

# POLI 437: International Relations of Latin America



# This week

Democratic Erosion

82		<b>Alberto Fujimori</b> <b>Fujimori</b> (1938–)	July 28, 1990 – April 5, 1992 (1st term) April 5, 1992 – January 9, 1993 (1st term cont.) January 9, 1993 – July 28, 1995 (1st term cont.) July 28, 1995 – July 28, 2000 (2nd term) July 28, 2000 – November 21, 2000 (3rd term)
(82)			
83		<b>Valentín Paniagua</b> <b>Corazao</b> (1936–2006)	November 22, 2000 – July 28, 2001
84		<b>Alejandro Toledo</b> <b>Manrique</b> (1946–)	July 28, 2001 – July 28, 2006
81		<b>Alan García Pérez</b> (1949–2019)	July 28, 2006 – July 28, 2011
85		<b>Ollanta Humala Tasso</b> (1962–)	July 28, 2011 – July 28, 2016
86		<b>Pedro Pablo Kuczynski</b> <b>Godard</b> (1938–)	July 28, 2016 – March 21, 2018

Human rights abuses, money laundering, bribes, phone-tapping; in jail

Interim president...

Odebrecht scandal; fighting extradition from US

Odebrecht scandal; suicide

Odebrecht scandal, money laundering; jail

Odebrecht scandal; pretrial detention

	<b>Martín Vizcarra</b> 	March 23, 2018	November 9, 2020	Constitutional President of the Republic of Peru
	<b>Manuel Merino</b> 	November 10, 2020	November 15, 2020	Constitutional President of the Republic of Peru
	<b>Francisco Sagasti</b> 	November 17, 2020	<i>Incumbent</i>	Constitutional President of the Republic of Peru

Impeached!

Resigned after five  
days!

Interim president

**Any good corruption  
stories from last week?**

# Making predictions is hard

and rising criminal violence. Peruvian democracy is in its best shape ever; a breakdown is highly unlikely. Despite many limitations, democracy in Colombia survived a large spike in violence that began in the 1980s and lasted through the early 2000s. Cuba remains the only openly authoritarian regime in Latin America, in stunning contrast to the situation before the “third wave” of democratization began in the 1970s.

So one cannot say that democracy is *broadly* eroding in Latin America. But there is reason for concern that democratic advances have not

*Journal of Democracy* Volume 26, Number 1 January 2015

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# Whoops

## Peru thrown into constitutional crisis amid power struggle

*Vice President Mercedes Araoz, who was named president by opposition legislators, resigns and calls for new elections.*

2 Oct 2019



October 2019: Peruvian President **dissolves Congress, uses police**

**Is this legal?**

Technically yes: Peruvian constitution  
says after **two votes of no confidence**

**Did this happen?**

President **claims** yes;  
opposition **claims** no

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



## 'God and Money': Graft in Peru Sparks Political Reckoning

Peruvians overwhelmingly support president's closure of a Congress that many deem irredeemably corrupt

# Protests in Peru after court orders release of Keiko Fujimori

*Opposition leader is accused of money laundering and receiving illegal contributions from Brazilian company Odebrecht.*

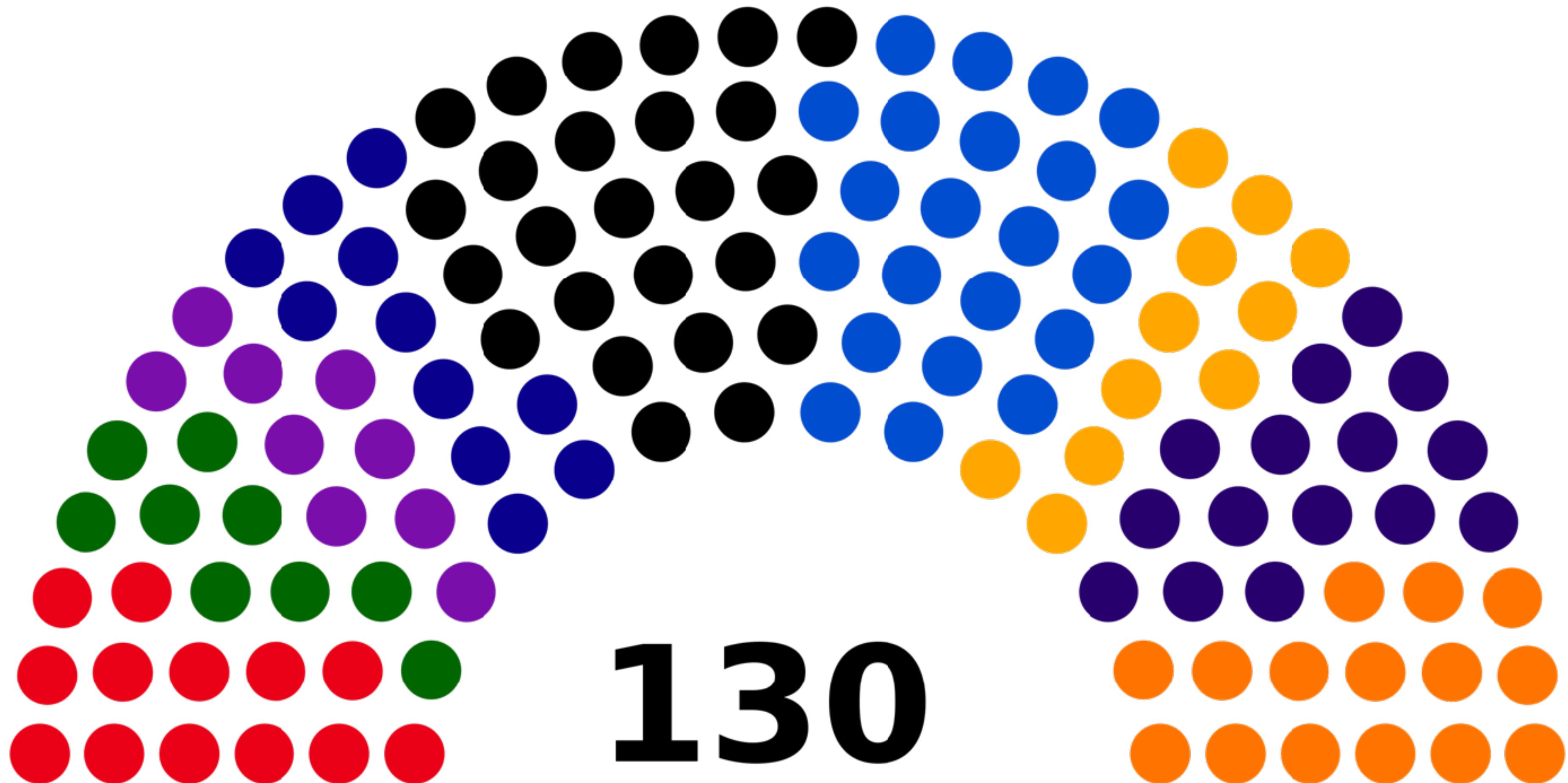
25 Nov 2019



Keiko Fujimori is the daughter of Peru's former president, Alberto Fujimori, and leader of the opposition party  
[Martin Mejia/AP]



Intense power struggle between Vizcarra (right) and Keiko Fujimori's party (left)



2020 elections: major fractionalization, big loss  
for Keiko's party

# 2021 presidential elections

[\*\*https://americasquarterly.org/article/aq-podcast-perus-risky-election/\*\*](https://americasquarterly.org/article/aq-podcast-perus-risky-election/)

# An instructive case

What exactly is a democracy? How does one *undermine* it?

