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Globalization, State Theory, and Civil-Military Relations

THE PREVAILING DEMOCRATIZATION literature considers the reduction in the institutional and political power of the military within a state to be a central requirement in the establishment and maintenance of democracy. According to J. Samuel Fitch (1998, 36) “democratic theory does not admit the possibility that any group—military or civilian—possesses greater legitimacy than the will of the people, democratically determined through free and inclusive elections and tempered by the interplay of constitutionally established institutions.” Within such systems the military must remain subordinate to the constitutionally designated civilian authorities, and there can be no “enclaves” of power or policymaking that are not accountable to democratic control. David Pion-Berlin (2005) argues that democracy requires the avoidance of “. . . undesirable military behavior, be it intense pressure, provocation coup threats, or actual coups.” The emphasis of institutionalist/state-centered models upon the balance of prerogatives within the state is reflected in studies of democratization and civil military relations in Latin America. In these analyses institutions pertain to specific political organizations as well as systems of rules that structure and stabilize relations between actors. This perspective insists upon the potentially autonomous role for political institutions and argues that policy outcomes mostly reflect the design of these institutions.¹ For example, for some the bureaucracy, the executive agency, or the army is considered to be a collection of standard operating procedures and structures that *define* and *protect* interests (March and Olsen 1983). The degree of powers wielded by a state agency, the level of training, and the existence of a specific doctrine determining the priorities of state actors are stressed in institutionalist/state-centered models as

central in understanding state behavior. Others affiliated with this approach have emphasized a historical legacy that a state's institutional structure can carry in limiting the options available to current and future political actors.²

For example, the *Transitions to Democracy* volumes stresses the importance of the specific choices of political elites (military and civilian) in understanding the success or failure of democratic transitions. The competition between "hardliners" and "softliners" within the state and/or "radicals" and "moderates" within the opposition during specific periods of time were given important power in explaining democratic change. The institutional outcome of this transition within specific states—the division of political prerogatives between military and civilian authorities—set these countries upon a specific "path" that depending on the power of the armed forces during the transition determines the degree democratic consolidation can be achieved in a respective nation-state (see Karl 1990; Agüero 1995).

Contemporary studies of civil-military relations generally examine the armed forces as a body in which the process of professionalism and training, routinization and indoctrination can effectively insulate the military from the dictates of civil society or the petty political interests of society's respective social classes (Pion-Berlin 1997; Rial 1990; Fitch 1989, 1998; Norden 1996; Hunter 1997; Stepan 1988). The existence of electoral competition (Hunter 1997), the relative power between civilian authorities and the military (Stepan 1988; Agüero 1995), and the corporate interests of the armed forces (Nordlinger 1977) are central in understanding the extent of civilian control within a respective nation-state. For example, Wendy Hunter's analysis of civil-military relations in Brazil utilizes a "rational choice institutionalism" that focuses upon the "strategic choices" of civilian and military authorities in Brazil (2001, 40). Changes in institutional structures (i.e., the introduction of elections) changed the incentives and choices available to civilian authorities, which led them to erode military prerogatives (Hunter 1997, 2001). David Pion-Berlin (1997) has argued that the degree that power is concentrated in the hands of civilian authorities within a specific agency, as well as the degree that the military can influence the direction of a specific issue, contributes to success or failure in eroding military power. Felipe Agüero (1995) has posited that the balance of power between civilian and military authorities within the state is a consequence of the prior balance of power in democratic transitions that established an institutional path, which permeates present-day civil-military relations. Finally, Michael C. Desch submits that ". . . if a country faces a significant internal threat, the institutions of civilian authority will most likely be weak and deeply divided, making it difficult for civilians to control the military (1996, 4). Institutional contexts and strategic decisions, the balance of prerogatives within the state, as well as civilian/military perceptions of threat or doctrines have all been emphasized in civil-military studies in order to explain shifting patterns of civilian control and military autonomy within specific nation-states.

The literature that has examined democratization and civil-military relations in Colombia has generally replicated the nation-state/institutionalist bias found in the larger literature. At the end of the 1980s Colombian and U.S. scholars focused their attention on the failures of Colombia's political institutions to create space for political participation and competition (Archer 1995; Arocha and Sanchez 1987; Leal Buitrago and Zamosc 1990; Leal Buitrago 1989; Hartlyn 1988; Kline 1995; Martz 1996; see chapter 2). These works focused on the consequences that a lack of political openness had in influencing the development of informal, violent and nonviolent political movements that arose to challenge the state. The process of constitutional reform that took place between 1990 and 1991 was viewed as an important step in liberalizing Colombia's politics and undermining the two-party dominance that has long been a part of its history. The successful construction of a new constitution has been viewed in part as a political strategy of political elites within the state and/or a response to a deteriorating social situation (narco-trafficking violence, a strengthening guerrilla insurgency, increasing civic strikes and voter abstention, etc.) (Dugas 1994; Safford and Palacios 2002, 336). A related, but also common focus of studies on Colombian politics has been an emphasis upon the "absence," "weakness," and/or "ineffectiveness" of state institutions, specifically the lack of a coercive presence throughout the country (Pizarro 1999; Rangel Suarez 1998; Graham and Scowcroft 2000). The argument is that the public forces require more resources and effective tactics in order to efficiently combat the guerrilla insurgency (Rangel Suarez 1998, 145–77; Dávila 1999, 338–45; Zackison and Bradley 1997). A stronger state could establish the "law and order" necessary to create a stable environment for business investment and development, while at the same time removing opportunities for guerrilla and paramilitary legitimation through their substitution of the state. State behavior is conceptualized as largely an institutionalist process, taking place within the confines of the nation-state.

