



**UNLIKELY TRANSITIONS TO UNCERTAIN REGIMES?
DEMOCRACY WITHOUT COMPROMISE IN THE
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND ECUADOR**

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors undertake a comparative analysis of democratic development in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador. They argue that the socioeconomic structures and the political legacy of the previous authoritarian period have produced hybrid “democratic-authoritarian” regimes in both countries. Electoral rotation and open political competition are combined with episodic breaches in democratic procedures and only limited commitment to democratic norms among economic and political elites. In neither case has socioeconomic development in the twentieth century created any basis for cross-class consensus on democracy and capitalism. The normalization of democratic practices is vulnerable to economic crisis and there is a political and economic gulf between capital and labor. Lack of accountability is widespread and political parties suffer extremes of clientelism and personalism. Nonetheless, though breakdown of democracy remains a real possibility, both regimes have shown surprising durability for over a decade. The authors suggest that we may be witnessing a new regime variant, “crisis-prone democracy.”

RESUMEN

En este trabajo, las autoras emprenden un análisis comparativo del desarrollo democrático en la República Dominicana y en Ecuador. Ellas arguyen que las estructuras socio-económicas y el legado político del período autoritario anterior han producido regímenes híbridos, “democrático-autoritarios”, en ambos países. La rotación electoral y la abierta rivalidad política se combinan con rupturas episódicas de las prácticas democráticas y un apego limitado a las normas democráticas de parte de las elites económicas y políticas. En los dos casos el desarrollo socio-económico del siglo XX no ha creado bases para un consenso intraclasista sobre la democracia y el capitalismo. La normalización de las prácticas democráticas es vulnerable a la crisis económica y existe un abismo político y económico entre el capital y la mano de obra. La falta de *accountability* es general y los partidos políticos sufren en grado extremo de clientelismo y personalismo. Sin embargo, aunque el rompimiento con la democracia sigue siendo una posibilidad real, ambos regímenes han mostrado una durabilidad sorprendente por más de una década. Las autoras sugieren que podríamos estar presenciando una nueva variante del régimen, “democracia propensa a la crisis”.

Introduction

Charting the historical paths to democracy has been a longstanding concern of political sociology.¹ With the demise of authoritarian rule in Latin America over the last decade, a classic question of the genre resurfaced: Are there certain developmental sequences that are more likely than others to produce successful transitions to democracy? If there is any conclusion to be drawn from recent experiences, the answer is no. Highly heterogeneous circumstances produced Latin America's most recent wave of democratization. From the Caribbean to the Southern Cone, countries at different levels of economic development, with distinctive authoritarian legacies and divergent class structures, all underwent transitions to elected civilian governments in the last decade.

In light of this fact, a different question must be posed: Exactly what kinds of democracies have emerged out of these diverse circumstances and transition processes? While the movement toward popularly elected governments has been a generic tendency in the region in recent years, there are significant variations among countries in the extent to which "normal" democratic practices structure the behavior of key actors.² At a minimum, the "normal" functioning of a contemporary democracy would include regular competition among parties for political power through free and fair elections, the institutionalization of civil liberties and the mass franchise, and the nonviolent processing of conflicts through institutional channels.

To understand how and why Latin American democracies deviate from the realm of "normal" democratic practices, comparative work is needed. In particular, we need to examine the complex interactions of class and state structures and how they defined the parameters under which democratization has taken place.

The Dominican Republic and Ecuador are important cases for comparative analysis of democratic development in Latin America for at least two reasons. First, they were unlikely

¹ The classic work on the topic is Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). In the same vein as Moore's macrohistorical approach, see the discussion of France in Theda Skocpol, *State and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Also see the discussion of historical sequences in democratization in Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

² This notion of "normality" and "abnormality" in a regime is taken from the discussion by Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988): p. 65. They define "normality" as a situation in which "actors have settled on and obey a set of more or less explicit rules defining the channels they may use to gain access to governing roles, the means they can legitimately employ in their conflicts with each other, the procedures they should apply in taking decisions, and the criteria they may use to exclude others from the game."

democratizers. In contrast to advanced capitalist democracies or the more industrialized countries of Latin America, the democratic transition in these two cases occurred under adverse sociostructural conditions.³ These can be summarized as follows: 1) the political history of both countries is marked by a fragmentation and disorganization of civil society; 2) conservative elites dominated exclusionary political regimes that went largely unchallenged by suppressed and highly demobilized popular sectors; 3) their economies were largely dependent on agricultural exports, with a significant presence of foreign capital in the Dominican Republic; 4) sociostructural differentiation was retarded by industrialization that was late, even by Latin American standards; and 5) reformist middle classes, militant working classes, and a politically flexible bourgeoisie of the kind that supported the establishment of liberal democracy in Western Europe and populist regimes in the Southern Cone are weak or absent in our cases. Because of these adverse sociostructural conditions, study of the Dominican and Ecuadorean transitions probably has more relevance to transitions of other very late industrializing countries than the lessons of the Southern Cone where earlier industrialization and populism produced different historical actors and political opportunities.

Second, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador were the chronological leaders of the recent wave of democratic transitions in Latin America (in 1978 and 1979 respectively). As such, they provide us with the longest time frame for analyzing post-transition political development. Both countries have undergone more than two national elections since the transition and have experienced turnovers to opposition parties.

The central argument of this paper is that the socioeconomic structures and the political legacy of the previous authoritarian period have produced hybrid “democratic-authoritarian” regimes in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador. Such regimes are characterized by open political competition and free elections, but this is combined with episodic breaches in democratic procedures and a limited commitment to democratic norms among economic and political elites. In contrast to Adam Przeworski’s argument that liberal democracy in advanced capitalist systems is a “contingent institutional compromise” among social forces based on a Keynesian economic project, our argument is that the recently installed democratic regimes in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador have not been the product of such class compromise.⁴ These democracies did not

³ Guillermo O’Donnell notes the exceptional character of the Dominican and Ecuadorean transitions. See his “Introduction to the Latin American Cases” in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, ed. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986): p. 5.