The role of the **opposition** in democratic erosion

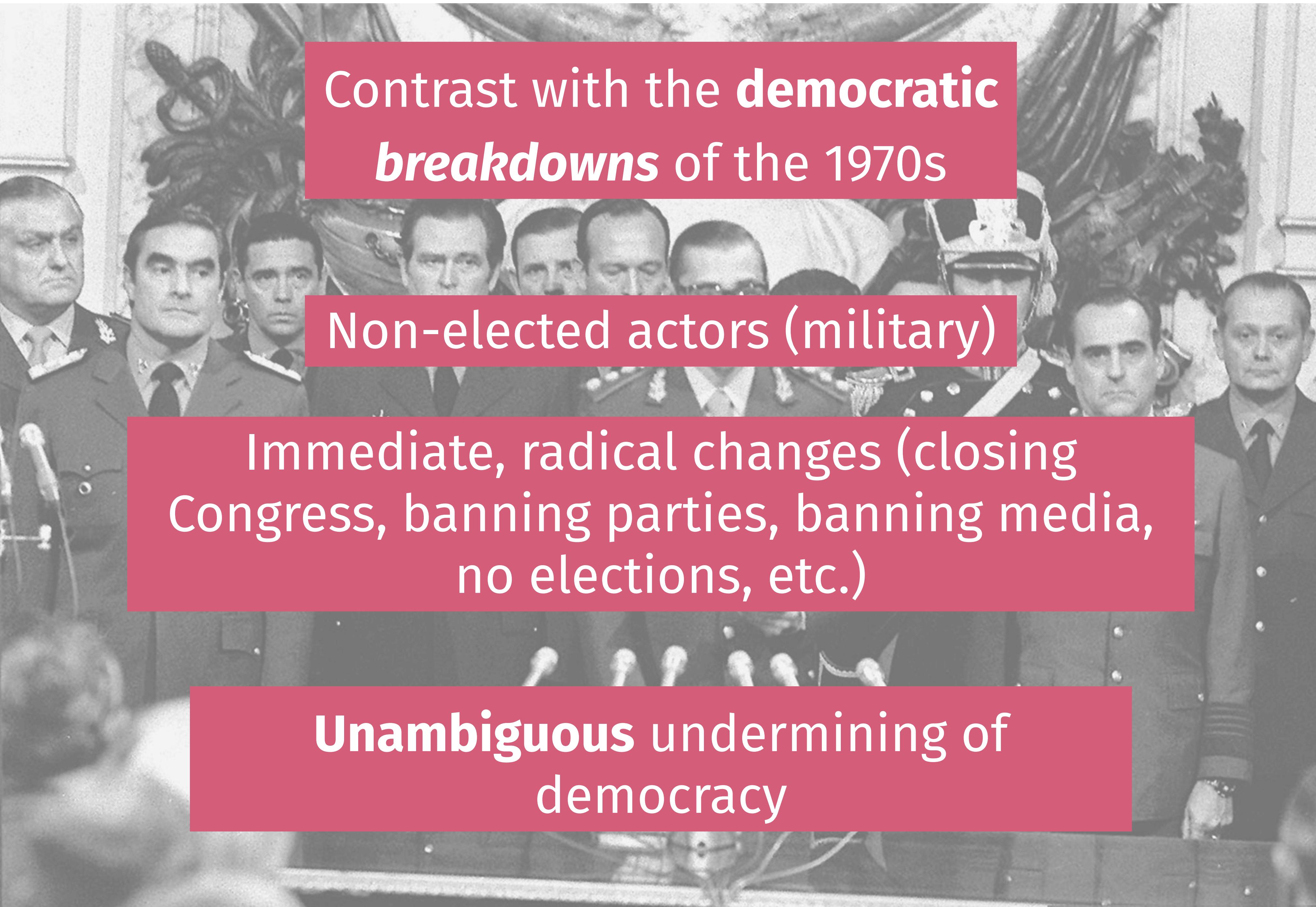
What if the public is OK with erosion? And why would they be?

## What is “democratic erosion/backsliding”?

*“State-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy.” (Bermeo, 2016)*

Generally **slow, deliberate, sequential**

Involves a **democratically-elected executive**



Contrast with the **democratic  
*breakdowns*** of the 1970s

Non-elected actors (military)

Immediate, radical changes (closing  
Congress, banning parties, banning media,  
no elections, etc.)

