

## I. Explaining Political Change in Latin America

---

**A**nalysts probing the impact of international influence in Latin American politics cannot ignore U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. The gripping nature of this hegemony is reflected in the titles of survey studies such as *The Hovering Giant* (Blasier 1976) and *Talons of the Eagle* (Smith 2000). Packaged with studies that foretell the demise of the nation-state in the face of globalization, one wonders if domestic actors in Latin America hold any real relevance to processes of political change in their own countries. Proponents of this view would point to democratic crises that bespeak the frailty of government capabilities, and endemic economic crises that force Latin American states to seek outside aid, which routinely arrives with burdensome conditionality. If governments are so vulnerable to the designs of the hegemon or the dictates of the global economic system, then they have lost the ability to chart their own course.

But the brash conclusions of these perspectives must contend with one indisputable fact—the region of Latin America continues to exhibit noticeable variations. Economic progress in Chile stands in contrast to Caribbean countries mired in backwardness. Militaries wield substantial influence in Guatemala and Ecuador, face advancing civilian control in Argentina, and have been dismantled in Costa Rica and Panama. Brazil secures more lenient IMF loans while the heavy hand of conditionality is levied upon Argentina. Insurgencies are effectively crushed in Peru, addressed politically in Mexico, and continue unabated in Colombia. Brazil and Mexico attract the lion's share of foreign direct investment in the region, as Central America is overlooked. Allegiances to U.S. policy run from dependable adherents in Chile and Central America, standoffish criticism from Brazil, rumblings of defection in Venezuela, and the renegade position of Cuba. Clearly, the domestic does matter, for in its absence, we would expect to

## 2 Explaining Political Change in Latin America

see greater convergence in Latin America, as states fall under the sway of a common external force, be it the Pentagon, the IMF, or global capitalism.

If both international and domestic forces hold relevance to political change in Latin America, what are the conditions under which either comes into play? This is the central question guiding the research in this book. It is easy enough to assert that external and internal forces matter to the conduct of politics in Latin America. It is more difficult to identify the general conditions that explain why the balance of influence tips toward the internal in one context and the external in another. From here, other questions arise. Are there opportunities for domestic forces to have input in cases dominated by international forces, and vice versa? And what of those situations that are caught between the two? Why do the motivations and abilities of foreign and domestic actors to immerse themselves in politics vary from topic to topic? Why does power express itself differently from issue to issue? How do coordination problems manifest themselves in the domestic and international arenas? And what weights should we assign to ideas, interests, and institutions? A few scholars have suggested some answers to these questions, but too often they apply them only to single cases, compile their answers in disparate edited works, or tailor them to descriptive commentaries on contemporary events.<sup>1</sup>

These questions guide the case studies in this book, which together illustrate a range of possibilities surrounding political change in Latin America. Our principal studies examine neoliberal reform in the Southern Cone, democracy in the Andean countries, human rights policy in Chile, and regional security institutions in Central America. Those are followed by additional capsulelike studies on environmental degradation in Brazil, drug trafficking in Colombia, and immigration from Mexico. The studies reveal their respective sets of significant characters, particular balances between foreign and domestic factors, and distinct parameters, processes, and opportunities for political change. Each is a story unto itself, illuminating a portion of the Latin American landscape. Combined, they offer a more complete view of how foreign and domestic influences enter the mix to shape political transformations regionwide. But weaving such disparate stories together into a compelling and coherent narrative demands a strong analytical thread.

Without this thread, political change appears as an incalculable force, one in which everything and anything holds significance. Indeed, we must begin by recognizing that political change is absolutely amorphous as a topic of investiga-

tion. Actors ranging from the Pentagon to Latin American politicians to European courts crowd the stage. Influence flows both from the financial ropes of the IMF at one end to the moral suasion of human rights activists at the other. Institutions such as the Organization of American States (OAS) or Conference of Central American Armed Forces stand firm at one time, only to be trampled underfoot by U.S. hegemony at another. Self-interested actors, ideas, and institutions stand shoulder to shoulder as compelling, often competing explanations for unfolding political developments in Latin America.

So what is our excuse for such a sweeping investigation? Only by placing disparate forms of change alongside one another can we begin to see larger patterns emerge—ones that reveal whether influences are bound to come from the domestic or the international. Only by standing a few paces back and looking at the broader picture can we impose some regularity on what is otherwise a dizzying array of influences—whether those take the form of ideas or self-interest—and a long parade of actors, be they states, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), informal networks, or individuals.

The study of political change need not be an exercise in the affirmation that anything and everything matters. There is a thread that weaves its way through seemingly discordant but equally compelling works that verify the power of multinational corporations (MNCs), document the successes of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, and chronicle U.S. hegemony. This thread is issues, and it tells us not only what actors, institutions, or ideas matter, but when, where, and how they do. Through issue-based comparison, we bring order to the postulate that there are as many sources as subjects of political change.