The focus upon the nation-state is also apparent in Colombian civil-military studies (Leal 1994; Pizarro 1995; Davila 1998; Davila 1999; Borrero 1989; Premo 1982; Ruhl 1980; Romero 2003b, 225). For example, Mauricio Romero (2003b, 225–26) argues that conflicts between the presidency and the armed forces during the 1980s and 1990s over a negotiated resolution of the internal conflict are the result of a "path dependency" of institutional conflict that was established in the Betancur administration (1982–1986). In explaining the institutional change of the early 1990s Francisco Leal (1994) emphasizes the changing mind-set of military leaders, who ostensibly developed greater confidence in civilian leadership, to explain the success of civilian initiatives to reduce military prerogatives. This confidence was based on some success in negotiations with smaller guerrilla armies in the late 1980s, as well as increasing funds for military budgets. Leal argues that the emergence of narcotraffickers as enemies of the state (not simply guerrillas), as well as negative human rights reports and corruption allegations, contributed to a greater acceptance by the military of a

reduced political role (Leal Buitrago 1994, 135–37). Andrés Dávila's work on the history of civil-military relations in Colombia focuses upon the character of the military's subordination to civilians at the beginning of the National Front (a power-sharing arrangement between the two parties that existed from 1958–1974), which institutionalized its autonomy over internal defense, without the responsibility of governing (Dávila 1998, 172–73). According to Dávila this "relative subordination-autonomy" continues to mark civil-military relations, contributing to political tension and conflict between civilian authorities and the military leadership (*ibid.*). These examinations of political violence and civil-military relations will often take note of the influence of the United States on the military's security doctrine or the pressures of the U.S.-sponsored "drug war" upon the country's civil-military relations; however, these variables do not hold a central place in their analyses. The role of capitalist globalization and the integration of the Colombian state into a larger transnational order is generally not even considered.

The study of political violence and disorder within Colombia has not all been focused upon state institutions. Others have concluded that Colombia's social structure plays a central role in the continuation of guerrilla warfare and violent reaction from the state and its paramilitary allies (Ahumada 1996, 2002; Romero 2003a, 2003b; Richani 2002; Medina Gallego 1990; Giraldo 1996). Consuelo Ahumada (1996, 2002) concludes that neoliberal reforms required the establishment of political institutions that centralized political control in the hands of Colombian executives and limited social protest. Ahumada suggests that the various policies associated with neoliberalism (privatization, reduction of protections for domestic industries, the curtailment of the state's welfare role) created the need for authoritarian measures, benefitting a "neoliberal elite" over a "traditional elite" that supported a continued role for the state and nationalist politics. Nazih Richani's work on Colombia's "war system" integrates the role that economic elites have played in maintaining the internal conflict (2002, 133–56). Richani distinguishes between the needs of Colombia's "agrarian elite" and its more modern, internationally integrated economic elites, arguing that the costs of the war upon these sectors plays a central role in the strategic options chosen by the state: to contain the insurgency, to build up a massive military response, or to negotiate a resolution (Richani 2002, 133–55). He argues that a "positive political economy" has been created in which guerrillas and the armed forces have acquired new wealth to maintain and intensify their war activities, creating a situation in which "war" is more beneficial than peace. Though these works share similar interests regarding divisions within Colombia's political/economic establishment I complement their contributions by directly linking these divisions to transformations within the global economy. My interest is not only in the degree to which specific class factions are able to influence the state, but also in the degree to which state leaders have internalized transnational interests

as their nation's own. Furthermore, the interventions of international financial institutions (IFIs) and the United States in promoting the political/economic conditions for Colombia's limited political liberalization and para-state repression are addressed.

In the end, institutionalist/nation-state analysis may help in explaining the military's acceptance of the reforms, but why did the reforms take place when they did? Why would civilian authorities initiate them? It is unclear as to how the military's confidence in civilian authority could be obtained, given the failure of negotiations with much larger guerrilla armies or why the armed forces of the late 1970s pressed, and received from civilian authorities, increasing institutional power in the face of a considerably weaker and regionally isolated threat. What had changed in terms of the state's social and international context that led to the reduction of the military's institutional role in the early 1990s? Why have we not seen a reversal of these changes with the intensification of the internal threat? Clearly, the "fragmentation" or "weakness" of the state is an important element in understanding Colombia's political situation; although how have the decisions of political and economic elites created and/or exacerbated this situation?