**Unambiguous** undermining of  
democracy

# What is “democratic erosion/backsliding”?

*“State-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy.” (Bermeo, 2016)*

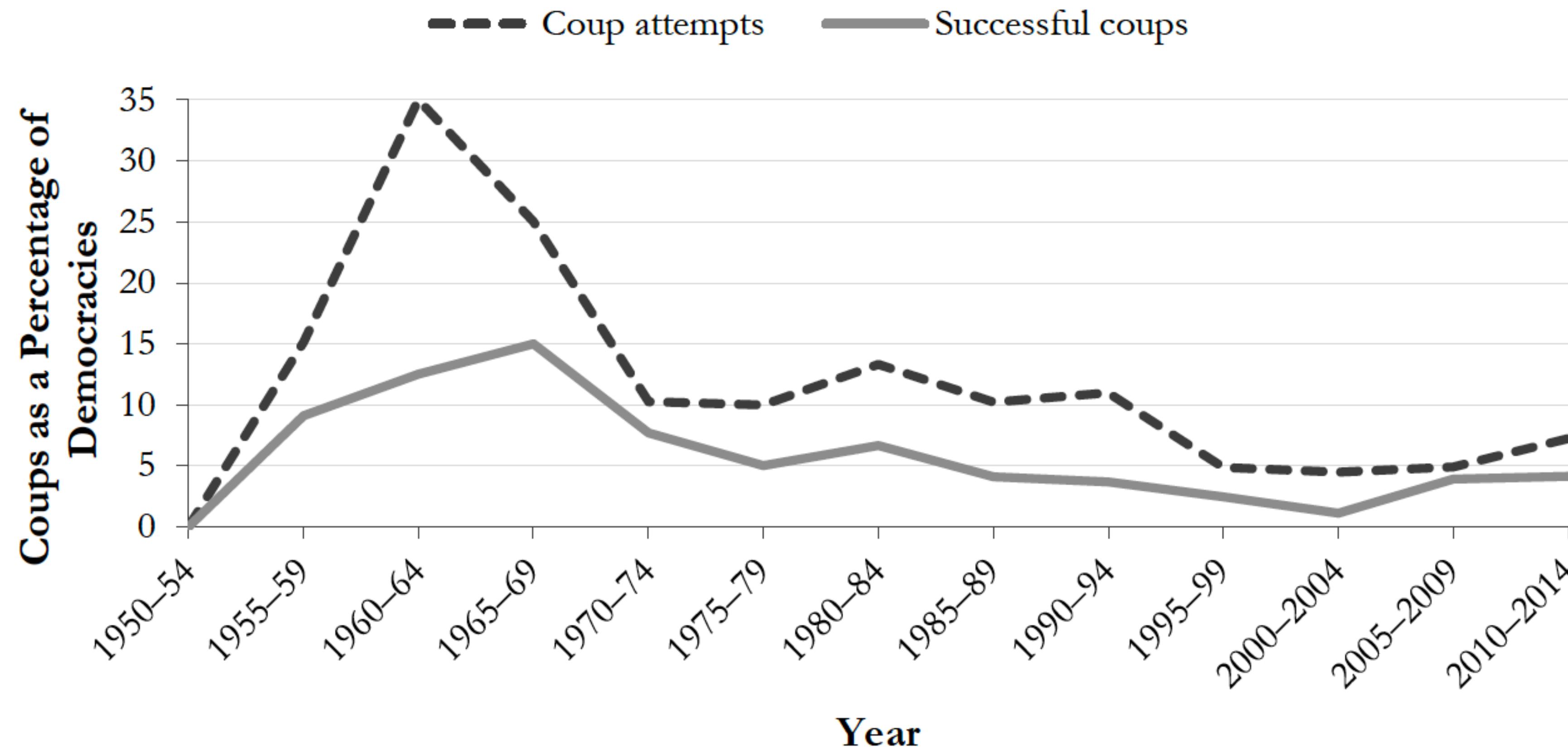
**Much more ambiguous**

**Who is the state?**

**What institutions “sustain” a democracy?**

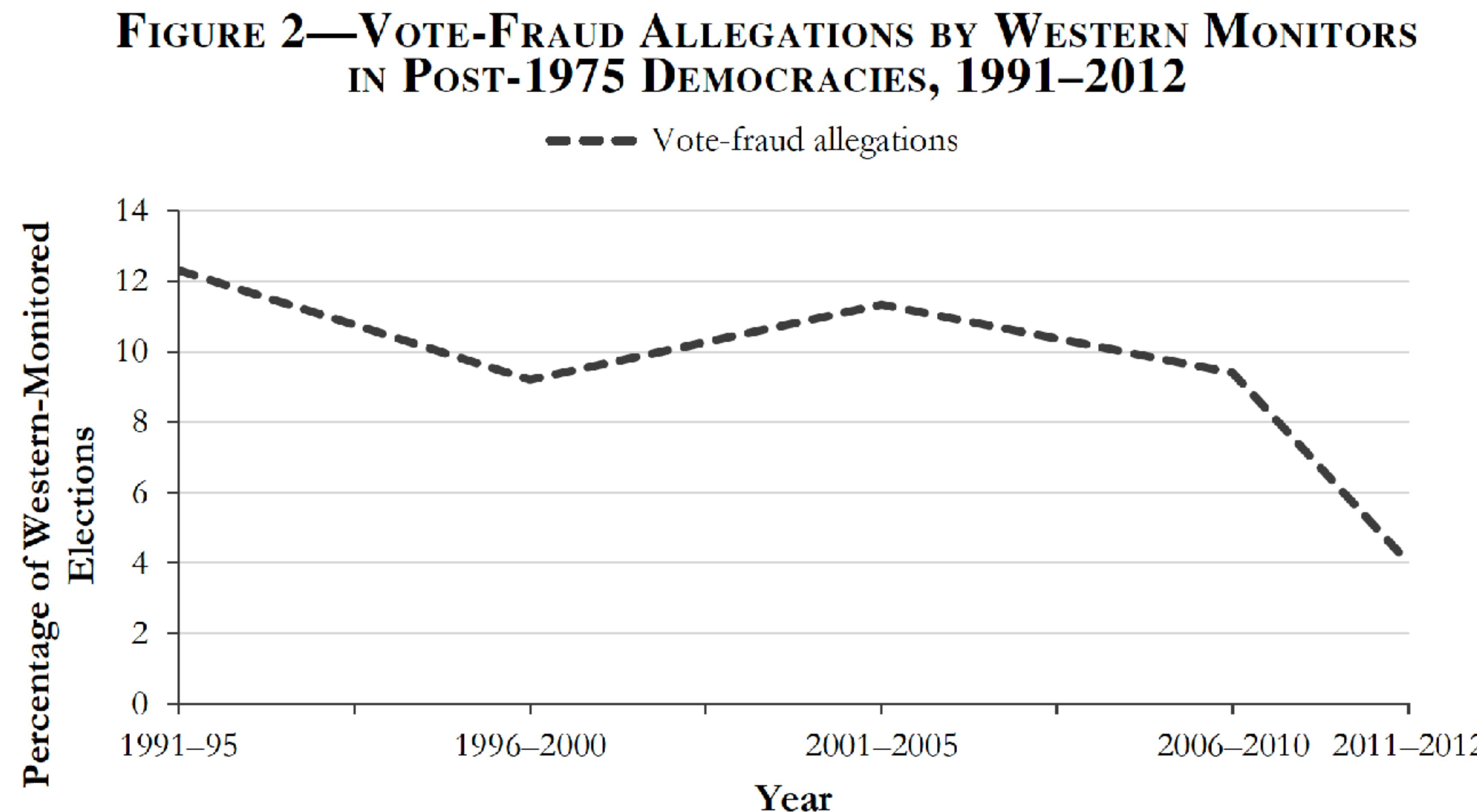
**Is there any room for change?**

## FIGURE 1—COUP FREQUENCY IN DEMOCRACIES, 1950–2014



Full-on **breakdowns** are becoming less common  
(though remember predictions...)

Extremely blatant voter fraud (e.g., stuffing) also less common



A lot less of this (esp. in Latin America), and more erosion



## Results [ edit ]

Choice	Votes	%
For	11,445,638	100
Against	0	0.0
Invalid/blank votes		-
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,445,638</b>	<b>100</b>

# Hussein campaign anthem



# Why?

## Can International Election Monitoring Harm Governance?

**Alberto Simpser** University of Chicago

**Daniela Donno** University of Pittsburgh

*The monitoring of elections by international groups has become widespread. But can it have unintended negative consequences for governance? We argue that high-quality election monitoring, by preventing certain forms of manipulation such as stuffing ballot boxes, can unwittingly induce incumbents to resort to tactics of election manipulation that are more damaging to domestic institutions, governance, and freedoms. These tactics include rigging courts and administrative bodies and repressing the media. We use an original-panel dataset of 144 countries in 1990–2007 to test our argument. We find that, on average, high-quality election monitoring has a measurably negative effect on the rule of law, administrative performance, and media freedom. We employ various strategies to guard against endogeneity, including instrumenting for election monitoring.*

Might be that **international norms, local democratic norms**, make outright breakdown too costly

**What does democratic erosion look like in Latin America?**

# Promissory coups instead of the conventional military coups of the Cold War

Ouster: the president is behaving like an autocrat, we have to kick them out to preserve democracy

Implicit or explicit *promise* to hold elections following ousting

# 1991 Haitian Coup of Aristide

*“A correction of the democratic process”*

Aristide brought back to power in 1994 after US intervention



# 2009 Honduran coup



Ouster: (left-wing) President Zelaya was attempting to circumvent the Constitution

Few promissory coups actually lead to **real, competitive elections**

In cases like Honduras, the opposition will often **boycott the elections** (giving ouster big victory)

But there's a real dilemma here: *what if* President is undermining constitution? Should they be removed? By who?

The other big form of democratic backsliding is  
**executive aggrandizement**

Almost always involve popularly elected  
official with **strong popular mandate**

Slow weakening of **checks on executive power**

# Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador

## 2007 – 2017



Part of Pink-Tide, campaigned on  
“Citizen’s Revolution”

Averaged almost 56% across three  
Presidential elections

Instead, tension rose further and officers shot tear gas canisters at the president who stood on the balcony tearing at his shirt saying: "If you want to kill the president, here he is. Kill him, if you want to. Kill him if you are brave enough."

Called referendum on **constituent assembly**  
(i.e., body to draft new constitution)

82% (!!!) Of electorate supported assembly, 64%  
(!!!) endorsed new constitution in 2008

Redrawing of electoral seats, recentralization  
measures

His party wins 73% of seats (!!!), controls 2/3  
Congress, eliminates **term limits**

Bans bank/bank shareholder ownership of media companies

Journalists liable if they disseminate false or “opportunistic” information

Can dissolve any citizens' organization if divorced from original purpose or harmful to state security

Also a dilemma: what if these things are reasonable on their own?

## ***Venezuela's Maduro Claims Control of National Assembly, Tightening Grip on Power***

It was the last political institution in opposition hands. Now President Nicolás Maduro's has moved closer to total control of the state.



Other executive aggrandizement moves much less ambiguous

One of the difficult aspects of **executive aggrandizement** is that very often through legal channels

**Constituent assemblies**

**Public referendum**

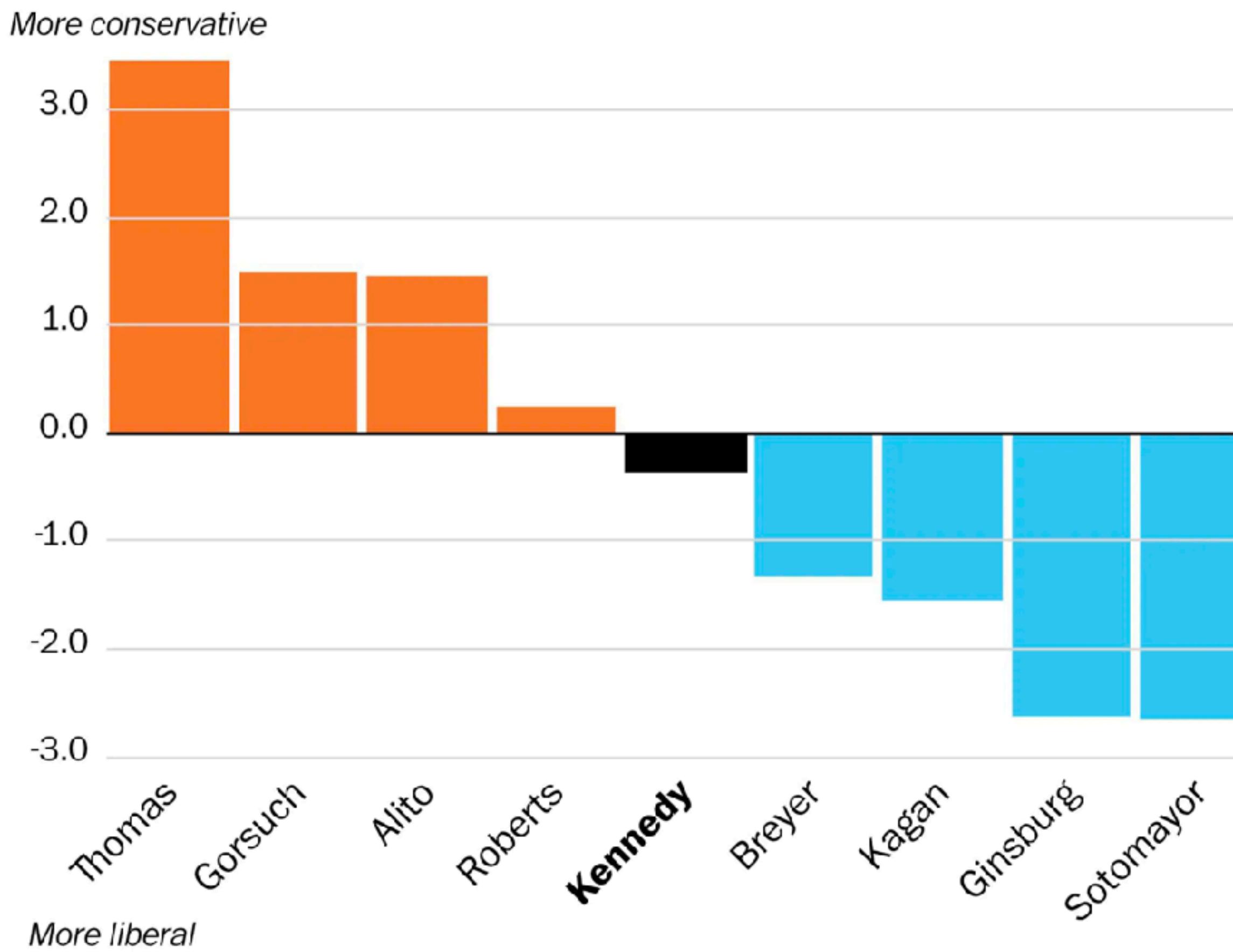
So who's to say that democratic erosion is taking place? What if this is just "the will of the people"?