⁴ The idea of democracy as class compromise is put forth in a number of works by Adam Przeworski. See, for example, Przeworski and Michael Wallerstein, “The Structure of Class Conflict in Democratic Capitalist Societies,” *American Political Science Review* 76, no. 76 (1982). See also Przeworski’s collection of essays, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

emerge as a political arrangement to negotiate the relations between labor and capital, but as a vehicle for restructuring domination by economic and political elites in a context in which the lower classes were not highly mobilized or threatening.

Because of the lack of social and political consensus, the new civilian regimes in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic are “crisis prone.” Crisis resolution in these systems has revolved around the retention of nondemocratic behaviors that range from coup threats to authoritarian decision-making practices in the executive branch. Moreover, the “normalization” of democratic practices is further constrained by the current economic crisis. In addition to limiting the economic resources of the state, the management of the international debt problem creates incentives for politicians to insulate economic policy making from societal pressures; discussions are frequently removed from congressional debate, weakening the legislature as a policymaking body. Another striking characteristic of these political systems is the widespread lack of accountability—between government and parties, between legislators and parties, between parties and the masses. This is evident in a wide range of phenomena, from the dizzying shifts in partisan alliances to the abandonment of the goals of redistribution and participation by “progressive” parties. But in order to understand the contradictory character of these new political regimes, we must first examine the historical conditions that produced them.

State and Civil Society: The Organization of Exclusion

Until their recent transitions, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador were highly exclusionary political systems. The durability of dictatorial and oligarchic approaches to politics, the traditionally low levels of lower class political participation, and the relative “lateness” of democratization were part of the legacy of their export economies.⁵

The integration of Ecuador into the international commodities market at the end of the nineteenth century produced a heterogeneous and fragmented class structure. At the top of the social pyramid were two sets of regional elites differentiated by economic interests. The coast was dominated by the agro-financial bourgeoisie of the port of Guayaquil, which controlled the cocoa trade. In the mountainous interior or *sierra*, a traditional landowning class maintained a hacienda system that produced for the internal market. Conflicts between these regional elites for control over the state took place in the electoral competition between the Liberal and Conservative

⁵ This overview of the historical development of these countries is based on our previous work. For a more detailed discussion of the Dominican case, see Rosario Espinal, *Authoritarismo y democracia en la política dominicana* (San José: CAPEL, 1987), and “Classes, Power and Political Change in the Dominican Republic,” Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University, 1985. On Ecuador, see Catherine M. Conaghan, *Restructuring Domination: Industrialists and the State in Ecuador* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).

parties, but also spilled over into nonelectoral seizures of power. Notwithstanding the serious tensions between these groups, there were no profound economic contradictions between the two and neither group ever attempted to use its control over the state to dismantle the economic base of its rival.

The integration of the Dominican Republic into the international market at the turn of the century was the result of the expansion of US direct foreign investment in the Caribbean. In contrast to Ecuador where a local oligarchy played a pivotal role in organizing the export sector and maintaining political order, the traditional Dominican elite did not control the sugar industry. With the US military occupation of 1916-1924, not only was the sugar economy controlled by foreign capital, but the state was dominated by an external power. As in other Caribbean and Central American countries, the embryonic local bourgeoisie found itself politically defeated and economically marginalized by the 1920s. Subsequent military dictatorships such as that of General Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961) emerged as a national substitute for direct foreign domination.

While external dependence and internal infighting led to the eclipse of civilian elites and the emergence of a personalistic military dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, the greater autonomy and capacity for accommodation among Ecuador's dominant classes allowed for the development of an oligarchic electoral system that permitted a rotation of power. Ecuador's oligarchical electoralism was competitive in regard to parties but restricted in regard to the franchise—i.e., the party system was open, with leftist and populists participating, but registration and literacy requirements severely restricted the size and class composition of the electorate until the constitutional changes of 1978. Conversely, under the Dominican political system engineered by Trujillo, single party domination hindered party competition even though there were no restrictions on the franchise by the 1940s. Trujillo created an electoral vehicle—the Dominican Party—to be used periodically to legitimate his power. He maintained extensive personal control of both the polity and the economy; elections were only designed to organize the population in support of the dictatorship.

The heyday of Ecuador's electoralism occurred in the "democratic parenthesis" from 1948 to 1961 when the presidency was transferred peacefully among the traditional parties. The evolution of the party system mirrored the character of the restricted electorate; there were the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties along with splinter groups from those parties. Beginning in the 1930s, popular discontent was channelled through the highly conservative and coopted populism practiced by José María Velasco Ibarra. Notwithstanding his populist rhetoric, Velasco maintained close ties with traditional elites and never engaged in redistributive programs during any of his five terms as president. A new populist party emerged in the 1940s, the *Concentración de Fuerzas Populares* (CFP), but its growth was constrained by its identification as a regional party of Guayaquil.

In the absence of concerted demands from below, there was limited pressure to alter oligarchic electoralism in Ecuador. Corporatist arrangements were woven into the fabric of the political system; corporate interest representation took place through the national producers' associations, the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture. In addition to holding seats on policy-making boards inside the government, these business organizations were assigned "functional" senators in the national legislature.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, the oligarchical system in Ecuador and dictatorial rule in the Dominican Republic did not allow for the political incorporation of subordinate classes. The middle and working classes remained numerically small during this period owing to the limited spin-off effects of tropical export agriculture. The bulk of the work force remained concentrated in the countryside, laboring in a variety of settings. The rural work force was made up of peasants, wage laborers, and small capitalist farmers. In Ecuador, capitalist relations of production predominated in coastal export agriculture while precapitalist relations endured in the hacienda system of the sierra until the 1960s. The heterogeneous character of the rural labor force was further aggravated by the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural cleavages between coastal and serrano populations as well as the divisions within the indigenous groups of the interior. In the Dominican Republic, the sugar industry's employment of blacks from Haiti and the English-speaking Caribbean created a linguistically and ethnically diverse rural proletariat that was unable to organize. Hispanics prevailed in the rest of the agricultural economy as peasants and small farmers.