Why do issues matter? Take Argentina, for example, a nation that seemed well heeled by the imposing presence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and U.S. Treasury during the 1990s. When it came to devising internal economic policies, Argentina always adhered closely to the fund's guidelines and took Washington's admonishments seriously. Understanding their subordinate relation to the United States and the international financial institutions (IFIs) that it dominates, Argentine leaders developed the notion that if you can't beat them, join them. Under President Carlos Menem, the country seemed more slavishly devoted to following Washington's economic lead than did practically any other nation on earth.

But that was not the case when it came to matters of military and internal security policy. Argentine leaders resisted Washington's call to redeploy its troops

## 4 Explaining Political Change in Latin America

to fight the drug syndicates, terrorists, and other unconventional foes. In fact, in 1995, at a time when Argentina was at the pinnacle of its compliance with the IMF-U.S. economic agenda, its representative stood up at the hemisphere-wide inaugural meeting of the Defense Ministerial of the Americas to assert that there could be no discussion of the struggle against narco-terrorism as a matter of regional security cooperation. That must not have pleased U.S. defense secretary William Perry who earlier that day had noted how the scourge of narco-trafficking and terror “threatened the very existence of our democracies” and urged all the militaries of the region to “support joint counter-drug efforts” (U.S. Department of Defense 1995). But Argentina has stood firm. To date, the country’s military observes legal restrictions on its internal missions; nothing that the United States has said or done has appreciably altered that fact, even under the weight of military hegemony and looming financial bankruptcy.

No sweeping characterization of Argentina will work: it is neither the structurally weak and dependent nation that its economic subservience suggests, nor is it the tall and proud independent nation that defends its turf, as its security policy suggests. It is both. We must ask how it is that a nation can be so vulnerable to foreign influence on one subject, and so invulnerable on another? After all, should not relations of power between these two states dictate who the weaker and stronger parties will be across the board? Why should power have any regard for the boundaries between one issue and another? Answers begin to emerge once we identify how issues influence the motivations and capabilities of states.

The United States is the perennial hegemon on security affairs and should be able to dictate to nations in the hemisphere what their defense priorities shall be. But in the post-Cold War era, when threats to U.S. security have subsided, and danger lurks in other corners of the globe, Washington perceives that there is less at stake in this region. Consequently, it is insufficiently motivated to contest the independent security choices of Latin American states (like Argentina) despite its misgivings about those choices.

But what happens when motivation is suddenly unleashed? Do power relations then run roughshod over issue classifications? Can the United States get its way by hanging prized issues over the heads of Latin American states like the sword of Damocles? Not necessarily, for issues not only shape motivation—they also circumscribe capabilities. One need look no further back into history than 2003, in the United Nations Security Council, where Mexico and Chile defied U.S. aspirations to legitimate military action against Iraq. With a Chilean free

trade agreement winding its way through the U.S. Congress, and Mexico's singular status in NAFTA threatened by hemispheric trade negotiations, the scene seemed ready-made for triumph by the United States. But the United States' eagerness to validate its goals was met headlong by Mexican and Chilean political leaders driven by memories of U.S. intervention into their own affairs and overwhelming popular opposition to the war. For these countries, the prospective resolution was just as much a domestic as it was an international issue. And while the United States had military might and economic threats at its disposal, what Joseph Nye terms "hard power," this was an issue of international law, where "soft power," or the ability to influence through reputation and persuasion, played a greater role (2002). Overt, coercive measures to secure passage by linking the war vote to Chile's and Mexico's economic needs would have undermined the very sense of righteousness and legal rectitude offered by a Security Council resolution. Issue arenas defined by international law and soft power discredit issue linkage and allow weak states with strong wills to have a chance, regardless of how motivated the hegemon may be.

In the end, the United States invaded anyway, which represented a new issue, the use of force, where hard power obviously does matter. Nonetheless, the invasion stands as testimony to the fact that muscle, even when backed by motivation and action, still remains only an incomplete determinant of international relations. After all, the denial of a widely recognized legal mandate eventually deprived the United States of international manpower and monetary contributions to support its occupation.

By classifying the pursuit of legitimacy and the act of invasion as two distinct issue areas, we reveal dynamics unique to each, which is the purpose of issue-guided analysis—to employ issues as signposts that identify important actors and viable modes of influence. Each subject represents a distinct constellation of opportunities and barriers for every prospective participant, including nonstate agents. Actors find that they are more highly motivated to pursue their goals in one arena than another. They also realize that they hold particular skills or resources tailor-made to advance their interests in one domain while they are distinctly ill equipped elsewhere. Hence, to explain the U.S. invasion of Iraq, U.S. might and motivation in light of U.S.-Iraqi tensions is sufficient. But to explain the quest for international legitimacy, new actors and mechanisms of persuasion suddenly enter the picture—UN Security Council voting procedures, soft power, political leaders in Mexico and Chile, and popular opposition movements in

## 6 Explaining Political Change in Latin America

these same countries. To underscore and complete this example, we note that France could veto the pursuit for legitimacy, but it could not veto the invasion.