One idea: executive **benefits** from said policy change

Challenge you to find a major institutional change where the case can't be made (e.g., the filibuster)!

## Ideology of the court

Martin-Quinn scores for Supreme Court justices in 2016



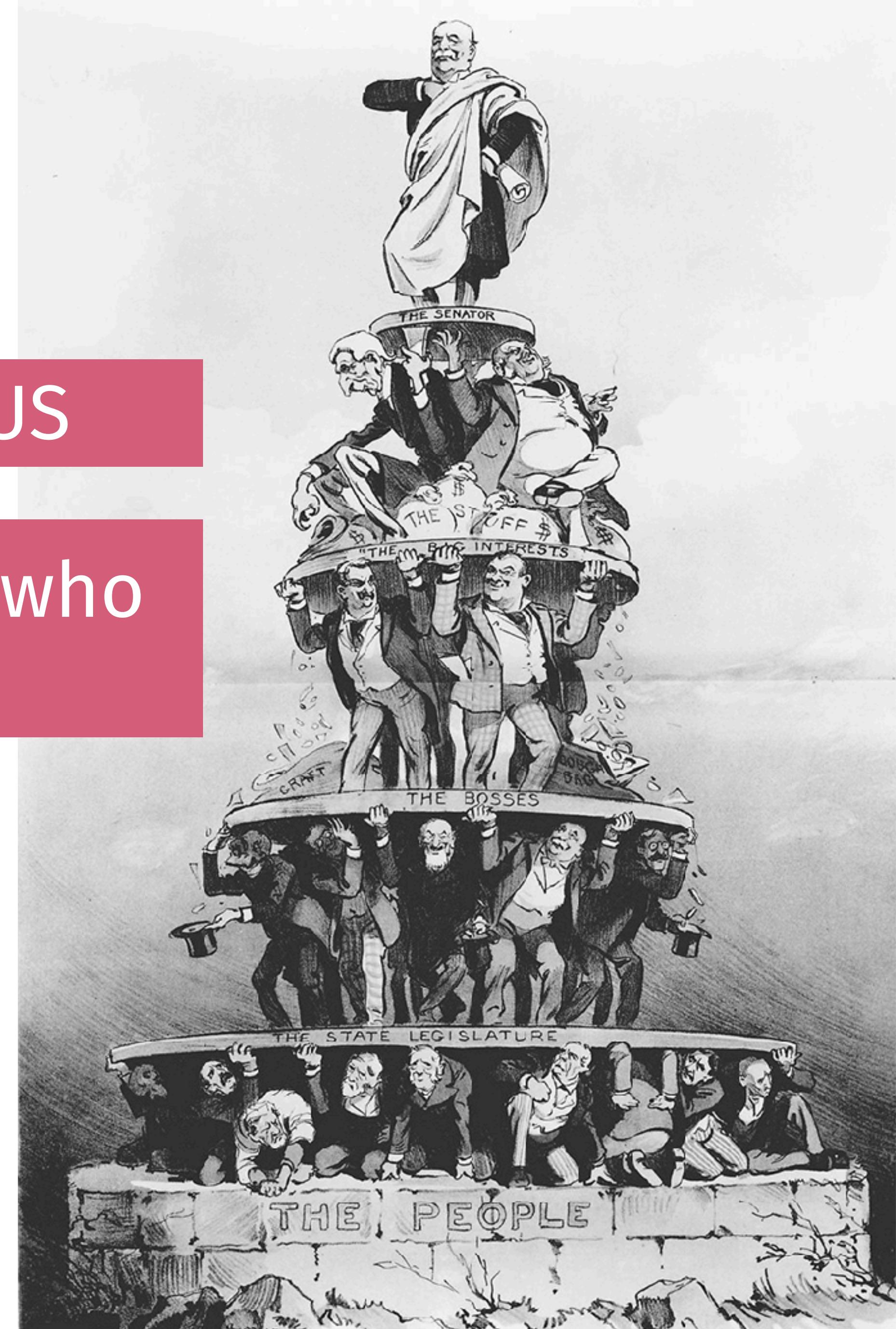
Source: Andrew D. Martin and Kevin M. Quinn

WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

How to distinguish between rules and norms?

Senators weren't always elected in the US

17th Amendment pushed by **Progressives** who  
were frustrated by political machines



Another idea: makes opposition victory **more difficult**

Most electoral rule changes will have implications for who wins (e.g., DC statehood); also why is this relevant?

So then how do you know erosion when you see it?

**Is any change to the rules (electoral, constitutional) inherently illegitimate?**

# Part of what's so interesting about the **democratic erosion** debate in Latin America

Two views of democracy:

