

DID REGIONAL INTEGRATION SAVE DEMOCRACY IN PARAGUAY?*

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I. INTRODUCTION

On the 22nd of April 1996 an institutional crisis struck Paraguay. The President, Carlos Wasmosy, had decided to remove the army commander, general Lino Oviedo, from his post. Since the coup that ended the regime of Alfredo Stroessner¹ in 1989, the General had continuously increased his power and had converted himself into a symbol of the influence of the armed forces in Paraguayan politics. President Carlos Wasmosy's decision to remove him from his position was the culmination of an increasingly fierce power struggle between the two. The General refused to accept the President's order, however, and the April Crisis was a fact. For a very short period of time, from the 22nd to the 25th of April 1996, the democratic transition in Paraguay was seriously threatened. After a period of suspense, however, a peaceful resolution of the crisis followed. By studying these events and the historical processes, globalization, regional integration and democratization, which all met in an intensive interaction during just 4 days, I intend to throw light on our understanding of how changing levels of governance affect domestic politics in developing countries. The approach starts with a multi-disciplinary perspective and focuses on Paraguay's participation in the regional integration process, Mercosur², and the recent process of democratization in that Country. Paraguay has joined the process of regional integration and, through 'feedback', Mercosur has come to play a significant role in the development of democracy in Paraguay. I expect to find evidence for the increasing influence that economic co-operation on the regional level exerts over national political decision-making.

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II. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to collect empirical material, fieldwork was carried out from September to October 1997 in Asunción. The work in Paraguay was divided into two parts. First I interviewed politicians, academics and leaders of social movements in order to obtain firsthand information concerning the events of April 1996. Secondly, I studied the results of research conducted at Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as well as of studies carried out at the Catholic University.

When dealing with the case of Paraguay, it is important to note that the local research community is very weak. Very little work is done due to the lack of a well-developed academic community and of economic resources. The former is a legacy of the long period of dictatorship (Rodrigues, 1997: 8.9). There have even been signs of resignation in regard to this situation (López Bosio, 1995). Thus the task of collecting sources is difficult, but challenging. It is easy to fail. On the other hand, any results obtained from such an effort will contribute substantially to our common knowledge.

The key empirical material that this article is based on consists of sixteen interviews carried out in Asunción from September to October of 1997. The reason why I opted for interviews is that the role of the international community in general, and Mercosur in particular, has not received proper attention in scholarly work on Paraguay. The intention has therefore been to obtain new insights and to present an analysis based on new material. The method that I have used is a qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews. The purpose has not been to confront a theoretical model with reality. My aim with the interviews has been to apply an interpretative approach and to explore whether or not the information given by the interviewees can be translated into the concepts used in this paper, and thereafter be analyzed in accordance with the theoretical framework elaborated in the following section. The interviewees have been chosen to represent a cross sample of three main groups, academics, politicians and leaders of social movements. In addition, among the formal interviews a representative of the media, Manuel Godoy, can also be found. It also should be noted that much of my inspiration and information rests on informal street interviews. Due to the limited scope of this work it has not been possible to exhaust all sources³. My intention, however, has been to collect information from sufficiently many persons so as to make the cross checking of the data possible. The academics have been selected on their credentials as leading scholars and researchers in their respective fields. Thus I have received a presumably objective view of the events of April

1996. The politicians were selected so that all the main parties would be represented. In the cases of Rafael Casabianca and Carlos Facetti, they also represent key actors in the April Crisis. As for the leaders of social movements, it has been my intention to talk to as many different organizations as possible, representing different groups and ideologies within Paraguayan society. The final conclusions are based primarily on a careful elaboration and analysis of this information. They have also been influenced, however, by newspaper reading, and listening to radio and television broadcasts, as well as by those secondary sources referred to in the bibliography. As for the theoretical sources, those will be discussed in the following section, where I develop the theoretical framework of the paper.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout the history of modern social science, the nation-state has been seen as the principal actor in the international system.⁴ In fact, building on the concept of sovereignty, the nation-state has been considered to be the building bloc of the international system, thus leaving us with fundamentally two analytical levels, the domestic and the international. In recent years, however, the very notion of sovereignty has been brought into question. It is argued that the concept of sovereignty is itself a product of the epistemological context in which it is formed. The division between domestic and international is a politically determined frontier, and it certainly does not represent any kind of natural order. The final, and in my view necessary, reformulation of the concept of sovereignty involves a political decision, which, however, decision-makers show a considerable degree of reluctance to take (See Bartelson, 1993: 217-225).