The moment of policy change and the direction that this change took in Colombia cannot be easily explained through the use of institutional or nation-state, based models of political behavior. The inability of traditional approaches to explain the apparent paradoxes in Colombian civil-military relations reflects an understanding of nation-states that first isolates nation-states from their international context, and second assumes a degree of state autonomy. A conception of the state that recognizes the importance of class relations of a given national/international society to state behavior can better explain policy outcomes in Colombian civil-military relations. As Laurence Whitehead has submitted in reference to democratization that "it may be artificial to dichotomize the analysis into domestic and international elements.." and "there is no such thing as democratization in *one* country" (Whitehead 1996, 23–24, emphasis mine; see also Yashar 1999). Broader social forces outside of the nation-state itself work to reinforce societal divisions of power that influence the behavior of politicians and military officers within a nation-state. This book adopts what William Robinson refers to as "transnational" or "global" perspective (Robinson 2001), one that does not limit our analyses solely to the "key decision-makers" or "central policy decisions" within nation-states, but integrates actors outside of nation-states, as well as highlighting how the transformation of nation-states within an era of capitalist globalization affects politics.

GLOBAL CAPITALISM AND TRANSNATIONAL STATES

Capitalist globalization refers to the accelerating internationalization of capital, technology, and the spread of capitalist production lines on a global level,

a process that coincides with the decline of the regulatory influence of states and labor. Robinson and Leslie Sklair have argued that capitalist globalization has contributed to the restructuring or reorientation of nation-states into central actors within “transnational states” (Robinson 2003) or as a part of a “transnational capitalist class” (Sklair 2002). Transnational states are actors and institutions that facilitate capitalist globalization and the interests of transnational corporations. Nation-states are increasingly becoming a central component of this set of transnational actors, not only because of international pressure or coercion from international financial institutions or powerful states but because leaders have come to power within these states who equate national interests with transnational interests. These national states are joined in their efforts by various supranational political and economic institutions that are also guided by the need to expand free markets and the political liberalization that is viewed as complementary to this process. The leadership position of transnational corporations within the world economy has been central to the unfolding and development of this process.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) are corporations that maintain headquarters in one country as well as operations in other nations. According to a United Nations Center on TNCs, by 1992 their investment patterns were driving the evolution of the world economy, and by 1995 two-thirds of world trade was being carried out by TNCs,³ and some 400 TNCs owned two-thirds of the world’s fixed assets (Robinson 1996c 20; Mansbach 1997, 204–11). By the year 2000 one-third of the world’s fifty largest economic entities were transnational corporations (Robbins 2002, 123–24).

The increasing mobility of capital and the decentralization of the production process is being promoted by the competitive activities of transnational corporations seeking the business environment most acceptable to their interests (few protections for the environment, cheap labor, low taxes, as well as weak protections for labor). This business environment is being established throughout much of the third world, steadily increasing levels of foreign investment from transnational corporations. Foreign direct investment from transnational corporations into the third world increased fivefold between the early 1980s and the early 1990s (International Labor Organization 1997, 2). By 2001 foreign direct investment from transnational corporations was the most important source of external capital in developing countries, and between 1991 and 2001 the number of countries deemed “favorable” to foreign direct investment had increased from 80 to over 140 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2001). However, this direct investment abroad has been increasingly overshadowed by the levels of portfolio investments (stocks, mutual funds, pensions, insurance) engaged in by transnational capital. In 1975 almost 80 percent of foreign exchange transactions were linked to the production of goods and services, while in 1998 only 2.5 percent of these transactions were connected to goods and services,

with 97.5 percent related to portfolio or financial flows (Henwood 1999, 31). The reduction of capital controls throughout Latin America has accelerated the ability of liquid capital to enter and leave specific markets in response to perceptions that an economy cannot meet the targets and objectives associated with the neoliberal model (i.e., overvalued currencies, increasing fiscal deficits, or inflation). Financial deregulation on portfolio investments led to an increase in flows of short-term capital that could enter and leave the region quickly, leading to national crises and banking collapses in different countries in Latin America during the 1990s (Green 2003, 58).

TNCs have been aided in their efforts in creating a business environment consistent with their investment needs by an array of different actors. According to Leslie Sklair (2002, 9) there exists a “transnational capitalist class” of multiple actors committed to a set of policy objectives consistent with the goals of transnational corporations. Sklair divides the transnational capitalist class into four fractions, “1) Transnational corporate executives and their local affiliates (corporate fraction); 2) Globalizing state and inter-state bureaucrats and politicians (state fractions); 3) Globalizing professionals (technical fraction); and 4) Merchants and media (consumerist fraction)” (2002, 99). Sklair argues that this class “consists of those people who see their own interests and/or the interests of their social and/or ethnic group, often transformed into an imagined national interest, as best served by an identification with the global system” (2002, 9).⁴ Or as Robinson argues, the fact that increasingly political elites in power in Latin America constitute a “transnational fraction means that their material interests and identity lie with integration into the emergent structures of global capitalism and with the rationalization and modernization of both accumulation and domination” (2003, 117). Sklair’s “transnational capitalist class” and Robinson’s model of a “transnational state” both view the state as being a part of a larger structure of political and economic power that is emerging to facilitate capitalist globalization internationally and the interests of transnational corporations specifically.⁵ Transnational policy-making institutions (such as the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Interamerican Dialogue, or the World Economic Forum), the governments of core capitalist states, and international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have all worked to expand free trade, reduce regulations upon the investments of transnational corporations, and accelerate the integration of markets through economic blocs (such as the North American Free Trade Association or the European Union).