## Direct democracy

Democracy is  
fundamentally about  
**popular rule**

Channels for popular  
input are critical

## Representative democracy

Democracy is  
fundamentally about  
**dispersing power**

Checks and balances are  
critical

# That thing about predictions...

## Delegative Democracy Revisited

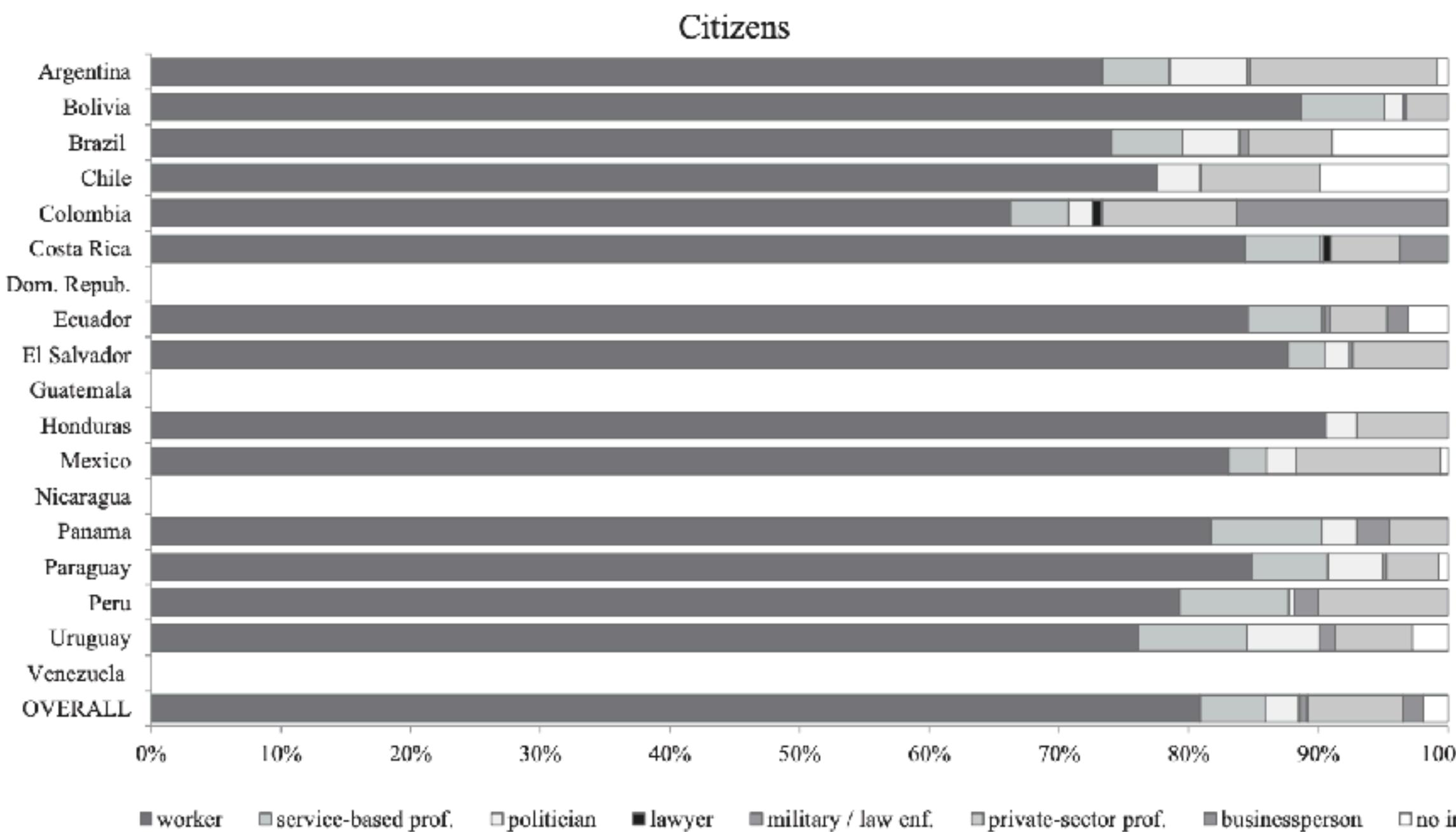
### MORE INCLUSION, LESS LIBERALISM IN BOLIVIA

*Santiago Anria*

2016, Morales narrowly lost a referendum—whose unwelcome result he quickly accepted—that would have changed the basic law in order to let him run again in 2019.<sup>1</sup> As opinion polls show, the level of public

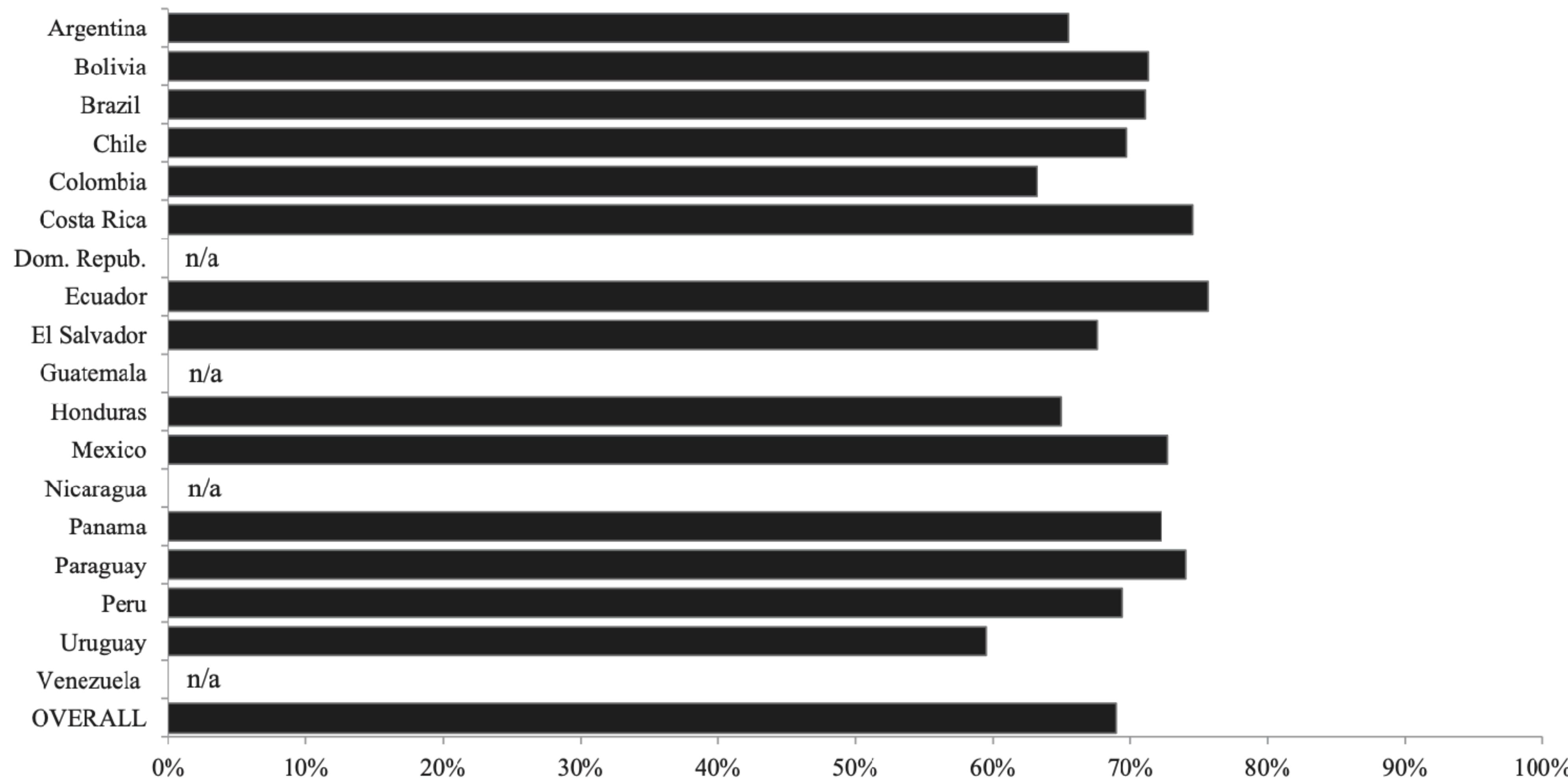
Unhappy trade-off in Morales' tenure: **inclusion** is increasing, but at the cost of **checks on the executive**

**FIGURE 2 Class in Latin America**



### FIGURE 3 The Underrepresentation of the Working Class in Latin American Legislatures

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*Note:* Bars report the difference between the percentage of working-class adults in each country and the percentage of each country's legislators from the working class.

*Sources:* USAL surveys and ILO.

**TABLE—REPRESENTATIVES’ OCCUPATIONS PRIOR TO BEING ELECTED TO THE PLURINATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Sector	1993–97	1997–2002	2002–2006	2006–10	2010–14
Public Administration	14%	16%	22%	17%	19%
Middle-Class Professionals	49%	38%	28%	25%	18%
Politician	4%	4%	8%	7%	11%
Workers, Artisans, and Primary Sector	4%	11%	11%	19%	26%
Transportation	-	2%	1%	4%	5%
Business and Private Sector	24%	27%	27%	27%	19%
Retirees, Students, Other	5%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Sample Size	74	98	80	96	97

*Source:* María Teresa Zegada and Jorge Komadina, *El espejo de la sociedad: Poder y representación en Bolivia* (La Paz, Bolivia: CERES/Plural, 2014), 57.

Working class, indigenous representation increases in government

**Direct democracy** was central to many of the Pink Tide, especially Morales

Broad policy changes (e.g., constitutional reform) via **referendum** and not through representative channels