Issues then determine the cast of characters drawn to a particular case of political change based on motivations and capabilities. As we move from issue to issue, the principal protagonists change in tandem. For instance, outside states may be much more motivated to engage on the economic or security-related front than they are on the human rights or environmental front. Given the power differential in the Western Hemisphere, the former issues typically fall under the sway of the United States, which can easily dampen the aspirations of would-be rivals from outside the region. While human rights and the environment unfold primarily in the domestic arena, they routinely draw the attention of international organizations and social activists from afar. Those nonstate actors may discover that wider avenues of influence open up for themselves precisely because foreign states are ill prepared to deal with these topics or are simply uninterested. And yet those nonstate actors are resource poor and appreciably less powerful than states and cannot easily effect change from afar unless they leverage foreign states to lend a hand, however briefly they may do so.

But what determines *why* actors will be lured into one set of issues but not another, or *why* external players seem more influential on certain matters and domestic players on others? To answer this question, we categorize issues into the realms of “high politics” and “low politics” (Keohane and Nye 1977). This division is a time-honored distinction used to describe areas of state policy making within the international arena. It is adapted here to understand where states, when driven by the fundamental logic of self-interest, are most likely and least likely to intervene in or otherwise exert decisive influence over the affairs of foreign countries. High politics means high stakes; governments believe their vital interests hang in the balance. They will be strongly inclined to intrude on the domestic affairs of other nations if doing so is perceived as necessary to protect or enhance national security, economic well-being, or prominent goals on the national political agenda. That scenario unfolds when the domestic problems of a nation somehow spill over its borders or when the domestic riches of a nation (minerals, markets, cheap labor, etc.) reach out and lure foreign powers in. Externalities generated by an offending state will not alone suffice to provoke foreign intrusions; it is only when those externalities impinge on a state’s vital national interests that they would cause it to react intrusively. States may then choose to intercede either directly or indirectly through international organiza-

tions such as the IMF and OAS whose very emergence is a product of these state imperatives. Either way, high politics defines scenarios in which the international often trumps the domestic when it comes to promoting change.

By contrast, low politics defines those lower-stake issues where states have little or no incentive to interfere in the domestic affairs of others. They do not associate their own national well-being and survival with the fate of a foreign nation's internal struggles over issues such as poverty, unemployment, education, health policy, democratic deepening, or human rights. Moreover, political leaders see no electoral gains to be had by delving deep into these domestic matters of another country. Hence, states calculate few benefits but numerous costs to intervention.<sup>2</sup> They are also reluctant to intercede indirectly via international institutions, or to legitimate intervention via adherence to international norms, believing that doing so will create a precedent applicable to all states, themselves included. Accordingly, domestic forces for change often trump international ones in this scenario.

A state's self-interest then is obviously the starting point of this analysis since it is central to the definition of high versus low politics. But it takes political leaders to understand, interpret, and react to those interests. When foreign state leaders are galvanized into believing that their vital interests are at stake and are sufficiently motivated to do something about them, they usually occupy center stage. It will be exceedingly difficult for any given Third World state to ward off a powerful foreign nation or a collection of less powerful nations determined to intervene in order to advance their primary security, economic, and political objectives. Powerful states have overwhelming financial and coercive resources at their disposal. Collections of weaker states, sensing that their own vital interests are up for grabs, can sometimes band together within regional organizations and intervene as well.

However, when states do not perceive their key interests to be at stake, they will step aside or turn away, allowing domestic politics to dominate. In their absence, foreign nonstate actors also move front and center. Those individuals and institutions are driven more by principles and norms than by interests. Consequently, the key motivators for change shift from interests to ideas as we move from high to low politics. So too do the forms that influence takes, from the high politics reliance on hard power—the currency of financial leverage and coercion—to the low politics reliance on soft power—the currency of values and moral suasion.

## 8 Explaining Political Change in Latin America

Powerful states are certainly more than capable of pushing their weight around in the realm of human rights, the environment, and other low politics issues, should they choose to. They could, in theory, link progress on development, human rights, social justice, health, democratic reform, or the environment to the provision or withdrawal of aid, investment, trade, or military support. They seldom do, however, because the political will to do so is not there. All of their considerable resources that are brought to bear so impressively on security and economic issues are usually held in abeyance in low politics areas because those states surmise that the application of hard power will either not be worth the effort, be counterproductive, or be deemed inappropriate. Occasionally, hugely motivated activists can grab the attention of states just long enough to make a difference. But unless low politics problems generate externalities that cause foreign states sufficient and sustained concern, the attention span of those states will be short-lived, as they gravitate back to issues of greater national significance to them.

### Boundaries, Motives, and Capabilities

The high and low political distinction should, we submit, give guidance for understanding the balance between international and national sources of political change in Latin America. The full framework for analysis will be elaborated below and in chapter 2. But before proceeding any further, it should be noted that the high-low politics distinction comes with a basic presumption: that there are separate external and internal political spheres. In this day and age, is that separation still valid? We live in a globalized era, and some would say that the boundaries between the domestic and the foreign have washed away (e.g., Ohmae 1995; Strange 1996; Greider 1997). Who or what is there to demarcate the domestic from the foreign? Countries are figuratively and literally wired into the global economic system like no time before. In an age when billions of dollars of finance capital can be shifted in and out of a country in a split second, not slowed for a moment by national controls, of what value is the distinction between a domestic and a foreign bank account? When MNCs increasingly outsource tasks to laborers in other nations, does it really matter whether the firm is located at home or abroad? And what of the ability of networks—be they comprised of media channels, activists, or terrorists—to operate freely across bor-

ders? Undeniably, people, information, and resources are crisscrossing state frontiers in unprecedented numbers and at great speed.