Given the fragmented social structures and the exclusionary character of the political regimes, the growth of popular class organizations and mass political parties was largely stunted in both countries. Trade unionism was also weak. In 1942, Trujillo legalized the Confederación Dominicana del Trabajo (CDT) and turned it into a coopted organization that lacked grassroots support. The strikes organized by sugar workers in the mid-1940s to improve working conditions brought some concessions, but the movement was crushed by the government. Labor leaders were assassinated or forced into exile. Ecuador's tradition of labor repression began in 1922 when hundreds of workers died in a confrontation with government troops during a general strike in Guayaquil. But political and economic conflicts fragmented the labor movement and created three competing trade union confederations.⁶

By the 1960s, socioeconomic transformations were underway in both countries. In Ecuador, the switch to banana exporting on the coast brought about economic growth and the expansion of medium-sized farms. In the sierra, entrepreneurial landholders began to adopt more capital intensive methods and became advocates of a limited land reform to rid themselves of their

⁶ For a discussion of this fragmentation in the early union movement, see Alan Middleton, "Division and Cohesion in the Working Class: Artisans and Wage Labourers in Ecuador," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 14, no. 1 (1982): 171-97.

traditional obligations to tenants. At the same time, the national government adopted pro-import substitution policies that set the stage for industrialization. Postwar economic modernization brought an expansion of urban middle and working classes along with modifications in the structure of dominant class interests as capitalists moved into industrial investment. In the Dominican Republic, the economic surplus generated by the 1940s sugar boom was monopolized by Trujillo who used his political power to amass a personal fortune in landholding and industry. But even under such circumstances, the introduction of import-substitution industrialization brought some expansion in the size of the urban working and middle classes. Concentrated in the urban areas, they played a major role in the breakdown of dictatorship in 1961 and its aftermath.

The changing character of these societies was reflected in the development of new organizations and ideological discourses in the early 1960s. By the close of the 1960s, the fragmentation of the traditional Conservative and Liberal parties in Ecuador produced christian democratic, social democratic and new personalist parties; at the same time, electoral support for the populist CFP grew. With these new actors in place, populism and developmentalism became key themes in national politics. Oligarchic electoralism proved unable to adapt to this changing structure of interests, demands, and discourse—opening the doors to political instability. Civilian mismanagement and economic recession provoked a military intervention in 1963 that was followed by an interim civilian government and a last-ditch effort to restore oligarchic electoralism in 1968. This interlude ended with President Velasco Ibarra's declaration of a civilian dictatorship in 1970 and a military intervention in 1972.

In the Dominican Republic, Trujillo's failure to incorporate new social groups in the 1950s led to the increasing isolation of the regime and his assassination in 1961. The collapse of the dictatorship was immediately followed by a new flourishing of civil society reflected in the organization of political parties, unions, business and professional associations. As in Ecuador, newly organized actors voiced demands for redistribution and development. The most important political organization of this type was the center-left Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) led by the outspoken nationalist Juan Bosch. Founded by exiles in the early 1940s, the PRD was able to organize freely in 1961, gaining broad-based support to win the 1962 national election. Fearful of the nationalist, reformist, and "atheist" PRD discourse and the increasing organization and mobilization of popular sectors, business elites and the Church backed a military coup that ousted Bosch in September 1963.⁷ The coup was followed by an interim civilian junta, which was unable to contain social demands and mobilization. The increasing social mobilization and polarization led to the 1965 civil war, immediately crushed by a direct US military intervention. The convulsions

⁷ For a detailed discussion of these events, see Piero Gleijeses, *The Dominican Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

ended with the restoration of authoritarian rule under a new guise. The US supervised “demonstration” election of 1966 brought Joaquín Balaguer, a former Trujillo associate, to power.⁸

The political instability of the 1960s both in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador was an outgrowth of socioeconomic transformations and the inability of the traditional elites—long accustomed to the politics of exclusion—to alter their governing formulas to incorporate new groups into political life. Thus, military coups, social revolts, and interim governments were ad hoc responses to the breakdown of the old regime. Ultimately, the formula that emerged as a solution to the disintegration of the old order was not liberal democracy but a refurbished authoritarianism in the form of a military government in Ecuador and a civilian one in the Dominican Republic. The authoritarian regimes inaugurated in 1966 in the Dominican Republic and in 1972 in Ecuador sought to economically coopt dominant and middle classes into a new *modus vivendi* while maintaining controls over political participation, especially among lower classes.

Authoritarianism in the 1970s: Setting the Stage for Transition

Antonio Gramsci’s observation that a crisis is a situation in which “the old is dying and the new cannot be born” aptly describes both the circumstances under which modernizing authoritarian regimes were installed in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador and the political legacy they left behind. Rather than end the clash between the old-style politics and the new social realities, these governments engaged in contradictory policies that preserved a place for traditional powerholders while generating a context for regime transition.

The newly installed authoritarian regimes, military-based in Ecuador (1972-1979) and civilian in the Dominican Republic (1966-1978), were economic modernizers. They undertook policies that expanded the overall size of the state, developed infrastructure, and promoted economic diversification through the channelling of state credit and investment. Together with Brazil, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic showed the highest rate of growth of manufacturing in Latin America for the period 1970-1975.⁹ But even as the regimes presided over important changes in the role of the state and the structure of the economy, they did not subject societies to a fundamental restructuring of power relations. They did nothing to heighten the organizational and mobilization capacity of the lower classes, nor did they undermine the economic power bases of existing business elites. For the most part, the spectrum of political organization was essentially

⁸ For a discussion of “demonstration” elections, see Edward Herman and Frank Broadhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S. Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America* (New York: United Nations, 1981): p. 107.

“frozen” as existing parties and organizations were limited in their activities. This conservative type of modernization left intact many of the adverse sociostructural and political features that were the mainstay of the old oligarchic/dictatorial organization of politics. Thus, economic modernization did not put an end to the profoundly nondemocratic features of the social structures.