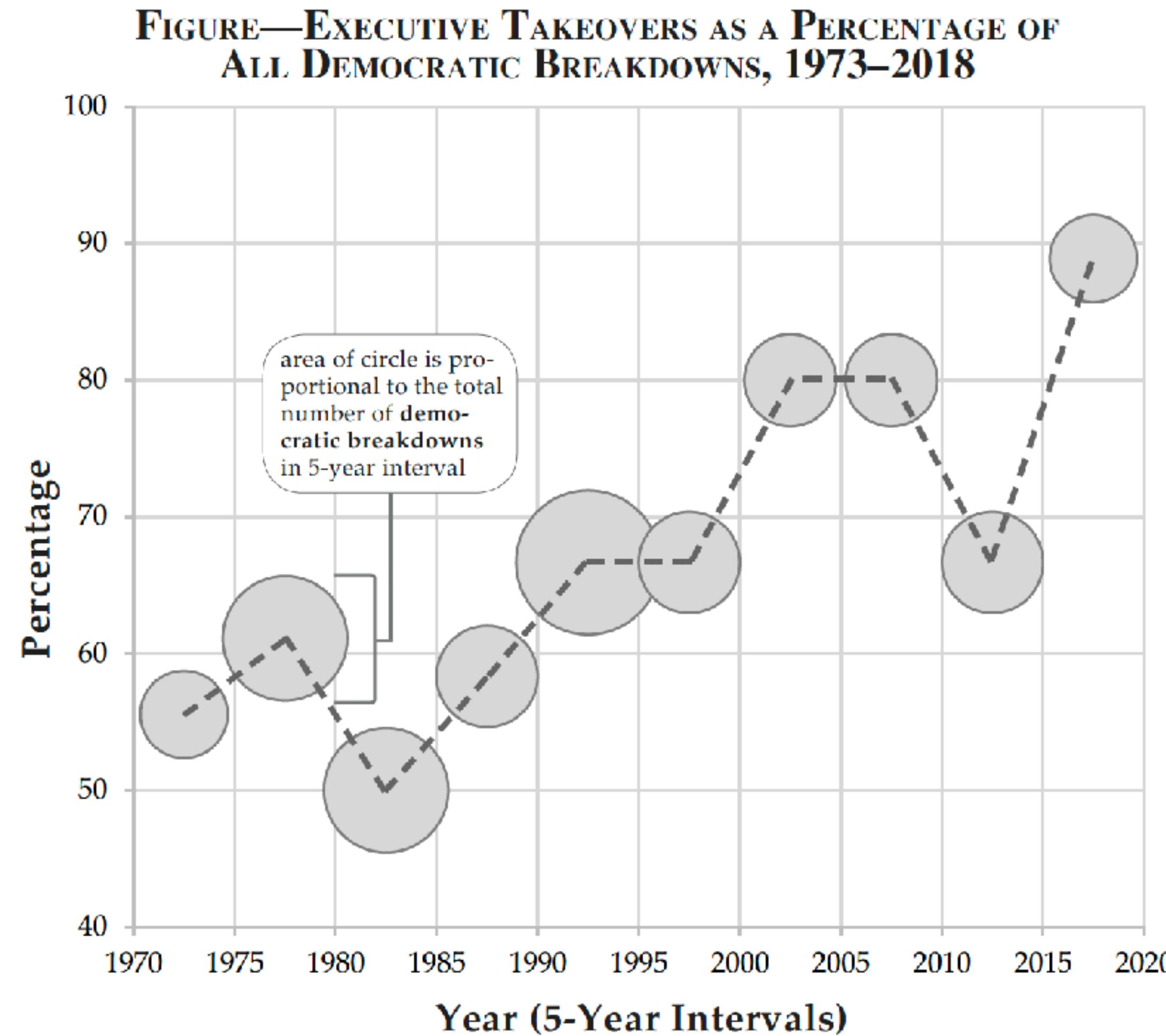
Pitch: representative institutions there to prevent the changes MAS supporters want

Example: direct election of judges in 2011

# “Hello, President”



# Svolik's Polarization versus Democracy



Source: Author's coding and Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 1973–2019.

## Puzzle: why do voters who purportedly support democracy, also support candidates who erode?

els of public support for democracy in Latin America. Throughout the 2000s—with Hugo Chávez well on his way to becoming the archetype of a Latin American authoritarian populist—70 to 90 percent of Venezuelans agreed with statements such as “Democracy may have problems but it is the best system of government.” In fact, by this measure, around

Maybe our **measures** are bad

Maybe people **don't know** what democracy is

Svolik argues would-be “eroders” exploit polarization, pitting **democracy** against **partisan interests**

If people feel strongly enough about certain issues, they are willing to forgo democracy to get them

In the Latin American context, this means:

Battle **corruption**

Substantial **redistribution**

vs.

More **representation**

Chavez-figure

The **opposite, or none**  
of these things

The opposition/  
traditional parties

This is by no means a **trick or sleight of hand**

## ***New President in Venezuela Proposes to Rewrite the Constitution***

By [Clifford Krauss](#)

Feb. 4, 1999



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See the article in its original context from February 4, 1999, Section A, Page 8 | [Buy Reprints](#)

"The Constitution, and with it the ill-fated political system to which it gave birth 40 years ago, has to die," Mr. Chavez said in his address. "It is going to die, Sirs! Accept it!"

Openly arguing that **checks/balances** are bad  
(protect interests of elite)

If polarization provides the **opportunity**, when might we expect to see most polarization?

Why can't the opposition, or the traditional parties, deactivate these **trade-offs**?

Make the case that losing checks on executive will hurt citizens (e.g., the dictatorships)

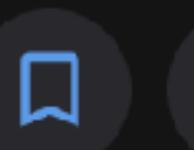
Say “we will give you all those policies too  
*and* not erode checks on constitution”



640 × 360



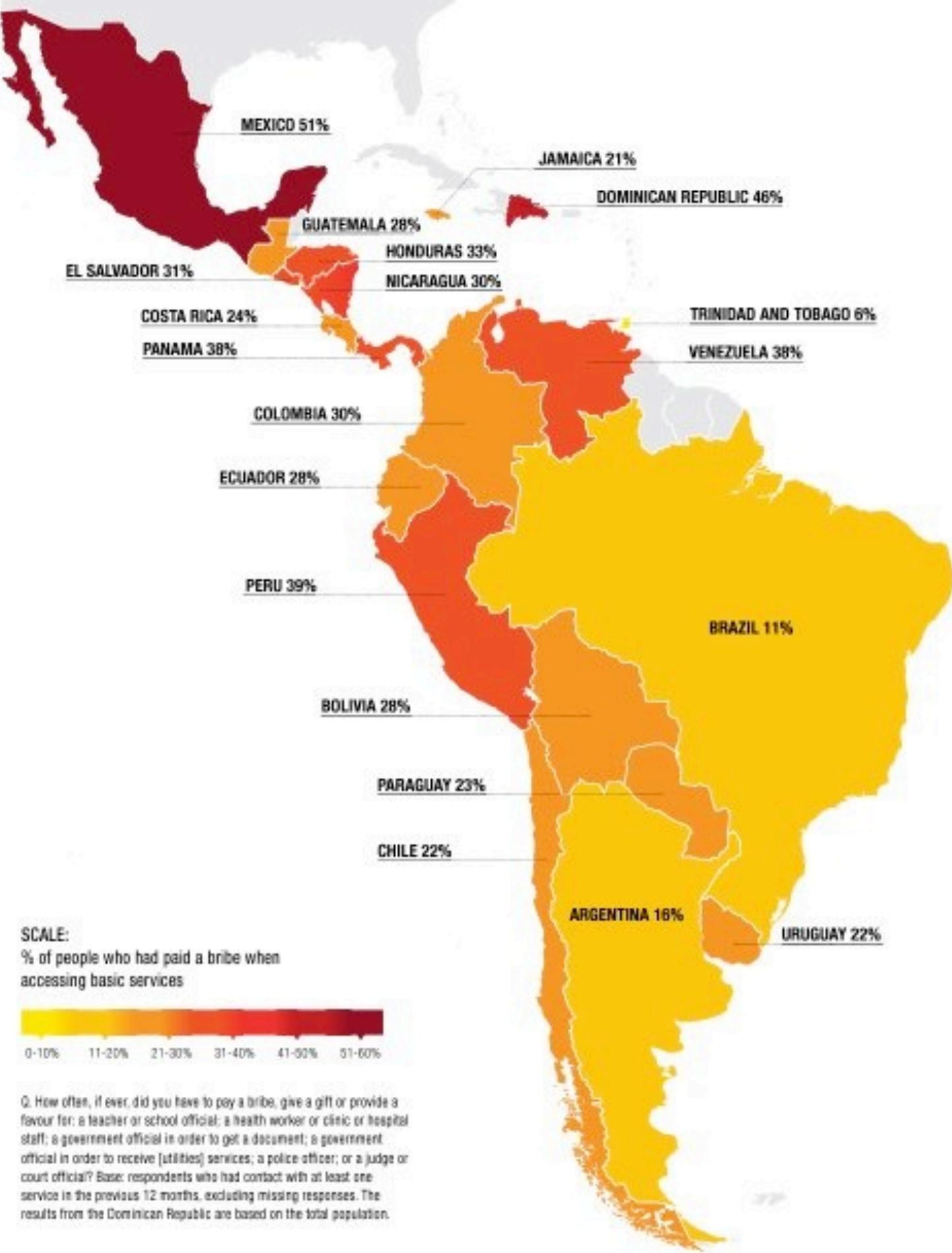
BBC



BBC World Service - Witness History, The Caracazo Protests

Economic or political crises produce opportunity for polarization

## BRIERY RATES ACROSS LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



PEOPLE AND CORRUPTION: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN – Global Corruption Barometer

15

## *Death of Colombian Teenager Drives Protesters Back to Streets*

Dilan Cruz, 18, died after being struck by a police projectile. Activists call him a symbol of “a generation that was robbed of its rights.”