Although it is tempting to dismiss the domestic-foreign distinction, we would respectfully demur from this view. While the world is more interconnected than ever before, nation-state boundaries still matter. They matter because states and citizens still act as if they do. It is states that go to war, vote in the United Nations, and sign treaties. It is state politicians whose goal it is to advance national interests and who promote *foreign* policies. And it is citizens who rally around the flag when their nation is attacked, is at war, or competes at international sporting events. Behavior and identities are still profoundly shaped by the nation-state, probably more so than they are by the diffusion of mass communications, cultures, or economic ideologies.

The divide between the domestic and the foreign is never so simple as a well-marked geographical frontier. It is certainly that, but it is more. The domestic often migrates with the flow of its own people. Companies, diplomats, and members of the armed forces serve abroad with consequences for their host nations. A state's expatriates reside and work elsewhere, send income back to family members, and simultaneously affect the economic well-being of their host and homeland. With the "Mexicanization" of Southern California, residents there have dual loyalties, cultural references, and political interests. When anti-immigration biases there run strong, some residents—even citizens—can be treated as if they were strangers in their own land. The boundary between internal and external persists, but it often becomes blurred.

Perhaps most significantly, the line between what is internal and external shifts according to flows of influence. State and nonstate actors frequently attempt to extend their spheres of influence beyond and across national boundaries. Clearly, there are examples of where foreign influences are welcomed. In these instances, the international and the domestic may work in tandem to resolve a problem, as their actions reinforce one another. But on many other occasions, outsiders are not welcome. Often there is a tension between a government's need for decision-making autonomy, and the desire of outsiders to erode some of that autonomy. The push and pull of influence from the inside and from without can be characterized by an overall framework and two competing elements within it. Our framework, as mentioned before, is one of issue orientation. The first element is sovereignty—a state's powers of exclusive jurisdiction over its people and territory. The second is the abilities and desires of those out-

side the nation-state to transgress its sovereign borders in order to shape domestic affairs.

To use an analogy, if sovereignty is an immigration checkpoint, then foreign influence is a traveler with documentation. Checkpoints are not posted everywhere, nor are they equally endowed with resources and trained personnel. Some will let down their guard just enough to allow undocumented travelers through. But there are aliens who can more easily penetrate any given checkpoint, depending upon what kind of passport they are carrying. Others will have a more difficult time; they will be stopped, questioned, detained, and then turned away. Some of those will be more persistent than others and return for another try, equipped with bribe money, or fraudulent papers and a new identity. The analogy sums up the three key elements to understanding whether the sources of change in Latin America originate primarily at home or abroad: barriers, capabilities, and motivation.

As a barrier, sovereignty is the tried-and-true principle that states regularly invoke when defending their rights to check external influences at their borders. Since all states can lay claim to the right to act with supreme authority over their subjects, sovereignty embodies the anarchical nature of the international system: there is no higher authority to appeal to. In this rough-and-tumble world where states are left to fend for themselves, sovereignty is a leveler; all nations are, in principle, endowed with equal amounts of it. In practice power often spells the difference between those who can girder their sovereign walls and those who cannot. Consequently, sovereignty is more than an idea: it has always been a mix of legal standards, mutual understandings, and power imbalances. While sovereign rights have been written into countless international and regional conventions, those rights are often honored only in the breach. More powerful states will often trample on the autonomy of other states while avowing their allegiance to principles of autonomy. Stephen Krasner has suggested that breaches of sovereignty have been so commonplace in world history that they have made a mockery of the principle (1999).

Many more would agree that while sovereignty is under siege, as a standard and practice it survives (Hashmi 1997). For every successful assault on sovereignty there is always an example where sovereignty has held its own, by dint of force, reason, or norms. Weaker states in particular bet on the fact that sovereignty as an international norm is still embraced widely enough to deter inappropriate interventions in their internal affairs. Thus, sovereignty is never as

solid as a law always abided, but certainly not as soft as an idea conveniently disregarded.

There is also agreement that sovereignty is in flux (Barkin and Cronin 1994; Farer 1996; Philpott 1997). Laws, customs, and practices evolve over time. What was once thought to be the exclusive domain of states no longer is. The trend line is clear: state prerogatives have shrunk. While we fully agree that sovereignty is in flux, we wish to emphasize something else: Sovereignty does not throw up the same set of defenses from issue to issue. As a rule of thumb, it is a more formidable barrier in the realm of low politics than it is in the realm of high politics. Domestic actors generally have greater control over rights-based policies, or educational and environmental policies, while foreign actors will make their presence known more effectively on financial or security-related matters. Why that is has to do with the capabilities and motives of those who would attempt to breach another nation's barriers.

