

LATIN AMERICAN DUALISM AND THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY SINCE WORLD WAR II

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This paper examines the political consequences of social dualism in Latin America since industrialization and large-scale urbanization since the Depression. Latin America, while far from being the poorest region in the world, is the most unequal. In most societies, from one third to half the population lives under or slightly above the poverty lines: these citizens have intermittent or part-time and lowly paid jobs or are unemployed, in many cases leaving on the stipends granted to them by the mostly inadequate welfare states of the region. They constitute what I call the marginal pole of the political community. The rest of the society, upper, middle and working class with regular employment, are what I call the organized pole.

Political institutions in the last decades can be understood as the product of the tension between these two segments of society. The marginal pole has been a central power base for populist and, in some important cases, social-democratic movements and parties. This sector has also been crucial for the establishment of plebiscitarian democracies and elective authoritarian regimes. Finally, dualism has also influenced the quality of republican democracies, i.e. the ones with strong separation of powers, producing what I call a bi-facial state.