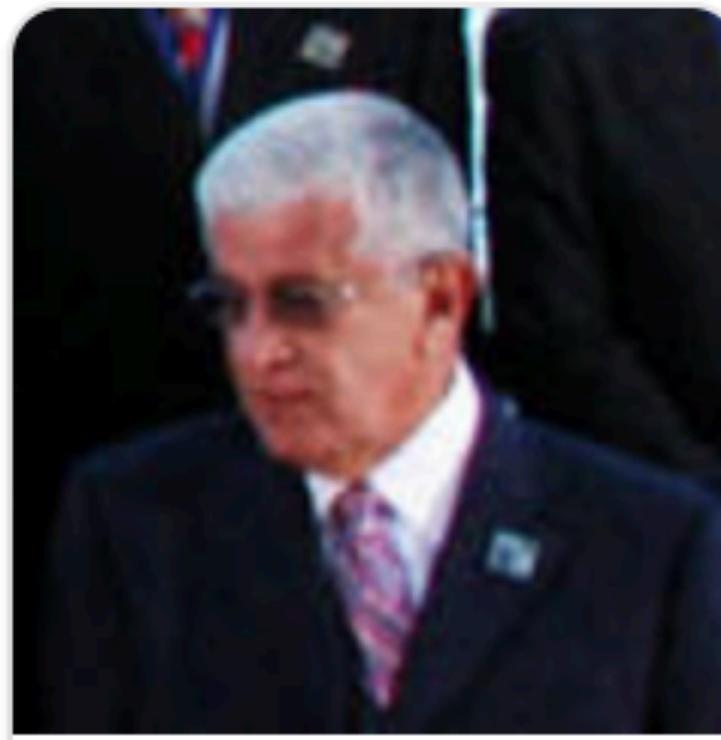


Students placing a Colombian flag on Tuesday at the site where Dilan Cruz was fatally wounded in Bogotá. Fernando Vergara/Associated Press

Many feel they're already losing in the status quo  
(basically content of this whole class!)



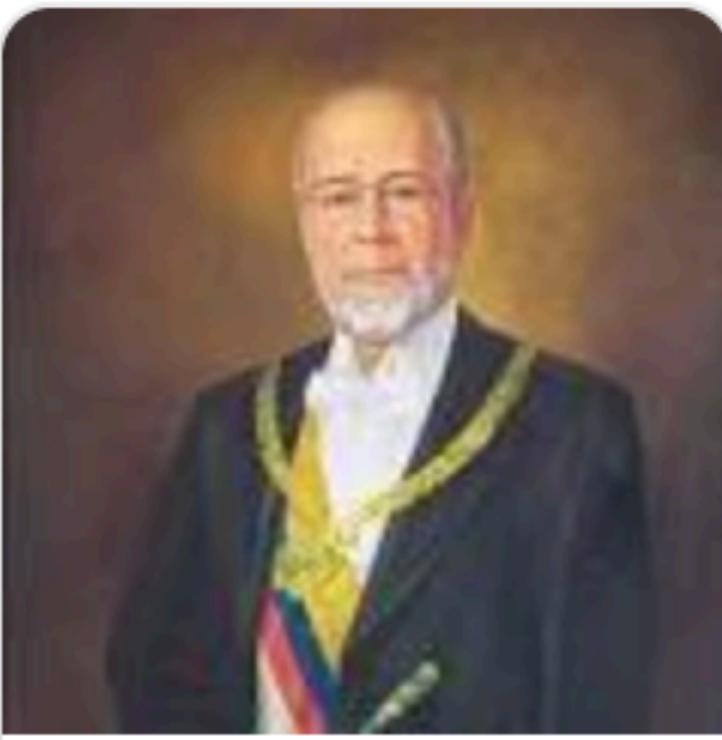
Rafael Correa  
2007-2017



Alfredo  
Palacio  
2005-2007



Lucio  
Gutiérrez  
2003-2005



Gustavo  
Noboa  
2000-2003



Jamil Mahu...  
1998-2000



Abdalá  
Bucaram  
1996-1997

The opposition faces a **credibility problem**  
based on past performance

# Abdala Bucaman (AKA: “the madman who loves”)

February 1997, just six months after he took office, Ecuador's National Congress voted to remove him, deeming him mentally incompetent to govern. He fled to Panama, where he was granted political asylum. Fabián Alarcón, Ecuador's interim president, filed charges against Bucaram for the mishandling of public funds during his presidency.



# Bucaram campaign anthem



Some of this might be that outsiders have more **credibility** than insiders for promoting big changes

But part of it is also a function of **electoral coalitions**

Traditional, opposition parties *are supported by wealthier strata, who oppose these changes*

So not just a “false-choice”: in some cases,  
voters do face choice between **partisan interests**  
**and democracy**

Where is the **opposition** in all this?

New president, seems to be  
concentrating power

What can the opposition do to stop  
them?

And how the opposition's actions  
shape trajectory of erosion?

Interesting to compare these two populists and their opposition (Gamboa, 2017)



**Alvaro Uribe,  
President of Colombia  
Failed to extend term limits**



**Hugo Chavez,  
President of Venezuela  
Succeeded in extending term limits**

UPRISING IN VENEZUELA: THE GOVERNMENT

# **UPRISING IN VENEZUELA: THE GOVERNMENT; VENEZUELA'S CHIEF FORCED TO RESIGN; CIVILIAN INSTALLED**

By [Juan Forero](#)

April 13, 2002



See the article in its original context from April 13, 2002, Section A, Page 1 [Buy Reprints](#)

[VIEW ON TIMESMACHINE](#)

TimesMachine is an exclusive benefit for home delivery and digital subscribers.

A transitional government headed by a leading businessman replaced President Hugo Chávez today, hours after military officers forced him to resign. It was a sudden end to the turbulent three-year reign of a mercurial strongman elected on promises to distance his country from the United States while uprooting Venezuela's old social order.

In 2002, opposition tries to unite protesters, military in (failed) coup

## Colossal backfire: boosted support for Chavez

Undermined opposition internationally

Provided opportunity for Chavez to purge opposition from key institutions

Used information from coup to purge 200+ members of military, consolidate control

The Americas

# How Nicolás Maduro has been able to cling to power



Opposition protesters clash with police as blackout continues in Venezuela

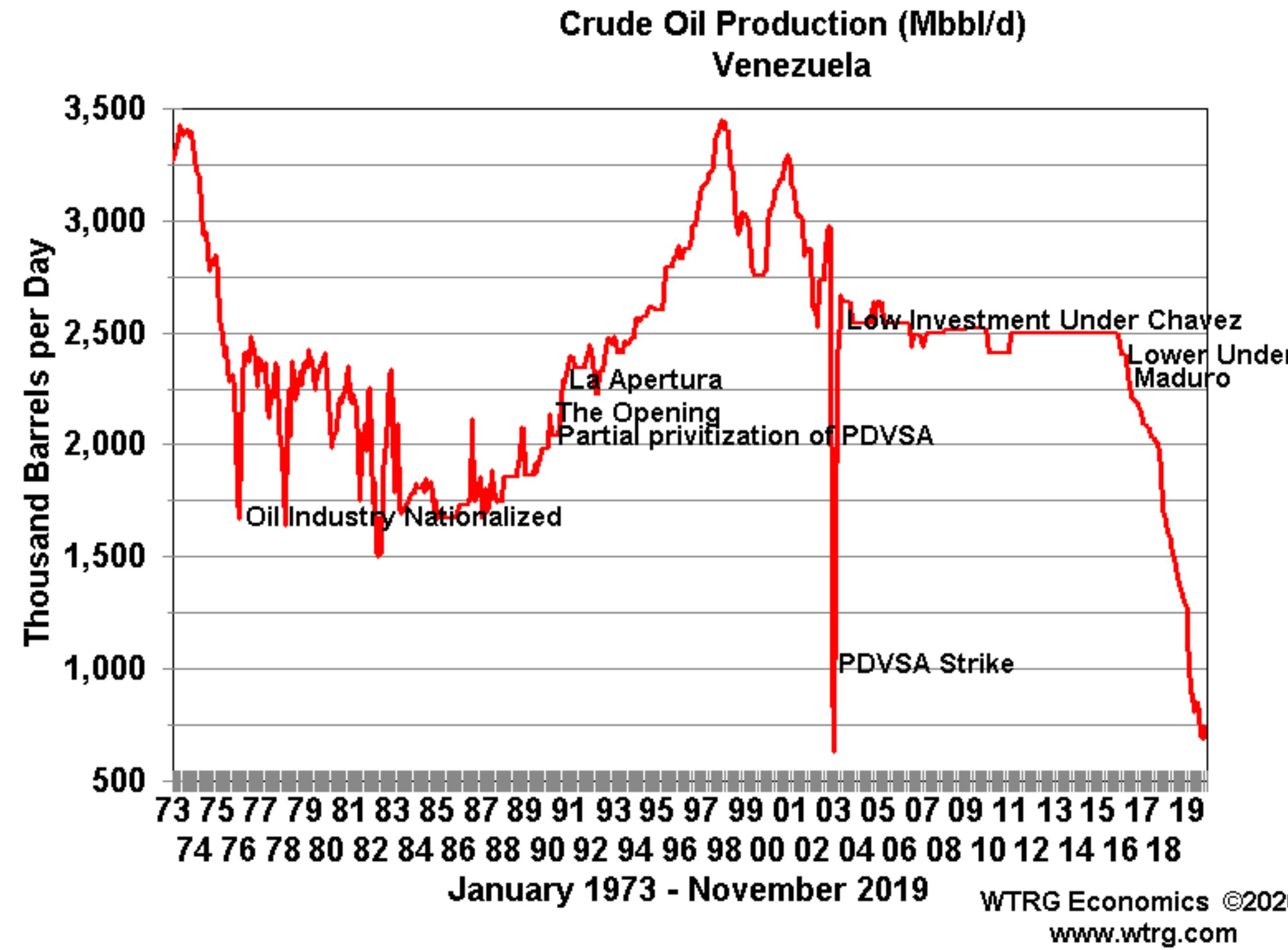
Thousands took to the streets on March 9 in response to a call by opposition leader Juan Guaidó. President Nicolás Maduro also called on his followers.  
(Reuters)



