

THINKING BRAZIL

UPDATE NO. 13 - DECEMBER 2004

An Electronic Newsletter of BRAZIL @ THE WILSON CENTER

U
P
D
A
T
E

Cardoso Commemorates 25th Anniversary of *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*

In 1979, a team of researchers based at the Woodrow Wilson Center conceived and launched a project titled *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*. This group of highly distinguished scholars including Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Abraham Lowenthal, Alfred Stepan, Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead designed the project to analyze and compare political transitions underway in Latin America and Europe during the 1980's. The resultant research, conferences, and four-volume book series was the origin of a conceptual debate and empirical research on regime change and democratic governance throughout the world. The series was translated into numerous languages and, for more than a decade, was the most cited work of social science published in English.



As part of the twenty-fifth anniversary of this project, the Latin American Program invited Fernando Henrique Cardoso - who served as President of Brazil from 1995 to 2003 - to speak about the initiative and the status of the democracies in the region.

Recalling the project, Cardoso confessed that, at the time it was launched, he and his colleagues had only a superficial comprehension of the relevance it would have for political transitions in Latin America. For Cardoso the project was essential in creating an intellectual basis

for democratization in the face of oppressive authoritarian regimes entrenched in most Latin American countries at that time. Particularly relevant given the recent demise of the Franco dictatorship (1936 - 1975) in Spain, the initiative helped motivate and develop a network of democracy experts that would eventually gain global reach in the advancement of democracy.

Cardoso expressed surprise with the pace of subsequent progress of democracy in Latin America after so many years of authoritarian rule, adding that not only



Woodrow Wilson
International Center
for Scholars



did Latin American countries become democratic but also that "their societies became more participatory." Recently this new level of involvement has increased thanks to the Internet, which has given citizens the opportunity to discuss and react to legislation even before it reaches congress. In Brazil for example, prior to the approval of the recently enacted Fiscal Responsibility Law, there was extensive public debate on the Internet and in other forums, adding legitimacy to the final version passed in 2000.

In assessing the quality of Latin American democracies, Cardoso acknowledged there have been varying levels of success for countries in the region. For him, Chile stands out as the most successful, having implemented a stable democratic model and built a solid economy in the wake of a notably harsh dictatorship. In Brazil, marked political and economic improvements have helped it attract a steady stream of foreign investment. Nevertheless, inequality remains a serious problem. On Argentina Cardoso noted that while the country had been struggling to stabilize both the economic and the political fronts, the Argentine people have recovered their belief in government, and the country appears on the mend. The Andean countries, including Colombia, Bolivia and Venezuela are, at present, facing the most serious challenges in the region. Venezuela is currently the most complicated; despite extraordinary economic potential to be derived from expansive oil reserves, political conditions have strongly undermined its prospects. "President Chavez rules under some inspiration of 'bolivarianism' [but] I cannot understand bolivarianism," said Cardoso.

During their struggle to cast off authoritarian

regimes and build strong democracies, the nations of Latin America have been forced to endure additional stress as globalization has affected all areas of productive, industrial, and financial systems. To succeed under these evolving and complex circumstances, Cardoso deemed it essential for Latin America to persevere in strengthening democracy.

Cardoso concluded by suggesting that the Woodrow Wilson Center build on the success of the original project, and spearhead an evolution of this comparative debate from a different angle: while the original Transitions Project analyzed the prospects for building democracy from the dynamics of domestic institutions, this new investigation could analyze these prospects as propelled by multilateral institutions. Before this can occur however, these institutions must be updated in light of current political realities, assuring democratic representation for their broader membership.



Thinking Brazil Update is an electronic publication of *Brazil @ the Wilson Center*. This project is founded on the conviction that Brazil and the U.S.-Brazilian relationship deserve to receive better attention in Washington. Brazil's population, size, and economy, as well as its unique position as a regional leader and global player fully justify this interest. In response, and in keeping with the Center's mission to bridge scholarly research and public action, *Brazil @ the Wilson Center* sponsors activities designed to create a "presence" for Brazil in Washington that captures the attention of the policymaking community. *Brazil @ the Wilson Center* is grateful for the support of ADM and the GE Foundation.

