

III. Democracy and Latin America

Speaker: Peter Smith (Director UCSD, Centre for Iberian and Latin American Studies)

- Democracy in Latin America is not mature and the 3rd wave of democratisation in the region continues to be fragile and uncertain. The democratisation process is not inevitable and there is considerable danger of regression to authoritarianism. Most Latin American countries have a so called “partial democracy,” while elections are more or less free, basic political rights are lacking.
- There is a wide-spread disenchantment with neo-liberal reforms in Latin America, since they have not brought any improvement in objective living standards or alleviated poverty. In the meantime, the capacity of the state to deliver basic public goods has diminished as globalization intensifies – a development contributing to plummeting approval rates for Latin American governments. The governing contract is fragile and must be addressed. Protest stemming from these trends is legitimate and the U.S. government should adjust its approach to dealing with protestors as wrong-headed anti-progress trouble makers.
- The direction of U.S. Latin America policy is still uncertain. However, it appears that trade and investment will be emphasised, while less attention will be paid to human rights and development-related issues. The emerging hard line on Cuba and disengagement from Colombia seem to support this proposition.
- *Enforcing Helms-Burton and tightening the sanctions regime with Cuba may have economic consequences for Canada. The Canadian government may be faced with the prospect (or opportunity) to distance itself from the emerging U.S. Latin America policy for this and other more philosophical reasons (i.e., as the champion of human rights). This gives rise to an important question for Canadian policy makers: “Is it worth it? Many well intentioned Latin Americans would hope so.”*

IV. International Trade and Telecommunications

Speaker: Peter Cowhey (Director IGCC)

- Support for free in general trade declined in the U.S. as economic prosperity increased. This trend may be attributed to fulfilled economic objectives of many businesses and to a growing conviction among some Americans that the new prosperity contributed to widening income disparity.
- The Bush team has given trade and other economic issues a new dynamic. There is optimism that the newly appointed U.S. chief trade negotiator, Robert B. Zoellick, will be able to obtain Congress authorisation to ratify multilateral trade agreements (by folding them together with bilateral trade agreements supported by the Congress). Mr. Zoellick