An important aspect of sovereignty is its *formal*, as opposed to its *real*, status. A state can be formally sovereign but, due to economic interdependence, in reality be dependent on other actors in the global economy.⁵ When states integrate into international regimes⁶ they give up their traditional sovereignty⁷ in favor of a 'negotiated sovereignty'. The very fact that states mutually recognize each other as sovereign entities is an affirmation of the anarchic structure of the system. Over time, it leads to the adaptation of international law and diplomacy to that notion (Buzan, 1993: 348). That is why the questioning of the concept of sovereignty is of fundamental importance in discussing changing levels of governance. A certain loss of sovereignty is necessary in order to become part of common solutions to collective problems. This applies especially to small countries

(Jerneck, 1994). Important aspects of the nation-state's existence are changing. Sovereignty has been questioned, interdependence points to the necessity of an overarching perspective when analyzing the world, and the increased trend toward international cooperation, including a proliferation of non-state actors. These are factors that suggest that the world is no longer going to consist exclusively of nation-states. As a consequence, my argument is that levels of governance will change.

Of particular interest to this research is the connection between economics and politics, as well as the tension between the national and the international arenas. The central focus in this work is on how political decisions at the national level are influenced by forces stemming from the regional level. It can be described as a dual spillover process. In the first place, integration at the regional level in the economic area spurs political co-operation (i.e. spillovers between issue areas). The creation of a security community then occurs (i.e. spillover between levels of governance). Particularly interesting concepts related to this process are the classical notions of security communities, seen as the result of economic and social integration (see Deutch, 1957), as well as the concept of spillover effects discussed by Haas (i.e. how co-operation in one area, e.g. trade, affects other areas, e.g. security issues).⁸

Globalization and, even more perceptibly, regional integration are bringing attention to the changing role of the nation-state. Sovereignty is pooled and governance has been transferred to a number of different levels. Just as Deutsch argued, integration has to be seen as a process of community building (See Mutimer, 1994: 34-36). Various interests and, theoretically speaking, various scholarly disciplines are increasingly being linked to each other. I will argue that the regional integration in Mercosur is a process with roots in the economic history of the sub-region, taking into account the global context in which the region currently finds itself. This regional level thus influences actions at the national level (i.e. the transformation of sovereignty or, in other words, changing levels of governance).

A wide array of interesting questions arises: What is the relationship between the process of economic globalization and regional integration? Is regional integration a sub-process of globalization, or is it a reaction to the process of globalization? Do nation-states have any choice but to integrate into the global economy? If sovereignty is leaving the nation-state, where does it go? These are questions that I intend to study in the future. In this paper, however, I have decided to narrow the central question to an assessment of the influence of the regional level, that is to say Mercosur,

on the internal politics of Paraguay. Of course, it will also be necessary to deal with internal actors, as well as other external forces such as the United States (US), the Organization of American States (OAS) or the European Union (EU), in order to isolate Mercosur's influence.

On this level, the paper can be seen as an attempt to understand one of the pieces in a big jigsaw puzzle that, if completed, would give us the answer to the cause of changing levels of governance. The inspiration behind this theoretical framework is drawn from a wide array of disciplines. However, the focus is on literature concerned with the ongoing process of globalization, as well as the more specific field of International Political Economy. What unites the different fields is their explicit concern with the transformation of the international system and with changing levels of governance. Philip McMichael (1996) has presented an interesting perspective on how globalization has changed the ability of a state to act. He argues that national interests have become subordinated to global interests in the so-called 'globalization-project'. The essence of this argument is that economic globalization and the creation of international institutions create a climate in which states have a choice between participating in the world economy under the conditions posed by this 'global interest', or becoming irrevocably left behind. This implies that states have to live up to the 'rules of the game' established by the international community, including respect for human rights, a democratic system of governance and adherence to the principles of a market economy.