In Ecuador, economic change took place under the auspices of two successive military governments whose administrations coincided with a petroleum-induced export boom. The first government, under the leadership of General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara (1972-1976), initially adopted a progressive and nationalist tone, mimicking some of the rhetoric of the reformist regime of neighboring Peru under General Velasco Alvarado. The initial reforms proposed by the Rodríguez Lara team of military and civilian technocrats included a greater regulation of foreign capital, more regulation of the business practices of local capital, and a very limited agrarian reform. But this mild attempt at “reform from above” was short lived owing to the continuing ability of organized business elites to veto public policy and the unorganized and disparate character of the reform constituency. After an intense mobilization against the regime by business interest groups, Rodríguez Lara was sacked by more conservative elements in the Armed Forces in 1976. The reformist agenda was completely shelved by the subsequent military junta led by Admiral Poveda Burbano (1976-79).

Although not completely parallel, the conservative modernization that occurred in the Dominican Republic under President Joaquín Balaguer (1966-1978) shares some of the features of to the Ecuadorean experience. The most significant is that the Balaguer administration pursued policies of economic growth while maintaining the political exclusion of popular sectors. During the economic boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s, wages were frozen and peasants were forced to subsidize urban expansion through government imposed price controls on agricultural products. The only mildly populist measure of the Balaguer regime was a limited agrarian reform enacted in 1972, which was designed by the government primarily to promote urban-industrial growth. The government kept the price of agricultural products low and encouraged large landowners to sell their land and diversify their investments.

Ecuador’s status as an important oil exporter and high prices for Dominican sugar brought unprecedented economic growth and expansion in public revenues during the 1970s. Further import-substitution industrialization was fueled by the state’s channelling credit and subsidies to the private sector. A peasant exodus to the cities contributed to the growth of the informal sector while the relative size of the industrial working class remained static due to the capital-intensive character of the new industry. Social differentiation accelerated as the expansion of public and private sector employment in services swelled the ranks of the middle classes. Dominant class interests became also more heterogeneous as *grupos económicos* diversified their portfolios. In

short, the processes of social change that began during the export boom in the 1940s and 1950s accelerated with the export bonanza of the 1970s.

Yet it is important to keep in mind that the economic changes and the proliferation of “interests” was taking place within a context that limited the expressions of civil society. The channels for representing societal interests to the state were neither highly developed nor encompassing. In Ecuador, the most effective associations were those representing economic elite interests (e.g., the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, etc.). The organizational vehicles for representing mass interests were either embryonic (as was the case with “modern” parties like the Christian and Social Democrats) or concentrated in a relatively small portion of the population (as in the case of unions). Moreover, the “representation crisis” in Ecuadorean society was deepened by the military’s suspension of the normal channels of interest representation. Rodríguez Lara halted formal group representation by suspending the Congress, banning party activity, and barring corporate groups from their positions inside policy-making bodies. Sporadic informal consultations with groups and individuals replaced the institutional structures.

In the Dominican Republic, channels of representation were also curtailed under Balaguer’s civilian-authoritarianism. Although Balaguer did not close the Congress, it was completely subordinated to the executive. While the government did not officially ban political parties (with the exception of Marxist organizations), party life was limited by the repressive tactics of state agencies and paramilitary forces. As in Ecuador, Balaguer used consultations with hand-picked individuals to replace institutionalized decision making in the Dominican Republic.

In both cases, the lack of mechanisms for interest representation and predictable access to state policy makers became increasingly problematic for the bourgeoisie by the mid-1970s. In Ecuador, the suspension of direct business participation in deliberations on economic policy was regarded by business as an usurpation of their traditional right to be heard in those matters. In the Dominican Republic, Balaguer’s strategy of incorporating selected businessmen into advisory councils and state agencies alienated new entrepreneurs who were left outside of this very personalized arrangement. Thus, while the economic policies of both regimes were favorable to the private sector, the lack of mechanisms to integrate a wider range of business groups estranged many from the government and led them into opposition.

In Ecuador, the presence of a relatively organized and politically disaffected bourgeoisie (operating in the absence of organized and mobilized lower classes) was enough to undermine even the modest reforms proposed by military and civilian technocrats and created the dynamics for the reinstatement of civilian rule by 1976. Because the Rodríguez Lara regime balked at popular mobilization, there was no organized constituency to act as a counterforce against the bourgeoisie’s antireform lobby concentrated in the Chambers of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce. The Chambers used the media and mobilized through public forums and meetings to

mount consistent and effective attacks on virtually all of the proposed reforms. In their attacks, Chamber spokesmen did not simply complain about the substance of economic measures but also seriously criticized the lack of business participation in their formulation. This critique became the basis of their calls for a *retorno constitucional*. These attacks on the government reached a fevered pitch in August 1975 as the Chambers reacted to government austerity measures. Business was joined by right-wing parties in calling for an end to the government. By January 1976, Rodríguez Lara was deposed and the Armed Forces announced their intention to reinstall civilian rule.

In the Dominican Republic, the support of the bourgeoisie for democracy did not become entirely clear until the 1978 elections. Well into the mid-1970s, the bourgeoisie had largely followed Balaguer's design for modernization and growth, gaining little autonomy from the government. Signs of disaffection were evident by 1976, but tensions were skillfully contained within a framework of a dialogue between business representatives and the government. Balaguer responded to business' demands for participation in the decision-making process with a call for regular meetings with business representatives at the National Palace. This helped to pacify business elites. Thus, unlike the Ecuadorean experience, the collapse of the Balaguer regime was not preceded by an open business-government confrontation. Instead, business jumped on the bandwagon of democratization as the popularity of the PRD grew among lower and middle class urban dwellers. The support of the bourgeoisie for democracy only became explicit on election night, May 17, 1978, when prominent business leaders rejected the attempted coup lead by a small pro-Balaguer faction.