Take human or political rights as an example. There has undoubtedly been a steady erosion of legal protections for governments that violate the rights of their own citizens. Many would agree with Fernando R. Tesón who says that the "domain reserved to the exclusive jurisdiction of the state is now quite small" (1996, 50) when it comes to these issues. But this observation begs the question, are international influences likely to trump domestic influences? The answer, interestingly enough, is not often.

While barriers to entry may have been dramatically lowered via law and custom, the capacity of external agents to take advantage of those lower barriers has not risen proportionately. The principal foreign agents in the realm of human rights are NGOs, transnational activists, judges, and lawyers. Though these non-state actors are hugely dedicated, principled, and motivated, they lack the centralized power, coordination, and enforcement mechanisms necessary to easily turn their convictions into results. These organizations and individuals are numerous and are growing, but they are dispersed across vast regions, are usually resource poor, and most important, do not have at their disposal the coercive tools needed to bring perpetrators to justice, or the leverage needed to compel changes that states resist making.

If nonstate actors are to succeed they must, through material, political, or moral persuasion, capture the attention of state leaders. It is states that have clout. It is they who can pull various economic, diplomatic, and military levers necessary to press other governments into compliance with human rights

norms. But because they do not perceive their own vital interests to be at stake, states are insufficiently motivated to fight for human rights protections abroad. Issue linkage is rare in this regard; only occasionally will states “go to the mat” for a humanitarian cause because they believe their security or economic interests are implicated. Consequently, human and political rights advocates will succeed, at best, only episodically—because seldom can they get foreign states to care enough about the transgressions of offending states to do anything about them. As Kathryn Sikkink admits, the “link to government is simultaneously the most powerful and least dependable aspect of the work of the issue network” (1993, 423).

At the receiving end, offending states are only occasionally troubled enough by negative international opinion or pressures to change their internal human and political rights practices. Much depends on their sense of exposure to the outside world, how much they value their international reputations, and their calculations of potential political or material gain from being cooperative. Their vulnerability to the outside world occurs only at moments, something to be discussed later on. Normally, however, states will resist the intrusions of foreigners, by refusing to conduct inquiries, hold trials, apprehend suspects, or honor extradition requests of other states. In the realm of low politics, sovereign states are usually equipped to hold highly motivated nonstate actors and less motivated state challengers at bay.

In the high politics arena, sovereignty poses a much weaker barrier to entry for external forces wishing to shape internal events. Like the traveler with the right documents, international agents can penetrate virtually any Latin American checkpoint. Here the problem is not so much an absence of legal precedent as it is the presence of very formidable, highly motivated actors able to breach international and regional agreements as they see fit. Within high politics, the gap between sovereignty’s rules and realities is astonishing. Since World War II, all justifications for armed aggression by one state against another have been stripped away, save two: self-defense or military action authorized by the UN Security Council. The United Nations Charter makes this limitation clear as does article 19 of the Charter of the Organization of American States. And it is not just unprovoked armed aggression that is outlawed by the OAS, but as article 19 points out “any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements.” Article 21 adds that the “Territory of a State is inviolable; it may not be the object,

even temporarily, of military occupation or of other measures of force taken by another State, directly or indirectly, on any grounds whatsoever.”<sup>3</sup> Both international and regional accords provide ample protection for Latin American states against foreign coercion of an overt or covert nature, aimed at destabilizing the political order.

Yet over the course of decades, the United States has violated these conventions on dozens of occasions, in the name of national security. The list of nations that have fallen prey to U.S. military, paramilitary, and covert interventions is well known: Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, The Dominican Republic, Brazil, Grenada, and Panama, and there are more. The pretext for intervention is an externality, and a familiar one: the domino effect. The rise of a left-wing insurgency or government in one state could precipitate similar developments in other states, creating a real regional security crisis for the United States. The sovereign rights of Latin American states to be free from coerced intervention into their security affairs are usually trumped by the imbalances of power between the hegemon and its weaker southern neighbors.

If we turn our attention to the economic dimension, then it seems clear that Latin American states lost the ability to chart their own economic course—free from the counsel of foreigners—nearly half a century ago. Again, the loss of economic independence cannot be attributed to a dearth of rules and conventions governing nonintervention. One could reach as far back as 1902, when the Drago Doctrine became accepted into international law. Named after the Argentine foreign minister, it established the principle that just as individuals could no longer be apprehended for indebtedness, states should no longer be subjected to the forceful repayment of loans at the hands of other more powerful states (Levine 1937). And the OAS Charter proclaims that every state has the right to develop “its economic life freely and naturally” and that no state can “use or encourage the use of coercive measures of an economic . . . character in order to force the sovereign will of another State and obtain from it advantages of any kind” (OAS 2004, arts. 17, 20).