I have often felt that authors skeptical of the concept of globalization, such as Hirst and Thompson (1996), view it as a finished product that can be compared to an ideal type. In their book *Globalization in Question*, they contend that the world economy today is international rather than global, and that the principal actors are nation-states. They present two ideal types; first 'the international economy' based on the nation-state, and second, the 'globalized economy' based on the global level. They argue that interdependence between states does not necessarily lead to more integration. They hold that the regulating bodies on various levels would get in conflict with each other, thus leading to disintegration that would make it impossible to control the economy on a global level. They then go on to criticize proponents of the idea of globalization. The problem, however, is that the latter would hardly accept the definition of globalization proposed by Hirst and Thompson. For instance Hirst and Thompson argue that an increasingly integrated world economy since the 1970s is no evidence of a globalized economy. That might be true, but it is

certainly evidence of a *globalizing* economy. Just because the world currently lacks a political force strong enough to regulate the global economy, it does not exclude the possibility that such a force might evolve in the future.

I agree that the nation-state is still the most important actor on the global scene. Nevertheless, I believe that its relevance and importance is declining, and that it will be severely transformed in the future. My argument is that the supremacy of the nation-state today is due to the lack of sufficiently strong higher level institutions, not that the nation-state is irreplaceable.⁹ Hirst and Thompson see the future of the nation-state as a problem. I see their problem as parochial thinking. I believe they question the process of globalization because they fail to recognize its central feature. That is the transformation of the role of the nation-state and the resulting change in levels of governance.

It has been argued that developing countries find themselves in a situation where the IMF, the World Bank and the lending industrial nations can powerfully affect their economies by demanding compliance with public sector guidelines established by these external actors (see for example; McMichael, 1996). Nevertheless, the fate of these economies, according to Borda (1994:11). This is of course true if the *formal* aspects of sovereignty are used, but it is more questionable using the concept of *real* sovereignty. Governance, in my use of the term, is concerned with *real* sovereignty. Hence, changing levels of governance is the shifting of organizational levels, national, regional or global, at which decisions concerning individual countries are taken. The realities of the world today demand an increased degree of cooperation among actors. In this process of interaction, the units not only agree on technical solutions to particular problems, but also engage in a socialization process. Through technological developments and economic interdependence that reduce the perceived distances between people, bonds will be created that are more important than institutional structures.

IV. THE END OF THE COLD WAR - A NEW HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From studying the Visegrad countries¹⁰ and their reasons for joining the EU, it became clear to me that social and political motives were very important, as were economic interests. Their wish, at the end of the Cold War, to become firmly tied to western institutions overshadowed their economic concerns (Strömberg, 1995). An interesting Latin American parallel is the efforts of the first democratically elected Chilean government in 16 years to end political isolation by signing a number of

economic treaties (Fuentes, 1996:137). In the case of Mercosur, the most obvious example is Paraguay. The Country decided to join Mercosur in 1990. A politically isolated country that had suffered from authoritarian regimes for decades sought to tie itself to an international institution as a central component of its transition to democracy. Paraguay wanted to use the economic process of integration with Mercosur, in itself important, for political ends.¹¹ This strategy was closely related to entering into *a new historical context*.

Out of the Pan American Conference in Washington, about a century earlier, came the decision to establish what subsequently became the Organization of American States (OAS).¹² By 1948, it had gained a bureaucratic infrastructure and, thus, had become institutionalized. The US wanted Continental solidarity, and the Latin American states wanted non-intervention. Through the establishment of the world's hitherto most highly articulated regional association, a compromise giving the US military co-operation in return for help with economic development was struck (Skidmore and Smith, 1984:335-336). According to Gorges Couffignal (1996:14-15), the Organization was established to strengthen democracy, promote peace and develop the economies of the participating countries. But, he argues, during the entire Cold War period, the Organization failed. Instead, it functioned as an echo chamber for US interests.

