality of representative institutions.

Besides, the rule of law and democratic governance are important factors in creating the conditions for sustainable and long-term economic growth on an equitable basis. Latin America needs to tackle serious problems of poverty and inequality and improve its competitiveness in a globalized economy. Strengthening and consolidating democratic institutions and the rule of law are essential elements of this process.

Whichever set of standards and mechanisms are chosen, it is time to develop a collective understanding of democratic civil society. This understanding must ultimately reflect a democratic dialogue among global civil society, including international organizations, transnational networks, and grassroots organizations. Increasing the representativeness and accountability of civil society organizations can increase their credibility, broaden their participation, and stimulate collaboration. A democratic civil society can improve the daily life and well-being of citizens and help build and sustain a democratic state. Democracy is too important to be left to the sole discretion of governments.

Furthermore, along with criticism and reflection on disappointment and public irritation with modern politics, the priority is the point of view that democratic values must be defended despite all the problems and difficulties.

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### **Демократиялық қоғам концепциясы: Латын Америкасы мысалында**

**Аңдатпа.** Заманауи шындықта «демократия» термині әлем қоғамдастығының күн тәртібінде ерекше талқыланып, дамушы елдердің саяси жүйесін зерттеу көптеген саясаттанушылардың басты тақырыбына айналып отыр. Сонымен бірге, Латын Америкасында болып жатқан трансформациялық үрдістер мен олардың тарихи алғышарттары зерттеушілерді ерекше қызықтыруда. Осы ғылыми мақаланың мақсаты сыртқы және ішкі факторлардың кешенді тәсілі арқылы Латын Америкасы аймағының әлеуметтік-саяси жүйесінің қазіргі жағдайын зерттеу болып табылады. Сондай-ақ, мақалада Латын Америкасы аймағындағы демократиялық қоғамның қазіргі жағдайы мен қалыптасуын зерттеуге кешенді көзқарас қарастырылған. Жұмыстың теориялық маңыздылығы Латын Америкасының саяси жүйесін зерттеу саласындағы көптеген ғылыми еңбектер тарихи оқиғалардың призмасы арқылы аймақтағы демократияның қазіргі жағдайын қарастыратындығында. Алайда, сыртқы ықпал (көрші елдер, интервент елдер), жергілікті халықтың менталитеті, сондай-ақ әлемде болып жатқан оқиғалар сияқты факторларды да ескеру қажет. Жұмыстың практикалық маңыздылығы зерттелетін аймақтың қазіргі «демократиялық қоғамының» белгілі бір алғышарттарын зерттеу арқылы Латын Америкасының кейбір елдерінің тәжірибесін қолдану болып табылады.

**Түйін сөздер:** демократиялық қоғам; тұжырымдама; демократияның белгілері; қазіргі

заман; Латын Америкасы; саяси партиялар; демократияландыру; адам құқықтары; қауымдастық; үкіметтік емес ұйымдар.

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### **Концепция демократического общества на примере Латинской Америки**

**Аннотация.** В современных реалиях, когда термин «демократия» является особо обсуждаемой и актуальной в повестке дня мирового сообщества, изучение политического строя развивающихся стран является основным вопросом многих политологов. При этом, особый интерес исследователей вызывают продолжающиеся трансформационные процессы и их исторические предпосылки в Латинской Америке. Целью настоящей научной статьи является изучение современного состояния социально-политического строя Латиноамериканского региона посредством комплексного подхода внешних и внутренних факторов. Также, статья включает в себя комплексный подход в изучении современного состояния и формирования демократического общества в Латиноамериканском регионе. Теоретическая значимость работы заключается в том, что многие научные работы в сфере изучения политического строя Латинской Америки рассматривают нынешнее состояние демократии в регионе через призму исторических событий. Однако необходимо учитывать такие факторы, как внешнее влияние (соседних стран, стран-интервентов), ментальность местного населения, а также происходящие события в мире. Практическая значимость работы заключается в применении опыта некоторых стран Латинской Америки, путем изучения тех или иных предпосылок нынешнего «демократического общества» изучаемого региона.

**Ключевые слова:** демократическое общество; концепция; признаки демократии; современность; Латинская Америка; политические партии; демократизация; права человека; сообщество; неправительственные организации.

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