No treaty or other international agreement ever bound states to permit the international financial institutions to pry into their fiscal and monetary accounts, as they have done. Never was there a shared understanding between states that an IFI like the International Monetary Fund had the right to not only condition receipt of credit on changes in macroeconomic policy, but to literally sit at the table—cajoling, intimidating, and warning ministry officials to tow the line or

face the consequences. Yet since the mid 1950s, the IMF, backed by the power of creditor states, has operated in precisely this manner against weak debtor nations.

The most persuasive evidence that sovereignty has been permanently undermined in the economic realm is the fact that the theme hardly ever comes up in deliberations about neoliberal adjustment in Latin America. While that might suggest that there is now a widespread acceptance among Latin American states of their fiscal and financial vulnerability to external forces, it would be more aptly characterized as a mixture of some agreement and ample resignation. Material self-interest and the fear of failure to abide by the terms of externally imposed conditionality are at the root of submission to IFIs, as much if not more than some consensual understanding. In economics, as in security affairs, sovereignty is not only weak but obedient to the logic of consequence.<sup>4</sup>

To recap, our objective is to understand why influence over Latin American affairs tips in the direction of the international on some occasions and the domestic on others. Toward that end, we offer a comprehensive, issue-sensitive framework, so devised as to get us to the bottom of why barriers to external influence seem more formidable in some instances and less so in others. Embedded within that framework is the division between high and low politics, which helps us understand who the principal change agents are, and how capable and motivated they are. As issues shift from high to low domains and back again, so too do the central players, their motivations and abilities, and the forms of influence they resort to. With that information in hand, we are better able to assess when and why sovereign barriers to external influence are either successfully breached or not.

What does it mean to breach sovereign barriers? And how do we know that international influences have prevailed or not over domestic influences? This study considers neither the potential loss of a nation's legal sovereignty in the world community as sanctified by international treaties, nor a government's political right to rule over its inhabitants (Krasner 1999). We are, rather, concerned about political decisions—including government policies—and the degree to which they are or are not shaped by forces beyond their control and beyond the territorial limits of the state. More specifically, we are interested in determining whether domestic decisions are made that would not have been likely without foreign pressure, or conversely occur independently and with little or no regard for the external world.

Invulnerability or vulnerability varies by issues, and our challenge is to find

those issue areas where the balance of influence seems to tilt decisively—if even just for a brief period—in one direction or the other, and then to account for that tilt. To know if the “foreign” matters, we first establish some sequence of related events that may suggest a cause-and-effect relation. When domestic actions follow on the heels of international pressures and appear to flow directly and logically from those pressures, that gives us an initial indication of causality. Timing is important. The shorter the lag between external action and internal reaction, the more persuasive the nexus is; the longer the lag, the more doubt is cast since other factors could have more readily intervened. If, however, it is domestic forces that prevail, the task is to note either that foreign pressures have receded or are absent from the scene, or that domestic actors completely disregard them.

Then again, how much does the foreign matter? Are external pressures crucial in some instances and irrelevant in others? Once having discovered a succession of international actions and domestic reactions, we can then assess what significance key actors and informed observers attach to them. Those actors may have acknowledged that external agents had a critical impact on internal events. In chapter 4 on democracy in the Andean region, we take note of political and media acknowledgments of the OAS mission’s stunning effect on the first round, 2000 presidential elections in Peru.

Of course, domestic actors may take umbrage at external interference in their affairs and thus emphatically deny that foreigners have any influence upon them. In that instance, other measures of significance are needed. We could note the relative constancy of political life in a country that is suddenly disrupted by foreign intrusions. If a search for potential domestic agents of change turned up empty-handed, we could infer the external mattered. Alternatively, we could raise, as we do, the “what-if” question through the use of counterfactuals (Tetlock and Belkin 1996). What if political actions had evolved without any external intrusion? Would that evolution have looked appreciably different? By definition, these are educated guesses not verifiable certainties. But the counterfactual can be reasonably persuasive if based on a thorough understanding of the chronological past and the plausible course that political events would have taken without the introduction of catalysts from the outside. In chapter 5 on human rights in Chile, we assess what would have probably occurred in Chilean courts in the absence of judicial action against Augusto Pinochet in Spain and Britain.

Conversely, if the domestic prevails in a decisive way, we look for evidence of national figures promoting change while rebuffing foreign opposition or find

instances where foreigners never bothered showing up in the first place. Chapter 6 on Central America demonstrates how Central American states forged their own regional security organizations without any overt U.S. input or interference whatsoever.