In Latin America this process of economic reform and the integration of Latin American states into components of transnational states has been taking place since the mid-1970s. The shift to market-oriented economic strategies followed decades in which the developmental model in Latin America was state-led development through import-substitution-industrialization

(ISI). The various ISI policies pursued by Latin American governments involved a significant role for state spending, financing that was increasingly obtained in the 1970s through loans from banks based in industrialized nations, banks that viewed the Latin American market as a safe location for their investments.

The U.S.-instigated recession of the early 1980s in response to continuing inflation in the U.S. economy coupled with increasing energy prices undermined the ability of governments in Latin America to maintain their debt payments to international banks, with countries in the region threatening to default on their debts. In response, international credit dried up for Latin American governments, and the resulting economic crisis, which coincided with increasing domestic pressures for democratization, led to the withdrawal of military governments throughout the region (Remmer 1992/1993). The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank offered these states the necessary loans but required them to implement “stabilization” and “structural adjustment” policies in order to receive them. The region’s debt was used as a lever to press for “economic reform.” “Stabilization” represented a set of policies designed to create fiscal surpluses, reduce inflation, and reduce domestic demand for imports, all in an effort to improve the ability of these governments to pay down their debts (Green 2003, 270–71). Structural adjustment policies were policies such as the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the shifting to export-led development, the removal of capital controls on foreign investments, and the weakening of labor protections in order to create a business environment welcoming to transnational corporations (*ibid.*).

These policies have established, and are establishing, the basis for neoliberal economies, which have had a devastating impact upon the majority of Latin Americans. In 1980, 118 million Latin Americans were poor, but by 1990 that number had increased to 196 million and to 230 million by 1995 (Vilas 1996, 16; Robinson 1998/1999, 118). Between 1980 and 2000 both social inequality and poverty increased despite a 52 percent increase in total GDP for the region, as Latin America’s wealthiest benefited the most from neoliberalism (Green 2003, 151–54). Unemployment increased by one-third between 1991 and 2001 to reach 8.4 percent for the region, while millions joined Latin America’s growing informal labor market (*ibid.*, 156–57). The emergence of neoliberal economies was not simply the result of international pressures but also reflected the hegemony of neoliberal ideology among a faction of Latin America’s political and economic elite.

Gramsci, International Hegemony, and Policy-Planning Organizations

Not only has capitalist globalization weakened national boundaries through a global system of production and the various institutional agreements that work to facilitate this process, but national boundaries have also been eroded

by transnational policy networks linking intellectuals and politicians across borders. These intellectuals represent a global community of like-minded “modernizers” committed to a similar set of ideas believed necessary to create both the economic and the political conditions for transnational capital within their (as well as others’) respective nation-states.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) argues that “hegemony” is a relation between social classes, in which one class fraction or class sector takes a leading role through gaining the willing consent of other classes and groups.⁶ The schools, churches, political parties, and media are examples of institutions that socialize the consent of subordinate classes to the rule of dominant classes. Gramsci also argues that “historic blocs” fuse different classes under one hegemonic order, established by the leadership of that “bloc,” as a variety of social forces (such as intellectuals, party leaders or the military) come together to maintain that order. In other words, the hegemony of a dominant class is not simply attained through the *coercive* force of the state (the police, the military, courts) but is also maintained by obtaining the *consent* of subordinate actors through consensual mechanisms (elections, interest group involvement, the dispersion of dominant ideologies).

The rise of transnational corporations and elites internationally and the mechanisms utilized by these actors to develop a “historic bloc” internationally across all states in the international system has been emphasized within the “Gramscian School of International Relations” (Cox 1983, 1986, 1987; Gill 1991, 1993; Robinson 1996a). Robert Cox (1983, 1986, 1987) argues that the growing internationalization of production and exchange represents the potential basis of a transnational historic bloc. Following Gramsci, these scholars explicate the ideological and political tools that are in place to make the international hegemony of transnational capital a reality.

The establishment of this “hegemony” is being accomplished through the influence of ideas and policy-planning groups. The ideas and details of the programs and laws of any national government generally require some type of planning, development, and thought in their creation. Policy planning organizations, universities, or think tanks have often played a role in the development of these ideas and policy agendas. These institutions introduce reports and proposals on major issues, and often members from these groups are appointed to central decision sites within the state (Robinson 1996a, 26–28, 41–44; Domhoff 1978, 63; Barrow 1993, 33; Gonzalez 2001; Centeño and Silva 1998; Petras and Morley 1992, chapter 7).

Beyond the development of policy ideas, these organizations also “provide a setting in which an informed selection of members of the upper class and corporate community capable of serving in government can take place” (Domhoff 1980, 193).⁷ These academics and technocrats bring their various biases and ideological positions to their research and policy initiatives. These biases are a result of a number of factors including the social composition of the intellectuals themselves and/or the institutional conditioning of the university or think

tank, which operates to remove or marginalize those academics who share a political position or bias that is inconsistent with the dictates of the people who control the research and/or institution (i.e., trustees, government or corporate wielders of grants, etc.) (Barrow 1990, 31; Touraine 1997).