The decline in support for authoritarianism in both countries, even among economic powerholders, set the stage for a political transition. Because the Balaguer government had maintained a formal institutional façade (e.g., legal opposition parties, Congress, a "democratic" constitution), Dominicans could avoid lengthy debates on how to structure the legal framework of the transition; the existing institutional structure could be used for a transition by simply abandoning the authoritarian practices (e.g., electoral fraud) under which they had operated. In Ecuador, where the pre-existing constitutional order was suspended by the military intervention, the transition involved lengthy talks between military and civilian leaders starting in 1976 over the design of the constitution, laws governing the party system, and the scheduling of elections. After a constitutional plebiscite, congressional elections, and a two-round presidential election, the transition was completed in August 1979 with the inauguration of President Jaime Roldos of the populist CFP.

Overall, the authoritarian-led modernization left a contradictory legacy for the regimes that followed. It generated a better organized bourgeoisie searching for political arrangements that would allow for a rational and reliable representation of their interests. Yet the newly established

civilian governments were not the product of class compromise; they were not cemented as part of an attempt to smooth relations between labor and capital. It was not a transaction involving a trade of political rights and welfarism in exchange for social peace and the maintenance of capitalism. Rather, “democracy” was viewed by business groups as a vehicle for them to reassert influence over the policy process. And, given their limited capacity to articulate demands, popular classes were not viewed by business as a threatening political adversary. Consequently, democracy emerged as a safe political alternative to an authoritarianism past its prime.

This absence of class compromise has deeply affected the behavior and development of parties, classes, and interest groups in the post-transition regime. Democratic “rules” were suddenly superimposed on these peculiar environments where continuity with elements of the past rather than sharp dramatic discontinuity marked the transition. Capitalists, disenchanted with the authoritarian regimes, stood ready to assert their claims over the management of economic policy. While sometimes protesting, popular class counter-claimants remained divided and disorganized pre-existing parties were revived, reinjecting the party system with much of its old dynamics, especially personalism and clientelism. Yet, the rejuvenation of these traditional actors had its price; while the dominant role of conservative players probably facilitated the transition, the weight and the behavioral proclivities of these actors is placing limits on the institutionalization of democratic procedures inside the state and democratic practices in the body politic.

Post-Transitional Politics: Business and Labor

With popular classes posing no significant threat, business elites looked to democracy as an institutional arrangement worthy of loyalty only if it provided access and preferential policies. Consequently, any “deviations” called into question their continued support for it. In Ecuador, the humiliating defeat of the right in the 1979 presidential election and the victory of Jaime Roldo’s populist CFP put business organizations on guard and culminated in belligerent attacks upon the succeeding government of Osvaldo Hurtado.¹⁰ While Hurtado undertook policies that were largely favorable to the private sector (e.g., a moderate economic stabilization program, a renegotiation of the international debt), Hurtado’s aloofness and the insulation of the government economic team from lobbying created a perception within the business community of an “anti-business” attitude within the Executive.¹¹ The Chambers of Production waged an aggressive

¹⁰ Vice-President Osvaldo Hurtado assumed the presidency in May 1981 after President Roldo’s death in a plane crash.

¹¹ For a discussion of the stylistic tensions between the Hurtado government and business groups, see Howard Handelman, “Elite Interest Groups under Military and Democratic Regimes: Ecuador, 1972-1984,” paper delivered at the XII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 1985.

campaign against the Hurtado government that went so far as to include a one-day business shut-down, calls for his resignation, and (in the case of the Chamber of Industry of Guayaquil) a call for a coup. These destabilizing tactics were dropped, however, once the 1984 presidential elections approached and the prospects for a victory by the right-wing presidential candidate and business leader, León Febres-Cordero, grew.

In the Dominican Republic, the post-transition period was marked by: (1) the consolidation of the National Council of Businessmen (CNHE) as the peak business organization; (2) an intense politicization of the CNHE; and (3) the control of its governing board by a conservative, communist-fearing anti-PRD faction. With a growing membership, the CNHE took on a direct political role in an effort to make it clear that it was willing to fight to defend business interests if threatened by the newly established government.

The CNHE confronted the first PRD government headed by President Antonio Guzmán (1978-1982) on three issues. It objected to the price control policies imposed by the government in an effort to control inflation. It disliked the insulation of the government economic team from business lobbying. And the CNHE denounced the government's increasing tolerance of labor militancy. The attacks against the government were mostly orchestrated through public events sponsored by the CNHE or affiliated organizations. The most publicized were the "Annual Business Dinners" organized by the CNHE. Those of 1979, 1980, and 1981 became stages for harsh attacks against the government. The height of the conflict was reached in 1980 when the government's economic team suspended dialogues with business representatives over the formulation of new economic policies after top business leaders accused government officials of being irresponsible and having socialist inclinations. In addition to disagreements over the substance of economic policy, political considerations aggravated the conflict. The pro-Balaguer business faction that controlled the CNHE executive board between 1979 and 1981 had a strategic interest in undermining the Guzmán administration. This was similar to the situation in Ecuador where the presidential aspirations of León Febres-Cordero heated up the attacks of business organizations on the government of Osvaldo Hurtado.

A shift in Dominican business-government relations, however, took place in 1982 coinciding with the inauguration of the second PRD government headed by Salvador Jorge Blanco (1982-1986). While cultivating ties with leading businessmen, Jorge Blanco implemented most of the stabilization package desired by business and promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In his inaugural speech on August 16, 1982, Jorge Blanco announced the end of the Keynesian policies favored by his predecessor. The pacification of business-government relations was also ensured with the election of a moderate faction to the new CNHE executive board. The new board realized that a declared "war" by business against the government, coupled with increasing popular mobilization and discontent with the stabilization measures, could

lead to a political crisis of unknown proportions. Likewise, a dramatic change in the tone of business-government relations took place in Ecuador with the election of León Febres-Cordero in 1984. His unabashed probusiness stance and his appointment of businessmen and conservative technocrats to the cabinet delighted the private sector. In contrast to the high profile struck by business lobbies under the previous administrations, business organizations were remarkably tame under Febres-Cordero. For the most part, they were satisfied with the administration's initiatives, at least until the economic crisis deepened in 1987.