One final distinction must be noted. In this study, we prefer to focus on the more inclusive term “influence” than on intervention. Intervention normally refers to coerced or unwanted intrusions by outsiders into the territorial confines of another state (Finnemore 1996). Military interventions are of course the most common, but there are other kinds, including covert intelligence gathering, economic sabotage, and humanitarian rescues. Intervention has the advantage over influence of greater definitional precision but the disadvantage of excluding from our review the array of alternative noninterventionist methods by which outsiders compromise domestic decision-making autonomy. Sovereignty can be and indeed has been breached without intervention. States can for example enter into agreements with other states or international institutions that place limits on their decision-making autonomy, as chapter 3 on neoliberal reform makes clear, and as does the capsule study on drug trafficking in chapter 7. And as chapter 4 on democracy in the Andean region points out, governments regularly invite in foreign observers who then constrain their ability to manipulate elections as they see fit.<sup>5</sup>

## The High-Low Politics Framework

This issue-sensitive framework gives scholars a general orientation for understanding shifts in the origins of influence on Latin American politics from near and afar. But change is seldom the simple outgrowth of a monolithic force symbolized by the terms “domestic” and “foreign.” The domestic and foreign are themselves hugely complex constellations of actors and institutions with distinct though overlapping priorities, abilities, and values. When, in a given issue arena, the most powerful political and economic forces from abroad pressure for domestic changes, they may not do so in a uniform, consistent, and durable fashion. It is quite likely that we will discover variations in the pursuit of interests and the expression of influence across actors even as their overarching priorities converge. Across time, we may find that what was once a peripheral concern for states has become a vital necessity. Thus, for them issues will migrate

over the divide from low to high politics. And across space, the international may become momentarily significant to a low politics cause as foreign nonstate actors unexpectedly muster strength, while the domestic has its moment in a high politics affair as foreign state actors briefly lose interest. We turn to succinct discussions on these dimensions in order to fine-tune the framework in ways that foreshadow the empirical discussions that follow.

### *Unpacking the Domestic and the Foreign*

To speak of a foreign-domestic balance without reference to possible discord and detachment within these arenas only obscures the subject matter. It is implausible and often misleading to conceive of a “domestic” alliance standing in opposition to an equally unified “international” group. Each arena comprises actors who may hold conflicting interests, values, and strategies, and in each realm cooperation can be problematic.

For instance, international players in the field of human rights confront a host of coordination problems that partly explains their lack of capacity. The functional division of labor among nonstate agencies often limits their ability to grasp the whole picture. Some monitor abuses from the outside to pressure foreign states, others offer legal counsel, still others focus solely on lobbying the governments from the inside, and several, such as the Red Cross, eschew criticism to ensure access. Moreover, the single country or regional focus of most groups limits concerted action. All of these coordination obstacles conspire to weaken the clout of foreign nonstate actors and enable domestic actors to chart the path of human rights policy.

By contrast, in high politics U.S. hegemony concentrates decision-making authority in fewer hands, often rendering coordination troubles moot. And as noted by the neoliberal camp, the intensity and persistence with which states pursue their self-interests within the high politics sphere reduces the likelihood that they will be thwarted by collective action difficulties. Having said that, we must note an interesting distinction between security and economic issues. States are most unwilling to surrender control over security policy. The state alone is master of its security interests and perceptions, deciding if, when, and where to make its presence felt in the region; in Latin America this means that the expression of U.S. military hegemony fluctuates in tune with its own security imperatives.

But this flexibility and control is more problematic in economic issues, as illustrated in chapter 3, which discusses international support for neoliberal reform in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Economic interests tend to be more stable than security concerns due to the greater durability of trade patterns and investment destinations. Colombia is currently a security preoccupation to Washington. It may not be in twenty years. Mexico and Brazil are of economic importance to the United States now, and they will likely be twenty years hence. This durability is not difficult to understand. Even a hegemon cannot easily control where businesses trade and invest, but it must answer to these decisions as it seeks to promote the economic well-being of the country as a whole. And though increasing levels of interdependence have encouraged states to create international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address discrepancies and common concerns, these institutions can gain a level of relative autonomy, develop their own interests, and thus further crowd the field (Stein 1993). The fact that states must respond to business interests and accord institutions some autonomy means that foreign influence, while strong throughout Latin America, will be expressed differently from country to country.<sup>6</sup> For political reasons, states may want to throw greater economic support behind some countries, but this demands that business and international organizations be so induced. And decisions by a state's international enterprises may engender greater economic support for a state, even in the midst of political differences.

#### *Movements from Low to High Politics*

There are both opportunities and limitations for an issue to cross the low-high politics divide. Movement occurs when an issue that was once of remote concern to foreign states takes on greater importance to them. In the low politics realm, principles of sovereignty and nonintervention traditionally have kept states at arm's length from the internal problems of others. Nonetheless, at certain unique points in history, nations sometimes discover that their interests hang in the balance even on matters that typically reside in the realm of low politics. A sense of urgency overtakes them, propelling them to join with other nations to collectively intercede in the domestic politics of a state. These efforts are determined and sustained, placing them beyond the concept of an "international moment."

In fact, governments may increasingly associate a heretofore low politics issue with their vital interests, even survival. When they do, they often codify and institutionalize new standards of political conduct to justify ongoing regional interventions. Once norms become embedded within treaties and other collective agreements, it becomes more difficult for states to ignore them (Ruggie 1983). What was once inappropriate conduct for states (i.e., intervention on a given issue) now becomes entirely appropriate.<sup>7</sup> What was once the self-interest of the “other” now becomes the self-interest of “us.”