Support of military has been key for survival of Maduro

at *El Universal*: “The coup gave Chávez the legitimacy, the reasons, and the information . . . if it hadn’t been for the coup, many people who opposed Chávez would have stayed in the government.”<sup>70</sup> Although the opposition kept, and even increased, some institutional pockets of support,<sup>71</sup> it lost any influence over the armed forces, which would prove costly in the years to come.

# December, 2002, opposition calls for general strike (including oil industry)



Billions of dollars in lost revenue

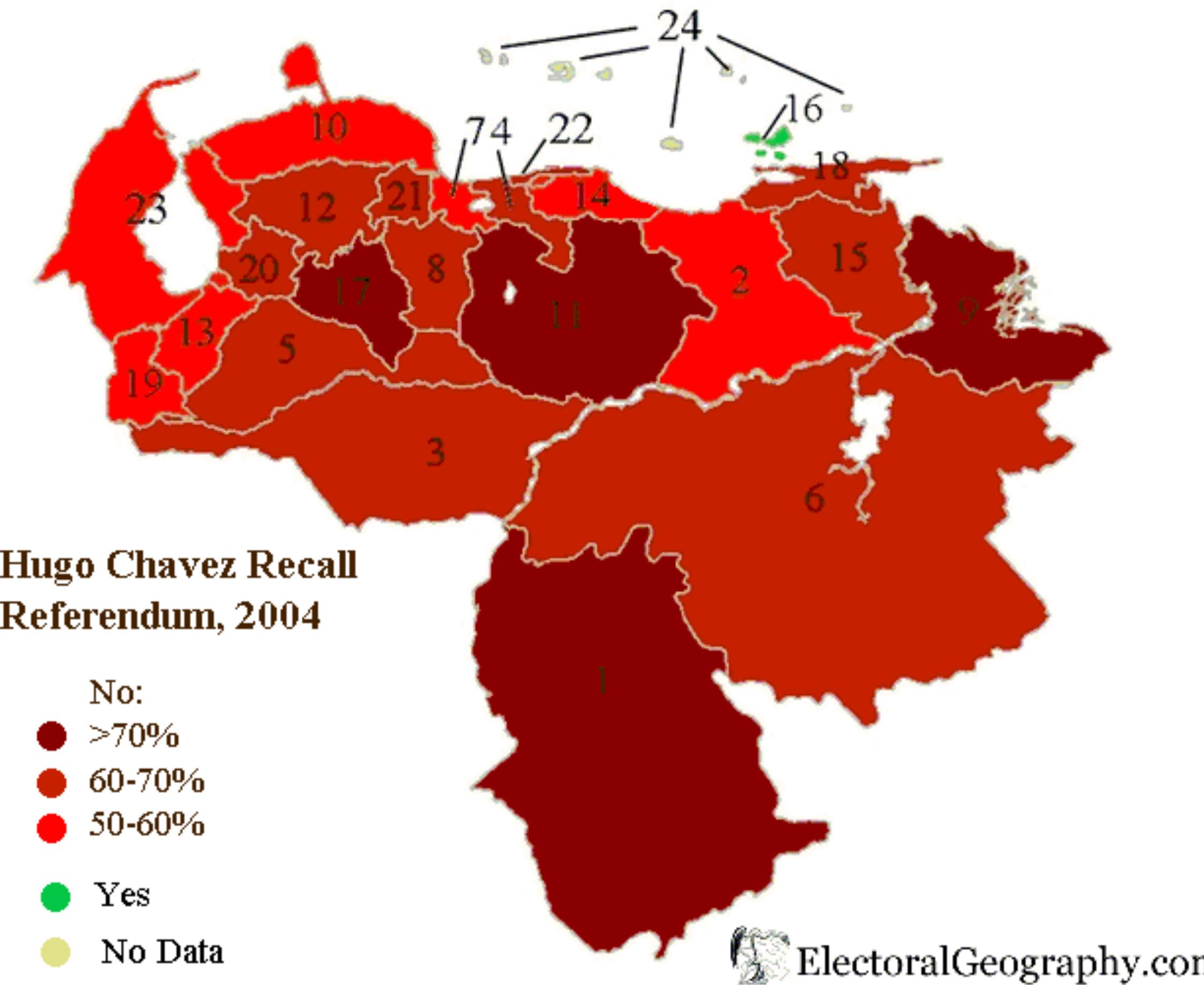
They [the opposition] felt strong with the people in the streets. And they hoped that if they continued with the demonstrations, these would translate into the government's fall . . . I said: ". . . I have never seen an indefinite strike, other than to oust the government." The indefinite strike . . . weakened the opposition and strengthened the government.<sup>75</sup>

## Weakened support for opposition

More importantly: gave Chavez information + motive to fire 18k employees and replace them with loyalists

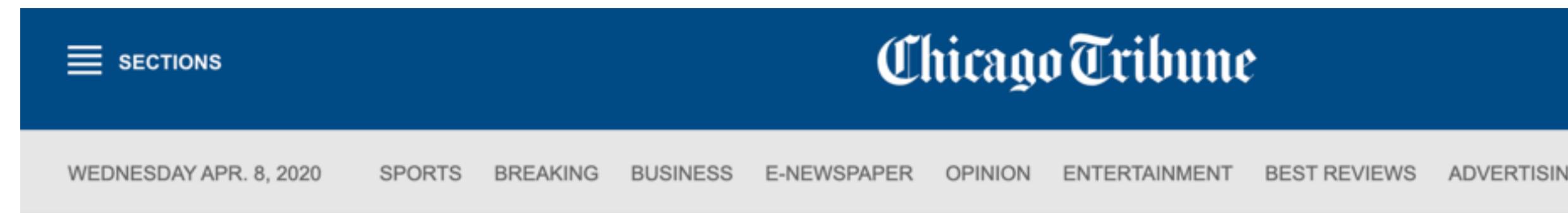
Critical: gives Chavez control over oil unions

# In 2004, opposition tries a **recall referendum**



## Chavez wins easily

# Next opposition move is to boycott 2005 parliamentary elections



## 4 parties boycott Venezuela vote

By **Gary Marx, Tribune foreign correspondent**  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

DECEMBER 1, 2005 | HAVANA

**T**he decision by Venezuela's main opposition parties to boycott Sunday's congressional elections is likely to further polarize this oil-rich nation and increase tensions with the United States, experts said.

Goal is to **delegitimize** Chavez, esp.  
abroad

Chavez's coalition wins 100% of the seats (polls predicted opposition would take 30% of vote)

From there it was full speed ahead for Chavez

Between 2000 and 2005, avg bill ~ 217 days

Between 2006 and 2010, avg bill ~ **37** days

Takes control of Supreme Court,  
National Electoral Council

Changed National Assembly rules to  
prevent obstruction

2009 launches and succeeds in a  
referendum for **no term limits**

At the start, opposition in Venezuela opts for more direct confrontations with Chavez

These are **gambles**: at times it looks like Chavez might topple

But winning these challenges provides Chavez room + pretext to **consolidate power**

**Oppositions might unwittingly empower autocrats**



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Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela

Author(s): Laura Gamboa

Source: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (July 2017), pp. 457-477

This just wasn't the case in neighboring Colombia

Opposition used **conventional legislative measures** (i.e., procedural tactics) to derail/slow Uribe

Not always successful, but able to outlast him in the end

# Food for thought

Do you think Americans do/could trade-off democracy for partisan interests in the same way?

What *should* an opposition do, if it finds itself in this kind of situation?