The behavior of business organizations in the post-transition period reveals much about the character of these groups and their relationship to democracy. On the one hand, business organizations are prepared to play the democratic game and abide by election results when probusiness policies and the containment of labor appeared to be guaranteed; their support of the Febres-Cordero and Jorge Blanco governments illustrates this. But in those periods in which control and containment were perceived doubtful, fractions of the bourgeoisie swung into action and engaged in potentially destabilizing attacks on the still fragile new regimes.

Another striking feature of the newly established democracies in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic is that the labor movement has been unable to make significant gains or counterbalance the power of business. No doubt, the operation of both the market and the political system has undermined the bargaining power of trade unions. In both countries, high rates of unemployment, the growth of the informal sector, and the prevalence of small and medium size enterprises represent major obstacles in the development of a strong union movement. Still other impediments derive from the political and ideological fissures plaguing the labor movement and the lack of commitment by political parties to the workers' cause.

Despite the Dominican Revolutionary Party's prolabor platform, labor had limited gains to report under the PRD's rule (1978-1986). The initial labor upsurge that followed the installation of the PRD government in 1978 was short-lived and did not result in improved mechanisms for participation. Failures to present a unified stand also damaged the capacity of labor to get concessions. While business consolidated its organizations, the labor movement engaged in splinter politics. Consequently, by 1986, the Dominican labor movement was more fragmented than ever. Splits with political overtones in the two largest and most progressive labor confederations, the Central General de Trabajadores (CGT) and the Unión General de Trabajadores Dominicanos (UGTD), further weakened the already divided labor movement. By the mid-1980s, trade unions were forced into a defensive position, struggling primarily for higher minimum wages to counterbalance the deleterious effects of stabilization policies and soaring inflation. On the other hand, the spread of food riots since 1984 reflect popular anger and frustration with the adjustment policies and the ineffectiveness of existing institutions and organizations in articulating popular demands.

Unlike that of the Dominican Republic, the Ecuadorean labor movement did take some halting steps toward greater unification over the last decade. Beginning in 1975, the three major trade union confederations started to engage in joint strike actions and constituted a steering organization, the Frente Unitario de Trabajadores (FUT). Since 1979, the FUT has sponsored eleven nationwide general strikes. Yet, the political and economic clout of trade unionism remains limited, in part because of its own internal diversity. The constituency of the trade union confederations in the FUT runs the gamut from rural laborers to public service employees to more traditional industrial workers. As such, there is a tremendous diversity in the working conditions of and the concrete demands emanating from these groups. Under the circumstances, the FUT has functioned largely as a defensive and reactive pressure group that views workers' interests in relation to their status as consumers; the FUT mobilizes in opposition to the "antipopular" measures enacted by the government such as price increases. Thus, the unity that has been forged in the labor movement has been carved out in relation to an external enemy, i.e., the government.¹²

So far, the FUT has been unable to find an alternative development formula or a coherent program that encompasses the diverse interests it represents. Moreover, political competition during electoral periods dilutes even this "oppositional" unity in the labor movement as groups and individuals attach themselves to different candidates. For the most part, labor leaders have typically gravitated toward support for candidates on the radical left (Frente Amplio de Izquierda, Partido Socialista, Movimiento Popular Democrático). But the electoral appeal of these parties has generally been quite limited. As such, labor's ties to institutional politics are weak and its influence inside policy-making bodies in the state is marginal.

While business may always hold a "privileged position" in capitalist democracies, as Charles Lindblom and others argue, the political and market power of business relative to labor is even more lopsided in countries such as Ecuador and the Dominican Republic.¹³ In the post-transition period, business organizations aggressively reasserted themselves as the mentors of economic policy makers. Yet their loyalty to democratic regimes remains contingent on the government's capacity to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, labor's capacity to act as a pressure group has been limited by its own internal divisions and because much of the "laboring" classes remain outside the ranks of organized trade unionism in the informal sector of the

¹² For further discussion of the Ecuadorean labor movement, see Jorge León, "Composición social y escena política en el sindicalismo ecuatoriano," paper delivered at XIV International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, 17-19 March 1988. Also see Juan Pablo Pérez Sáinz, *Clase obrera y democracia en Ecuador* (Quito: Editorial El Conejo, 1985).

¹³ For a discussion of the "privileged position" of business in advanced capitalist systems, see Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political Economic Systems*. (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

economy. Given these circumstances, popular demands and frustrations are expressed in a variety of ways. In both countries, grassroots neighborhood associations and other popular class organizations have sprung up and make highly specific demands on the local and national governments. The problem with these organizations, however, is that they are not organized around broader political goals. As such, they remain atomized and subject to control through clientelism.¹⁴ The more threatening outbursts of popular discontent—food riots in the Dominican Republic and the emergence of an urban guerrilla movement in Ecuador—have provoked repressive responses that call the integrity of the democratic regime into question.

The Disorganizing Party Systems

As our discussion shows, structural factors (i.e., extreme social heterogeneity, the pattern of economic growth and the effects of the economic crisis) have inhibited the development of lower class organizations capable of acting as effective counterweights to the power of the business lobby. This failure extends into the party system. Thus far, parties have been unable to act as engineers of a societywide consensus on capitalist economic development and democracy.

Representation and rationality crises are at the root of the problems inside the party system. Parties are plagued by weak links to groups in civil society and the inability of political elites to break free from traditional ways of doing politics marked by personalism, clientelism, and factionalism. Both of these problems contribute to the centrifugal and counterorganizational tendencies in the party systems. The economic crisis aggravates the struggle among political elites for control over resources and patronage, sometimes leading governing parties to abandon their electoral commitments to progressive goals and raising serious questions about the accountability of democratic institutions.

As noted earlier, Ecuadorean parties crystallized in an environment unfavorable to the development of strong mass-based parties. Restrictions on the franchise, oligarchic domination, and military intervention all worked to inhibit party development. A disdain for parties promulgated by leaders like José María Velasco Ibarra permeated Ecuadorean political discourse. Parties never acquired a heroic image as protagonists of democratization as did Peru's APRA, Venezuela's Acción Democrática, or the Dominican Revolutionary Party. Affective ties to party organization among activists as well as the rank and file remained weak so that competition for leadership slots and party nominations easily gave way to divisions and the creation of new parties.