Today we find ourselves in a new phase, which can be dated from 1989. This post Cold War era has presented the world with new opportunities. In the present context, the US is trying to turn the entire Western Hemisphere into an integrated area, both through increased economic integration within the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), and through the so called 'initiative for the Americas'. Primarily this is an economic enterprise, but spillover effects, such as democratic stabilization and political co-operation against drugs, were neither unexpected nor unwanted (compare Bulmer-Thomas, 1994:366-368). The case of NAFTA further shows that the US now sees regional, that is hemispheric, integration as compatible with multilateral free trade as agreed upon in the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations (Rey de Marulanda (1996:29)¹³). Replying to question concerning the apparent incompatibility between different sub-regional integration processes, US President Clinton reiterated his firm support for the multiplicity of these projects. He expressed his firm belief that these processes are not contradictory. Instead, he said, they are complementary and they create interdependence which in turn, leads to the formation of security communities. This, he argued, benefits continued hemispheric integration.

President Clinton does not perceive the different integration-processes as contradictory. On the contrary, he sees them as complementary (Clinton, 1997, TV-Broadcast).

With the end of the Cold War, the process towards integration in Latin America gained momentum. The Continent witnessed the emergence of a number of integrative schemes. In 1991, Mercosur was established by the signing of the Treaty of Asunción. Of utmost importance was also Mexico's participation in NAFTA, together with the US and Canada. Apart from these major schemes, a host of other integrative enterprises have seen the light, or have been revitalized, during the 1990s (Couffignal, 1996: 20; Pradilla Cobos, 1996: 91). As a kind of an umbrella organization, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) also can be mentioned. It was created in the 1980s and it should be seen as a point of reference for other free trade agreements among various countries in the region. In effect, Mercosur and the Andean Pact¹⁴, as well as other bilateral agreements, are incorporated in LAIA. The process of integration in the Western Hemisphere has not been an obstacle to increased trade with third countries. Hence the process has been referred to as 'open regionalism'.

My argument is that the new world order, with an increasingly globalized economy, goes hand in hand with regional integration schemes. The relationship between globalization and regional cooperation is a complex one, and I will not enter into that discussion in this paper. It is necessary, however, to state my belief that regional integration is both a part of the process of globalization, being one step closer to the global level, as well as a neo-mercantilist project, (i.e. cooperation as a defense against other regions). In any case, it is the process of globalization that lies behind regional integration, and it was the end of the Cold War that established the new historical context, which allows these different schemes to flourish.

V. PARAGUAY IN A NEW REGIONAL CONTEXT

The first step towards the establishment of Mercosur was a November 1985 meeting between the Argentinean President Alfonsín and his Brazilian counterpart Sarney. They met at the border to inaugurate the first bridge between the two Republics. The symbolical value of this meeting was far more important than the actual issues of co-operation. Peaceful coexistence and democratic consolidation¹⁵ were seen as conditions for economic development. But, simultaneously, economic development was seen to promote peace and democracy. The causality is circular, and the concept of spillover effects is central.

This philosophy also is firmly embedded in the treaty of Asunción, which gave birth to the Mercosur in 1991 (Dabéne, 1996:32-34, 38-41; de Almeida, 1996:118-119; compare also van Eeuwen, 1996:61). Mercosur is a success story in that intra-regional trade has increased from USD 5.2 billion in 1991 to USD 12 billion in 1994. During the same period the share of intra-Mercosur exports increased from 14% to 20% of total exports (Behar, 1995:4-5). The integrative process in the Southern Cone seems to be advancing rapidly. Globalization has moved the world economy into a completely different stage, compared to the post World War II years. Hence, the Mercosur countries do not have the option of slow, step by step, integration, as was the case in Europe (Rapoport et. al., 1993: 169-171; de Almeida, 1996: 116).

Even though Paraguay was a relatively open economy before joining Mercosur, it was still necessary to participate in the process. If Paraguay had not joined formally; the others probably would have sought to limit Paraguay's access to their markets. Another important aspect of the integration process is the fact that a large part, about 25%, of the Paraguayan population lives in neighboring countries (Interview with Campuzano, 1997). As Ohmae argues, the nation-state is not the historically given unit in economic affairs. Urban aggregations and their hinterlands constitute the traditional base for economic activity. The nation-state happened to suit the needs of development, and of the prosecution of war, during a limited moment in history - a moment that now has passed (Ohmae, 1995; Tilly, 1992).