Stephen Gill (1991, 51–52) posits that “intellectuals are not simply the producers of ideology, they are also the ‘organizers of hegemony,’ that is they theorize the ways in which hegemony can be developed or maintained. Thus intellectuals are a steering force in the political rule of a dominant class fraction in a given historic bloc.” In an era in which changes in the international economy have prioritized neoliberal economic solutions as the key to economic growth Latin American governments have increasingly been led by those actors who demonstrate their integration (intellectually and politically) with this changing social order. Changing conditions within the international economy have created a policy environment in which those economists, technocrats, and other intellectuals promoting the ideals of the free market and capitalist competition have an opportunity to enact their policies (Petras and Morley 1992, 145–78; Petras 1999, 58–79).

Throughout Latin America an emerging group of globalizing technocrats came to hold positions of national power over the economy and the state itself over the last two decades (Green 2003, 35–38). Jorge Dominguez and Richard Feinberg (1997) have examined individuals who have obtained leadership positions within Latin American governments and successfully promoted economic and political liberalization. They refer to these individuals as “technopols,” “technically skilled and politically savvy leaders who held key positions during critical periods of change” (Feinberg 1997, xiii), as opposed to “technocrats,” individuals with highly specialized training holding decision-making power within the state. In *Technopols*, different contributors focus upon the individual lives of specific technopols (such as Fernando Cardoso, Javier Corrales, and Alejandro Foxley) and explore how these actors have made neoliberal economic policies “acceptable” to the broader public (Dominguez 1997, 4). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s technopols throughout Latin America worked to “foster freer politics and freer markets” (Dominguez 1997, 2). In other words, these leaders worked to establish the hegemony of these economic and political ideas.

The technopols whom Dominguez’s volume examines embrace democratic politics because, according to Dominguez, “democratic regimes” provide assurances that the rules and institutions that guide economic policies will endure over the long-term (ibid., 13). Of course, this only works if both “government and opposition are committed to the same broad framework of a market economy” (ibid.). Technopols also were a part of, or organized, various institutes, policy-planning groups, and economics teams in which they worked to develop and transmit their ideas, as well as to “colonize state agencies” in order to establish the transnational agenda of market democracies

(*ibid.*, 19–20). They represent key parts of modernizing policy coalitions which have competed and attained national power throughout the region.

Catherine M. Conaghan and James Malloy focus on comparable policy coalitions in their analysis of neoliberal experiments in the Andes (1994). They stress the importance of not examining the state as a unitary actor, but preferring to view “. . . how conflict inside the ranks of state institutions and among societal actors can affect policy outcomes . . . the making and unmaking of policy is shown as highly contingent on concrete political struggles among power contenders that include classes and their organizations, bureaucratic agencies, technocratic cadres, and politicians and their parties” (Conaghan and Malloy 1994, 10). Others such as Eduardo Silva (1993) and Jeffrey Frieden (1991) have also examined these types of coalitions, concluding that if a specific coalition is dominated by economic interests with fixed investments producing only for a domestic market this coalition would differ in its ideological position than a coalition dominated by banking interests oriented to attracting greater international investment. In the case of Latin America not only have transnational corporations been important, but the support of the U.S. government and international financial institutions has facilitated the emergence of these neoliberal coalitions, granting those groups and individuals deemed competent enough to carry out the necessary market reforms a degree of international and domestic political legitimacy (Dominguez 1997, 27).

U.S. Foreign Policy and Democracy

U.S. foreign policy has been (and is) engaged in a new type of political intervention in Latin America. Rather than endorse authoritarian systems of governments, as it has historically done, the United States has emphasized the expansion of democratic institutions in the last two decades as a more effective means in managing social protest and resistance, as well as in ensuring transnational investments (Robinson 1996a). The relationship between the U.S. state and TNCs has played an important role in this endeavor.

Ronald Cox and Daniel Skidmore-Hess delineate the rise of transnational corporations within the U.S. government and their control over the two major political parties, replacing nationally oriented capitalists and labor in the overall policy direction of the U.S. state. Cox and Skidmore-Hess find that “some of the most important and influential political coalitions behind the long-term processes of globalization have been based in the United States and have long exported an ideological and political vision of the limits and possibilities of globalization to other parts of the world” (Cox and Skidmore-Hess 1999, 1–2). The United States has promoted a neoliberal economic and political liberalizing agenda, directly and indirectly, through free trade pacts in Latin America and in Africa, as well as its role in the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the IMF.⁸

“Democracy Promotion” has become the centerpiece for U.S. foreign policy, as the U.S. foreign policy establishment has committed itself to expanding “market democracy” (McSherry 2000; Robinson 1996a; Smith 2000). The failure of authoritarian regimes to maintain their legitimacy in the face of significant popular challenge coupled with the end of the Cold War and the cooptive effect of democratization has contributed to this shift in U.S. foreign policy (Gills et al. 2003, 8–12). The development of “democracy promotion” agencies, such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the use of aid conditionality that ties foreign assistance from the United States to institutional changes within the country’s politics are important indications of this policy.⁹ The NED argues that it is “guided by the belief that freedom is a universal human aspiration that can be realized through the development of democratic institutions, procedures, and values” (National Endowment for Democracy 2001). Its work has been complemented by the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and funded by the NED which “works to build democracy and market economies throughout the world” (CIPE 2000).¹⁰ The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), another arm of U.S. democracy promotion, has argued that “democracy promotion” is “complementary to and supportive of the transition to market-oriented economies” (as cited in Robinson 1996b, 634).¹¹ In the case of Latin America, Thomas Carothers has argued that the promotion of democracy “has become a central element of U.S. policy . . . and is seen as essential to a positive security environment” (1995, 13). Between 1990 and 1999 Latin America was the region that received the second largest amount of “democracy promotion” assistance from USAID (Carothers 1999, 51).