¹⁴ Mishy Lesser, *Conflicto y poder en un barrio popular de Quito* (Quito: Editorial El Conejo, 1987).

The centrifugal and counterorganizational tendencies in the Ecuadorean party system were unintentionally reinforced by some of the provisions in the new law regulating parties. The *Ley de Partidos*, adopted during the transition process in 1978, gave powers to the Tribunal Supremo Electoral to limit the number of parties through licensing procedures and by forcing would-be candidates to affiliate with a legally registered party. In theory, the Tribunal was to use its powers to remove small parties from the electoral scene and check any further proliferation in the number of parties. In practice, the attempt at condensing and rationalizing the party system through juridical means was not a complete success. The Tribunal itself was reluctant to provoke controversy by removing small parties from the electoral register. And the provision requiring candidates for public office to join legally registered parties “forced” many of the politically ambitious into artificial and opportunistic associations. The weakness of these ties was reflected in the phenomenon known as the *cambio de camisetas*, i.e., the desertion of Congressmen from their respective parties. With partisanship so loosely constructed, party affiliations were effortlessly shed as Congressmen calculated the relative advantages of patronage from other sources and their future electoral fortunes.

This lack of commitment to parties and the unpredictability it generates have repercussions for every dimension of politics, from electoral outcomes to the character of intergovernmental relations. The leadership struggle in the CFP split the government’s congressional majority and created chronic executive-legislative conflict during the government of President Jaime Roldo and his successor Osvaldo Hurtado.

Pitched battles between Congress and the president marked the Febres-Cordero administration from 1984 to 1988. Febres-Cordero’s unconcealed disdain for parties led to efforts to erode the center-left legislative majority through threats and bribes. This fueled the bitter conflicts between himself and Congress. The prospects for a “rupture” in the new institutional arrangements were recurrent during the Febres-Cordero administration due to these destabilizing executive-legislative battles. Most of the procedural questions at the base of the conflicts were never “resolved”; they simply dissipated. The President routinely ignored congressional actions, making for an extremely murky legal environment.¹⁵

Unlike those of Ecuador, conditions in the Dominican Republic were more favorable to the development of mass-based parties. Since the Trujillo dictatorship, a strong party machine was in place with the Dominican Party. In the wake of Trujillo’s assassination, a variety of political parties were formed once the Dominican Party was dismantled and basic democratic prerogatives instituted. Out of a keen competition for the popular vote in the early 1960s, the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) emerged as a democratic mass-based party. The tragic events

¹⁵ Febres-Cordero’s refusal to recognize the congressional amnesty for the dissident general, Frank Vargas Pazzos, triggered his kidnapping by Air Force paratroops in January 1987.

beginning with the ousting of Juan Bosch in 1963, the civil war of 1965, and the subsequent US intervention helped to consolidate the heroic image of the PRD as the protagonist of democratization. This image was reaffirmed under the Balaguer regime, when the PRD suffered persecution and defeat but was ultimately able to reorganize and challenge Balaguer in the electoral arena. By 1978, there were two dominant parties: Balaguer's Reformist Party and the PRD. They accounted for 95 per cent of the votes cast in the 1978 election. The PRD led with 51.9 percent of the vote. The collapse and subsequent crisis of the Balaguer regime and the widespread popularity of the PRD were perceived as positive signs for the consolidation of a center-left party (the PRD) with a weakened party to the right (the Reformist Party) and multiple smaller organizations to the left. Yet contrary to expectations, the PRD experience in government proved to be deleterious to its maturing as an organization. Personalism, intra-elite rivalries, and "abusive" clientelism in the midst of a declining economy plagued the PRD. As in the past, clientelism and corruption continued to permeate the fabric of political life.

Serious leadership tensions within the PRD became evident in 1977 at the party convention. Two contenders vied for the presidential nomination: Antonio Guzmán, a moderate landowner and old-timer party member, and Salvador Jorge Blanco, a liberal lawyer and civil rights advocate. Despite opposition from the party's left wing, Guzmán defeated Jorge Blanco. The party reunited after the conflict to defeat Balaguer, but the unity was short-lived. Tensions reemerged soon after the inauguration of Guzmán in August 1978. Of symbolic and practical importance were the pressures put upon Guzmán by other PRD leaders, including Jorge Blanco, to declare a general amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. This helped consolidate Jorge Blanco's image as a progressive politician. In an effort to gain support among PRD followers, Jorge Blanco also waged a campaign against Guzmán for refusing to ban reelection and excluding party cadres from public administration. Both issues appealed to PRD militants. Finally, severe tensions and controversies over clientelistic practices seriously damaged party-government relations. In the context of a deteriorating economy, with popular demonstrations on the rise, and an increasingly politicized business community, intraparty factionalism made the task of governing more difficult. The government staggered from crisis to crisis, ending with Guzmán's suicide in July 1982, which occurred shortly before the inauguration of Salvador Jorge Blanco as president.

Contrary to most predictions, Jorge Blanco fell short of his electoral promises. At the outset, the government favored the IMF's stabilization policies involving drastic devaluations of the Dominican peso, fiscal austerity, and price decontrol. Jorge Blanco's inaugural speech on August 16, 1982 was more reminiscent of orthodox policies of the late 1960s than the progressive PRD platform. The emphasis was on austerity not on redistribution, on restrictions not on concessions. Increasing economic hardships coupled with corruption and the

government's "highly selective" clientelism (e.g., privileges granted to hand-picked individuals to import luxury goods inaccessible to the middle and upper classes) aggravated public discontent.

With the Blanco administration and the party wrecked by rivalries, the 1985 PRD convention ended with a de facto split. As the balloting took place, violence struck the convention. It was widely reported that the assault was perpetrated by Jorge Blanco's supporters who were intent on preempting a victory of his opponent, Jacobo Majluta. The party crisis was temporarily solved with an agreement (*Pacto La Unión*) to disregard the vote of the PRD convention delegates. Majluta was granted the 1986 presidential nomination while the Jorge Blanco faction was assured key congressional nominations. Yet with a weak candidate, a discredited government, and a divided party the PRD lost the 1986 elections to Joaquín Balaguer.