A very large part of Paraguayan society does not understand what the world economy means to the Country. In the producing sector, the commercial sector and the cattle industry, however, all actors are very clear as to what the world economy and integration means to them. They all have personal economic interests that are affected directly by the world economy (Interview: Facetti, 1997). The major sector in Paraguay, however, is agriculture. The problem with this sector is the uneven distribution of land and capital, two of the principal factors of production (cf. Appendix). The owners of these factors are not sufficiently interested in developing and industrializing the agricultural sector because they live well on their abundant resources. The poor agricultural worker does not participate in the capitalistic process of accumulation, and there is constant decapitalization in the agricultural sector. This situation is a result of years of authoritarian rule that protected the landowners. But, it also has continued under the last two democratic governments (Interview, Campuzano, 1997). The people with affiliations to the Government are less

likely to favor a change, however, since they already live in abundance and they control the lion's share of economic power in the country.

The process of integration has had a clear political effect, however, as became apparent during the April Crisis. In fact, the principal effect on Paraguay stemming from the regional economic organization, Mercosur, has been political. In the following section the political role of Mercosur will be exemplified by the part the Organization, together with other actors, played in defending democracy during the April Crisis of 1996.

VI. THE APRIL CRISIS AND ITS ACTORS

To understand what triggered the April Crisis, one has to look at the Presidential election of 1993. Following an internal Colorado-party election, the leader of the party, Luis María Argaña, was declared the official Party candidate for the Presidency. This was not, however, the last word. General Lino César Oviedo used his political influence within the Party to change the decision in favor of the current President, Carlos Wasmosy. This action can with certainty be described as electoral fraud, and, as a consequence, Wasmosy obviously has been forced to pay a political price. As Machiavelli wrote, 'if the Prince governs thanks to the people, he can govern with tranquillity, but if he governs thanks to another powerful man, he will always be paying back.'¹⁶ Oviedo was this 'other powerful man' during the Presidency of Wasmosy, until the April Crisis erupted.¹⁷

Wasmosy, who earlier had protected Oviedo's position, became dependent on the latter's 'approval'. The extent of this dependence became clear when Oviedo, using obstructive tactics, sought to bloc an agreement with Brazil concerning the construction of a bridge across the river Paraná. Oviedo's actions threatened both Wasmosy's ability to govern Paraguay and the Country's relations with her powerful neighbor. During the morning of April 22, 1996, the President informed Oviedo of his decision to relieve the General of his duties. Oviedo had two possible responses. Either he could accept the order and resign, or he could initiate a coup against the President. Oviedo refused to accept the order.¹⁸

The purpose of this section is to describe how various actors behaved during the April Crisis. First, I will define the three categories of actors on which the analysis is based, the events of the actual crisis will then follow and, finally, an assessment of the role played by Mercosur in relation to the other actors during the crisis will be presented.

The key actors in the April Crisis, of course, were the President, Carlos Wasmosy, and the seditious general, Lino Oviedo. The tense

relationship between these two men was at the very core of the April Crisis. For the sake of analytical clarity, I would like to group the rest of the actors that intervened in the April Crisis, into the three following categories:

- *Internal actors*, the civil society¹⁹ and domestic public institutions, such as the armed forces, the police and the Parliament
- *Regional actors*, Mercosur as an institution, acting through Brazil, and the other members and associated countries; Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Bolivia.
- *Global actors*, any external actor not participating in the Mercosur integration process, e.g. the US, the EU or the OAS.

To get a sense of the situation, in which the different actors found themselves at the time of the April Crisis, the following description will serve as a brief guide.

Internal Actors

Civil society in Paraguay is very limited and fragile, with only sporadic signs of organization and of articulation of demands. It lacks continuity and, thus, also the ability to put pressure on the political institutions. Another deficiency of Paraguayan politics is the absence of a strong party on the left of the political landscape (Interview: Martini, 1997). Political apathy is prevalent in Paraguay since people in general perceive the democratic institutions, together with the armed forces, as one single apparatus, instead of as tools for political participation (Palau, 1990: 1-2).

After the coup of 1989, ending 35 years of dictatorial rule by Stroessner, very few organizations existed in Paraguay. Some people saw this, and they acted. A network of people from the Catholic Church was used to organize volunteers willing to work to strengthen the civil society and democracy. The Church itself, however, did not participate in any organized way. The campaign was a success and it was decided to form a permanent NGO, *Decidamos*, to work on these questions.²⁰

In order to consolidate democracy, the civil society would have to attain a greater level of participation in state affairs. One of the related problems is the uneven distribution of land. The great challenge for Paraguay is moving from one mode of production, agriculture, to another, not yet defined. This is the main concern of social movements in Paraguay (Interview: Galeano, 1997).