The work of these organizations has been complemented by a variety of military programs designed to foster democratic culture within Latin American militaries, with Samuel Huntington even arguing that such types of training “have been major factors in the diffusion and acceptance by military officers elsewhere of the liberal democratic norms of military professionalism and control” (1996, 7). By the mid-1990s all nations in Latin America, except for Cuba, could be formally considered “democracies,” and U.S. policymakers took at least partial credit for this success. The democratic outcomes sought by different U.S. governments have been the establishment of low-intensity democracies.

Low-Intensity Democracy and Capitalist Globalization

Low-intensity democracies are limited democracies in that they achieve important political changes, such as the reduction of the military’s formal institutional power or greater individual freedoms, but stop short in addressing the extreme social inequalities within Latin American societies (Gills, Rocamora, and Wilson 1993). “Democracy” is equated with a particular set of

procedural criteria, a “procedural minimum that includes “contestation over policy and competition for office, participation of the citizenry through partisan, associational, and other forms of collective action, [and] accountability of rulers to the ruled through mechanisms of representation and the rule of law” (Karl 1990, 2). This democratic model exemplifies a U.S. model of democracy, where the “focus is upon electoral rights, with little consideration paid to the wider socioeconomic power structure,” in order to develop “a type of state apparatus required by neoliberal economics” (Smith 2000, 75–77).

Low-intensity democracies effectively serve two functions. First, they provide a more transparent and secure environment for the investments of transnational capital, protecting them from the potentially nationalist imperatives of a military state, populist-corporatist regimes, or the corruption often associated with one-person rule. Second, these regimes function as *legitimizing* institutions for capitalist states, effectively co-opting the social opposition that arises from the destructive consequences of neoliberal austerity, or as Cyrus Vance and Henry Kissinger have argued, the promotion of “pre-emptive reform” in order to co-opt popular movements that may press for more radical, or even revolutionary change (as cited in Robinson 1996a, 201). John Dryzek (1996) in part refers to this “pre-emptive reform” by emphasizing the sometimes symbolic character of democratization and its effectiveness in weakening oppositional forces. The shift to “low-intensity” democracies reflects one element of a hegemonic process in which the focus is upon obtaining the consensual acceptance of the neoliberal order. As Barry Gills and colleagues argue, “the paradox of Low Intensity Democracy is that a civilianized conservative regime can pursue painful and even repressive social and economic policies with more impunity and with less popular resistance than can an openly authoritarian regime” (1993, 8–9). However, a role for a repressive state or para-state response within a Low-Intensity Democracy continues to be necessary for those subordinate actors that continue to resist capitalist globalization.

Jorge Nef argues that

limited democracy, with its narrow mobility opportunities and exclusionary agendas, provides a thin cushion against the deep structural problems once controlled by repression . . . in the absence of tangible rewards to buy legitimacy, violence (insurgent, repressive, institutionalized, as well as criminal) has become the most common form of political interaction. Under the veneer of normality, violence itself—including banditry, terrorism, repression, official abuses by security forces, and generalized lawlessness—remains the region’s dominant mode of conflict management. (1995, 94)

In the case of Latin America, and Colombia specifically, the pursuit of a series of economic policies to open up the economy to greater international

competition has simply exacerbated social and economic inequality. This has contributed to conditions amenable to strengthening coercive sectors of the state, as well as expanding paramilitary operations in response to escalating challenges to the state's legitimacy.¹² The transitions to "democracy" in Latin America or Colombia's political liberalization represented not a consolidation of democratic practices but an alternative form of elite rule.¹³

In Latin America, the political institutions that have been established over the last two decades have been highly centralized, with the executive wielding a great deal of power (O'Donnell 1994). Economic policymaking in particular is restricted to specific technocrats that have embraced the ideologies of neoliberalism and/or enjoy connections with modern sectors of capital and the international financial institutions that promote the agenda of transnational corporations.

The internationalization of capital markets and the restrictions upon economic behavior monitored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have furthered the maintenance of low-intensity democracies. These restrictions of global capital (see Gill and Law 1988) reduce the necessity of military rule to ensure economic strategies amenable to the interests of local and international economic elites. The collapse of the socialist bloc with the end of the Cold War further limited options, as the loss of this ideological and political alternative to capitalist globalization undermined pressures for radical change. The above structural context creates the conditions for the successful reduction of the military's prerogatives by transnationalized states.