The events surrounding the 1985 party convention are indicative of the deep problems in the Dominican party system. First, it is unlikely that the PRD will soon recover from intraparty factionalism and a formal split cannot be ruled out. Second, Balaguer's Reformist Party (renamed *Partido Reformista Social Cristiano*), despite minor efforts to modernize and democratize, continues to be a personalistic and clientelistic organization unlikely to survive Balaguer's death intact. Finally, Juan Bosch's Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), which has made significant electoral gains since 1978, is also a personalistic organization bound to undergo significant changes after Bosch's death. With party fragmentation and dealignment likely, it remains unclear exactly how popular demands can be articulated within institutional structures given the precarious state of other social organizations. Moreover, the severity of the economic crisis adds to the difficulties of developing integrated corporatist arrangements.

Conclusion

More than a decade has past since the Dominican Republic and Ecuador underwent transitions, but "normality" has not yet become a feature of political life. Electoral rotation has been achieved, but periodic interruptions of democratic procedures and practices still occur, especially in institutional conflict resolution and decision making. Behind the façade of democratic politics, a shadow world of extrainstitutional and extralegal play remains.

The socioeconomic development of these countries in the twentieth century did not create a basis for any sort of cross-class consensus on democracy and capitalism. Agricultural export and stunted industrialization produced a relatively small working class and a large disorganized stratum of informal workers and peasants. Ethnic and linguistic differences further fragmented lower class groups. Given these divisions, the trade union movement never emerged as the major interlocutor for the lower classes. The weakness of lower class organizations meant

that there was little to counteract the power of the dominant classes. From the perspective of business elites, an improved distribution of economic resources was not crucial to the maintenance of the capitalist order. What was crucial to economic elites was access to the state and the extraction of favorable policies. When authoritarian regimes proved unpredictable in their distribution of favors and access, business elites joined in the clamor for a democratic transition. The return of democracy, however, was not accompanied by a societal consensus on economic policy. Elites remain ready to swing out of normal democratic play when its outcomes are deemed unfavorable by them. This nondemocratic underworld is rooted in the absence of class compromise and durable understandings among elites. A deep gulf, both economic and political, separates capital and labor. Economic concessions to workers have been minimal since the transition and no new mechanisms of conflict resolution have emerged. Moreover, because democratization has coincided with the debt crisis of the 1980s, mass loyalties to the new political regime have not been cemented through economic pay-offs.

Professional politicians have done little to knit together the disparate groups in these societies. Nor have they secured any enduring understandings among themselves on the precise ground rules for the democratic system. Parties suffer under the extremes of clientelism and personalism, leaving them prone to fragmentation and dissolution. The feeble and unpredictable state of the party systems contributes considerably to the atmosphere of instability.

The political systems that have emerged in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador reflect what Przeworski and Wallerstein refer to as the “uneasy stalemate” that occurs in the absence of class compromise. Yet, we stop short of concluding that this stalemate will necessarily lead to rupture in these regimes. Certainly, a breakdown of democracy remains a real possibility—but the way in which these systems have staggered through the succession of political, economic, and constitutional crises over the last decade suggest an enormous capacity to “muddle through.”¹⁶ Instead of heading toward another round of breakdown (in the style described by Juan Linz), we may be witnessing the evolution of a new regime variant, a “crisis-prone democracy.”¹⁷

¹⁶ The reference is from Charles Lindblom’s classic work on incrementalism in the policy process. See “The Science of ‘Muddling Through’” in *Readings in Modern Organizations*, ed. Amitai Etzioni (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969): 166-170.

¹⁷ For Juan Linz’s classic description of how democracies break down, see his “Crisis, Breakdown, Reequilibration” in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, ed. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). The notion of “crisis-prone democracy” is taken from an earlier work by Espinal. See her “Torn between Authoritarianism and Crisis-Prone Democracy: The Dominican Labor Movement,” Kellogg Working Paper #116, December 1988. In a somewhat similar vein, Conaghan pointed to the development of a hybrid “democratic-authoritarian” regime in Ecuador in the concluding chapter of *Restructuring Domination*. Other authors have also emphasized the emergence of mixed regime types in Latin America. See, for example, the discussion by James M. Malloy, “The Politics of Transition in Latin America” in *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America*, ed. James M. Malloy and Mitchell Seligson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987): 250-257. Also see the discussion of “transitional” democracy by Robert Kaufman and Barbara Stallings, “Debt

In the 1970s, bureaucratic-authoritarian (BA) regimes emerged in the Southern Cone seeking to insulate economic policy from societal pressures; part of the process involved a forced demobilization of previously activated popular classes. Threatened by popular class demands, the upper bourgeoisie backed the BA regime and its attempts at economic normalization.¹⁸ In the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, the political transition to democracy was facilitated by the bourgeoisie's search to fashion new (and more predictable) access to the state. Unlike the BA experiments where systematic repression was central to the refurbishing of business-state relations, disorganization among lower classes and within the party system effectively undercut the capacity of these actors to make reformist or redistributive demands on the system in the late 1970s. Thus, in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, the "reconquest" of political power by the bourgeoisie was compatible with electioneering and political competition because the popular threat level remained relatively low.

But even in this absence of substantive threat, a fine-tuning of democratic institutions to provide the predictability the bourgeoisie originally sought has not taken place. Instead, politicians remain stuck in irregular and unpredictable forms of conflict resolution, ranging from backroom deals to the use of physical force. Thus, a tangled play of institutional and extrainstitutional games remains part of the fabric of these hybrid political regimes.

and Democracy in the 1980s: The Latin American Experience" in *Debt and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Barbara Stallings and Robert Kaufman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989): 201-223.

¹⁸ For the most recent discussion of the BA as a regime type, see Guillermo O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective*, trans. James McGuire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).