For more information please refer to www.wilson-center.org/brazil or contact Alex Parlini at parliniaj@wwic.si.edu

THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

Lee H. Hamilton, Director

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joseph B. Gildenhorn, Chair; David A. Metzner, Vice Chair. Public Members: James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress; John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States; Bruce Cole, Chair, National Endowment for the Humanities; Roderick R. Paige, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education; Colin L. Powell, Secretary, U.S. Department of State; Lawrence M. Small, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Tommy G. Thompson, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Private Citizen Members: Joseph A. Cari, Jr., Carol Cartwright, Donald E. Garcia, Bruce S. Gelb, Daniel L. Lemaute, Tamala L. Longaberger, Thomas R. Reedy

WILSON COUNCIL

Bruce S. Gelb, President. Diane Aboulafia-D'Jaen, Elias F. Aburdene, Charles S. Ackerman, B.B. Andersen, Cyrus A. Ansary, Lawrence E. Bathgate II, John Beinecke, Joseph C. Bell, Steven Alan Bennett, Rudy Boschwitz, A. Oakley Brooks, Melva Bucksbaum, Charles W. Burson, Conrad Cafritz, Nicola L. Caiola, Raoul L. Carroll, Scott Carter, Albert V. Casey, Mark Chandler, Peter B. Clark, Melvin Cohen, William T. Coleman, Jr., Michael D. DiGiacomo, Sheldon Drobny, F. Samuel Eberts III, J. David Eller, Mark Epstein, Melvyn J. Estrin, Sim Farar, Susan Farber, Joseph H. Flom, John H. Foster, Charles Fox, Barbara Hackman Franklin, Norman Freidkin, Morton Funger, Gregory M. Gallo, Chris G. Gardiner, Steven J. Gilbert, Alma Gildenhorn, David F. Girard-diCarlo, Michael B. Goldberg, Gretchen M. Gorog,

William E. Grayson, Ronald Greenberg, Raymond A. Guenter, Edward L. Hardin, Jr., Jean L. Hennessey, Eric Hotung, John L. Howard, Darrell E. Issa, Jerry Jasinowski, Brenda LaGrange Johnson, Shelly Kamins, Edward W. Kelley, Jr., Anastasia D. Kelly, Christopher J. Kennan, Michael V. Kostiw, Steven Kotler, William H. Kremer, Raymond Leary, Abbe Lane Leff, Perry Leff, Dennis LeVett, Francine Levinson, Harold O. Levy, David Link, Frederic V. Malek, David S. Mandel, John P. Manning, Jeffrey A. Marcus, Jay Mazur, Robert McCarthy, Linda McCausland, Stephen G. McConahey, Donald F. McLellan, J. Kenneth Menges, Jr., Philip Merrill, Kathryn Mosbacher, Jeremiah L. Murphy, Martha T. Muse, Della Newman, John E. Osborn, Paul Hae Park, Gerald L. Parsky, Michael J. Polenske, Donald Robert Quartel, Jr., J. John L. Richardson, Margaret Milner Richardson, Larry D. Richman, Carlyn Ring, Edwin Robbins, Robert G. Rogers, Otto Ruesch, B. Francis Saul, III, Alan Schwartz, Timothy R. Scully, J. Michael Shepherd, George P. Shultz, Raja W. Sidawi, Debbie Siebert, Thomas L. Siebert, Kenneth Siegel, Ron Silver, William A. Slaughter, James H. Small, Thomas F. Stephenson, Norma Kline Tiefel, Mark C. Treanor, Anthony G. Viscogliosi, Christine M. Warnke, Ruth Westheimer, Pete Wilson, Deborah Wince-Smith, Herbert S. Winokur, Jr., Paul Martin Wolff, Joseph Zappala, Nancy M. Zirkin, Richard S. Ziman



Woodrow Wilson
International
Center
for Scholars

One Woodrow Wilson Plaza
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004-3027
www.wilsoncenter.org