The existence of a relationship between democratization and the interests of specific classes has been noted by a number of different scholars (Moore 1966; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992). Catherine Conaghan and James Malloy (1994, 22) find in their analyses of neoliberal reform in the Andes that domestic business elites promoted democratic reform, as business elites viewed democracy as "a means to secure steady access to policy makers and to guarantee more predictability and probusiness postures in economic policy." Jeffrey Paige's (1997) and William I. Robinson's (2003) works on political liberalization in Central America associate democratization with the rise of modern sectors of the capitalist class (finance, agro-industrialists, capital-intensive factions, internationalized linked business sectors) to a position of dominance in these respective societies. For example, Paige finds that the revolutionary challenges of the 1980s in Central America worked to weaken the landed oligarchy (the owners of large landed estates) and strengthened agro-industrialists (who profited most from the processing of coffee) within these societies, a sector less reliant upon authoritarian power for capital accumulation (Paige 1997, 315–25). Representatives of the region's landed oligarchy have been in opposition to political liberalization, working to maintain their control over the state or sectors of the state (such as the armed forces) in order to ensure a large, stable, and repressed workforce. The integration of

these economies into capitalist globalization has worked to strengthen those modern sectors most effectively positioned to benefit from the international change (Robinson 2003, 66–71).

In the end, I stress the importance of actors and forces outside of the “formal” state, emphasizing the emerging trend of governments equating their national interests with transnational interests as one component of a larger transnational state. The study of capitalist globalization is important in the analysis of civil-military relations in that its promotion internationally is related to the establishment of political regimes that can only be referred to as limited, formal, or “low-intensity” democracies. These are democracies that are more concerned with maintaining control, rather than establishing the basis for *substantive* democratic change in the lives of Latin Americans. These global developments have conditioned political and economic change in specific nation-states and are directly related to democratization and civil-military relations in Colombia.

Colombia's Neoliberal State and Low-Intensity Democracy

Colombia's neoliberal state emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A transnational elite, Colombia's version of “technopols,” were elected and/or appointed to key decision-making positions within the state during this period. This transnational elite not only focused on shifting the country's economy in a neoliberal direction but also on reforming its politics in an effort to co-opt the state's political opposition. Efforts were made to negotiate the surrender of armed opponents, utilizing the possibility of institutional reform as an incentive for their inclusion into formal political competition. The remaking of Colombia's politics also included a number of reforms to Colombia's civil-military relations, as well as the introduction of a new constitution in 1991.

In contrast to most of Latin America, these reforms did not follow a transition from authoritarian rule. Colombia has maintained a restricted system of electoral competition for much of the twentieth century. The institutional reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s were in part a response to increasing levels of social agitation for political change, as well as escalating political and social violence that the Colombian state found difficult to control. Relatedly, Colombia's international context consisted of the regional diffusion of free market democratization, actively promoted by the United States and IFIs, with Colombia's own representatives of a transnational elite supportive of this agenda.

The reforms of the country's civil-military relations during this period included the placement of a civilian (replacing the commander of the armed forces) at the head of the defense ministry, the creation of special civilian-led agencies with responsibility over the military's budgets, and the enactment of

special human rights training and education programs for the armed forces. These political changes were coupled with a number of neoliberal economic reforms that opened up the country to greater investments from transnational corporations, privatized state-owned enterprises, deregulated labor markets, and lowered tariffs upon imported goods. The Colombian reforms reflected the regional trend of establishing elite rule, as political liberalization has only gone so far, largely restricted to shifts in institutional prerogatives and the formal expansion of civil/political rights. The continued legal and extra-legal opposition from civil society and guerrillas to neoliberal economic reforms, and/or demands for more substantive change, has continued. Political violence by the state and paramilitary forces have represented one of many responses to this resistance, as a “dirty war” was, and continues to be, launched against the perceived supporters and sympathizers of the guerrilla insurgency, as well as representatives of organized popular movements.

Colombian trade unionists have been at the forefront of resisting privatizations of specific state enterprises, or the further removal of protections and benefits for organized labor, and have suffered greatly for this opposition (Ahumada 1996, 219–51; Higginbottom 2003; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions [ICFTU] 2004). Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist, as almost 4,000 were assassinated between 1986 and 2003 (ICFTU 2001; U.S. State Department 2003; Livingstone 2004, 12–13). In 2003, 90 of the 129 murdered trade unionists in the world were killed in Colombia (ICFTU 2004). Most of the killings of these trade unionists during this period have been attributed to paramilitary groups.

The terror of paramilitarism has been complemented with the formal, institutional restrictions upon legal resistance to neoliberalism. Colombia’s neoliberal leadership through presidential decrees and articles in Colombia’s new constitution (1991) have made it easier for governments to ban strikes in specific industries, with governmental leaders frequently charging labor leaders with terrorist acts when they engage in social protest (Ahumada 1996, 223–37). The National Labor College reported that between 1996 and 2000 there were 146 arbitrary arrests of trade unionists and 128 arbitrary arrests of union members during the first six months of 2002 (Escuela Nacional Sindical 2000, 2002). The government prohibits strikes in a wide range of public services that are not necessarily essential, has the authority to dismiss trade union officials who have participated in an illegal strike, and can dismiss legal organizers after six months following a labor dispute or strike (United States Department of State 2003). The leftist political party, the Union Patriótica (UP), which was created by the FARC in 1984 as a part of agreements with the government to allow legal, leftist electoral competition was simply decimated in Colombia’s “dirty war.” Over three thousand of its members were killed by sectors of the Colombian security forces, right-wing death squads, and paramilitary armies in the first ten years of its exist-

tence leading to its virtual extermination as a political party (Dudley 2004, 11; Ortiz Palacio 1999, 13, 70–71).