But there are limits to how far states of a given region are prepared to rewrite the rules of collective engagement. When what afflicts one state becomes inextricably tied up with the self-preservation of others, then intervention into the domestic becomes easier. But sometimes it becomes more difficult, when intervention can bounce back to haunt other states if by interceding they expose deep flaws in their own systems. States would rather not judge regional neighbors too harshly for having failed to live up to certain standards, for fear that the spotlight would be thrown back on any of them next time around.

When states are so motivated by self-interest that they rewrite the rules of intervention to facilitate outside involvement, an issue can move from the realm of low to high politics. The example to be used in this book to typify such a movement is that of democratic defense. Democracy is a choice of regime, and regime choice has historically been a domestic affair. But increasingly, Latin American states are associating their own well-being with the well-being of others. If one democracy is threatened by a military coup, then others may be as well, because coups are contagious. Should the armed forces successfully usurp power in one country, then militaries in bordering states may try to emulate the same behavior. The more democracies that succumb, the easier each succeeding coup becomes. Likewise, if civilian leaders with questionable democratic credentials try to tamper with or cancel elections in one nation, then that serves as an example for other presidents with authoritarian leanings. To avert these fates, all democratic nations of the region have an interest in rallying to the defense of any one democracy or election in trouble.

These same states are much more reticent to push too far for democratic reform (also referred to as democratic deepening), fearing that they will cross the line from legitimate to illegitimate intervention in the internal affairs of another state, prompting retaliatory intrusions against themselves. It is not just that classic principles of nonintervention resurface. It is the somber reality that so many

states of the region exhibit sizeable imperfections in their own democratic systems. Thus, they respond to problems of democratic deepening in a lackluster fashion so that reprisals are not taken against them next time around. What is the upshot of this? Democracy is torn between its high and low political components. The oftentimes competing pressures between these spheres produce a kind of equilibrium that is suboptimal. Because outside states shun movements to improve quality but resolutely protect democracy from threats to its very existence, the Western Hemisphere now embraces a system that shores up “low quality democracies” of decreasing legitimacy to their own populations. This development does not bode well for democratic consolidation.

### *A Departure from Normal Politics*

The high-low politics distinction provides a baseline to compare more conventional scenarios with unconventional ones. Under conditions of “normal politics” we would expect self-interested foreign states and carefully supervised international organizations to hold sway in issues of security and economics. A nation’s defense and its material needs should rivet its attention on the domestic affairs of foreign states; commitments to principles and norms should recede into the background. Conversely, we would expect domestic actors (state and nonstate) to be more influential on matters of democracy and human rights. Ideas and institutions should hold their own against interests, all else equal.

Of course in politics all else is seldom equal. Political change is often the product of unanticipated disruptions to the status quo by unlikely candidates. Issues normally shaped by internal factors can have their “foreign moments,” and those usually dominated by outside forces can have their “domestic moments.” Why is this so? Moments, as the term suggests, are brief periods of time when windows of opportunity open for agents who would normally be offstage to move front and center. These opportunities can be traced to specific historical periods, and to the motivations and capacities of domestic and foreign actors.

International moments feature enduring motivations and varied capacities. These are occasions when highly committed activists and NGOs from abroad are able to leverage relatively disinterested state actors into showing brief concern about low politics issues. While these activists and NGOs are highly and consistently energized, their ability to effect changes by themselves in the domestic politics of foreign states is limited. As stated earlier in the case of human rights,

these nongovernmental actors are resource poor and do not have at their disposal all the assets needed to bring formidable pressures to bear on offending nations to compel desired changes. They will succeed only if they can grab the attention of key state actors—be these from judicial, legislative, or executive branches—who have some leverage. Persuading foreign states to act in defense of human rights, social justice, or the environment is not easy but once done can set in motion a chain of events that can boomerang back home (Keck and Sikkink 1998). To bring international moments into sharp focus, this book will devote a chapter to the theme of human rights.

By contrast, domestic moments are characterized by a dominant state's enduring capacity and cyclical motivations. Now any analyst of Latin American politics would approach the question of "domestic moments" in high politics with trepidation, due to the overbearing presence of the United States. And hegemony cannot be dismissed. But ironically enough, hegemonic potency itself creates opportunities for the domestic to emerge. As realists unhesitatingly remind us, military might responds to threats (e.g., Waltz 1979) and in the Western Hemisphere those threats wax and wane across time and space. Hegemonic expression, while potentially enduring, ebbs and flows with changes in perceived risk. Absent threats of sufficient magnitude, a hegemon will grow less attentive to a region. As it does, it allows for independent security arrangements to emerge from the region because it is simply less concerned with developments there. This book will explore this phenomenon with a case study of the rise of Central American security institutions in the post-Cold War era.

In international and domestic moments, the window of opportunity can close as quickly as it opens. International and transnational activists will be able to spark foreign state interest but not sustain it. The state's attention to low politics issues abroad fades as subjects more central to its own national well-being take precedence. Domestic moments will fade as well. Eventually, the hegemonic state will reassert its will, constraining or stifling Latin American efforts to carve out their own security niches. That will occur when the United States again perceives that its vital national security interests are at stake in the region.