The internal conflict that has been ongoing in Colombia since the 1960s has escalated in the last two decades, as the largest guerrilla army facing the Colombian state, the FARC, more than doubled its numbers during this period to almost twenty thousand soldiers (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 26–27). The FARC, which promotes a nationalist, social democratic perspective in its rhetoric and political documents has been highly critical of Colombia's neoliberal direction, the continuing limits within the political system, as well as the influential role played by the U.S. government in Colombian politics. It has also been an effective military force, spreading its units throughout the countryside, utilizing its resources from kidnappings, taxing the drug trade, and extortion to establish *de facto* control over many regions of the country.

The integration of the Colombian state into the political and economic forms of capitalist globalization has contributed to the FARC's growth but has also created the conditions for its possible weakening. The growth in Colombia's informal labor pool and rural unemployed, in part a consequence of intensified market competition, has increased the number of potential recruits to the FARC movement (López Michelson 1997b, 1B). A part of this informal labor pool has survived through the growing of coca, creating an increasing source of economic benefits to the FARC through its taxes of this illegal economy.¹⁴ However, the FARC's reliance on this economy and its military successes has created an opportunity for greater U.S. political intervention within Colombia's counterinsurgency campaign. The U.S. "drug war" represents the ideological and symbolic justification for escalating U.S. military aid and political pressure upon Colombian governments to increase their military pressure upon the insurgents. In addition, the increasing reliance upon the foreign investments of transnational corporations has created additional pressures upon the Colombian state to establish the stability necessary for these investments. In response to these pressures, between the late 1990s and 2004 the military power and presence of the Colombian state have been (and are being) strengthened, in part to allow for and protect the investments of transnational capital in those regions where the FARC is dominant.

The increasing military strength of the Colombian state complements the existing strategy of paramilitarism that has effectively arrested (and reversed) the spread and consolidation of guerrilla power in certain regions of the country. The state's paramilitary allies have effectively recruited from the same populations as the FARC and have also effectively taxed the drug trade in their war against the insurgency. By 2001 paramilitary groups had a presence in 40 percent of the country's municipalities and held *de facto* control over much of the northern part of the country (Lucia Pinzon 2001; González, Bolivas, and Vázquez 2002, 64). This political and social struggle takes place within a national context of extreme socioeconomic inequality.

Wealth and economic power are wielded within Colombia by large landowners, cattle ranchers, drug traffickers, large multisector and globally linked conglomerates (Economic Groups)¹⁵ and exporters tied to Colombia's leading exports minus oil (coffee, bananas, and cut flowers).¹⁶ In July 2004 the country's comptroller-general found that 64.3 percent of Colombians live below the poverty line, and in rural areas that number increases to 85.3 percent (Contraloría General de la República de Colombia 2004, 43). The wealthiest 10 percent of Colombians earned 80.27 times more than the poorest 10 percent in 2003 (*ibid.*, 48). Another Colombian government study found that 0.4 percent of landholders (15,273 holdings) account for 61.2 percent of registered agricultural land, while 97 percent (3.5 million landholders) share only 24.2 percent (as cited in Calligaro and Isacson 2004).

Economic elites (large landowners, agro-exporters, economic conglomerates, narcotraffickers) have utilized their economic power as a resource in influencing sectors of the state to protect and/or advance their interests. The accommodative relationship between economic elites and the Colombian state is maintained through financial contributions, interpersonal relations, the financing of policy-planning groups, and/or directly taking positions within the state.¹⁷ The affect upon policymaking has often reflected the capitalist faction being represented and/or the changing circumstances of the internal war. Internationally linked, emerging transnational sectors (such as the economic groups) have often worked directly to support and facilitate the political and economic values associated with capitalist globalization, while traditional, primarily nationally based economic elites (especially agrarian elites such as large landowners and cattle ranchers) have prioritized their security and the elimination of the popular and armed left. The continued challenge posed by the FARC to the Colombian social order, though unable to create a revolutionary situation, facilitated a political compromise in which democratic reformers tolerated paramilitary violence as a central component of the state's counterinsurgency strategy. On a regional level agrarian elites worked to achieve their goals via paramilitarism, while on a national level Colombia's transnational elite rhetorically condemned but tolerated and sometimes assisted these counterinsurgency actors.

The emergence and consolidation into national power of a transnational elite contributed to political reform within Colombia (the civil-military reforms being an important indication of this reform) but not the construction of a popular democracy that would challenge social and economic inequalities or that would allow real political space for oppositional forces within the state. The requirements of capitalist globalization and the maintenance of Colombia's highly stratified class structure conditioned "democratic reform" and the relevance of institutional change.