Carlos Martini argues that the trend towards democracy in Paraguay has been 'formal' rather than 'real'. This, he holds, is due to the lack of a strong civil society. Since 1989, the number of workers associated with the unions has increased significantly. This, however, has not resulted in increased organizational strength. The same has been the case with the agrarian movement. A 'real' democracy has to be legitimate in terms of its origin, as well as in terms of the results. Paraguay demonstrates a case where, in terms of origin, the institutions are daily becoming more and more legitimate; while, in terms of results produced (social deterioration) democracy is becoming less and less legitimate. The obstacle to civic development is the miserable economic conditions of much of the citizenry. They are not in a position to benefit from civic education since their needs are of a much more immediate character (Interview: Martini, 1997).

Regional Actors

We find ourselves at a historical moment when small countries like Paraguay are integrating with their larger neighbors. For countries like Paraguay, there presently is no other viable option. Mercosur, however, is not a redistribution project. It is based on competition and is very 'economistic' in nature. Nonetheless, a prerequisite for joining was a democratic government; this despite Mercosur's much greater emphasis on economic, rather than political, co-operation (Interview: Campuzano, 1997).

Institutionally, Mercosur is only an intergovernmental organization. This was confirmed in 1994 by the Protocol of Ouro Preto. It affirms that all decisions in Mercosur must be taken by consensus (Bizzozero, 1996:14). Although the integration movement in the Southern Cone stems from a basically political initiative, it has not succeeded in generating a thick institutional fabric. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Integration or Ministries of Finance handle all national contacts involving the Organization. This procedure impedes the other parts of the administration from participating in the integration process (van Eeuwen, 1996:58; Rapoport *et.al.*, 1993:172).

In Paraguay, however, Mercosur can be seen as a guarantee that the process of political democratization will continue. It has meant more politically, than economically, to Paraguay. Trade has been reorganized to the disadvantage of Paraguay. The Country finds itself in a dilemma when the neighboring countries, especially Brazil and Argentina, set the rules. The latter use their economic power to dictate trading rules. Paraguay and

Uruguay, being small countries, have not been able to defend their interests against the two giants. A few improvements have been made, but barriers still exist, above all for the small countries. In Paraguay, smuggling had already made the free movement of merchandise a fact. Before the establishment of Mercosur, it was much easier to do business illegally than legally. The only beneficiaries of the new system (legalized trade) were those who previously insisted on obeying the law (for moral reasons). Mercosur's greatest achievement was as a political bloc during the April Crisis. This political aspect is more indirect working through spillover effects. Developing democracy was a precondition for joining Mercosur, since it would be hard to conceive of a process of economic integration between countries with different political regimes.

Global Actors

The US has traditionally played an almost natural role in the political life of Paraguay. Today the US has three principal concerns relating to Latin America: fighting the drug traffic, opening up markets with a view towards hemispheric integration, and establishing representative democracy. The new post Cold War global context resulted in the US playing a decisive role in Paraguay with regard to the isolation of Stroessner, the naming of high commanders in the struggle against drug trafficking, the maintenance of the transition process and the fight against corruption. Since the end of the Cold War, the US has kept its status as a military and a political superpower. Even though it also exerts strong influence in the economic sphere in Latin America, however, the US now faces competition from the EU and Japan (Interview: Martini, 1997).

In the new world context, there is no longer a single hegemonic power. There is today a multi-polar constellation of great powers that, through the process of globalization, conduct a new type of dependence relationship. In the case of Mercosur, the US and the EU are competing for influence (Interview: Céspedes, 1997).

VII. THE UNFOLDING OF THE APRIL CRISIS

During the afternoon of the 22nd of April 1996, rumors concerning the insubordination of General Oviedo began to circulate in the mass media. But it was only the embassies of the US, Argentina and Brazil that were directly informed about the situation. The remaining ambassadors later received information through Lorenzo Baldissieri of the Holy See. Around four o'clock in the afternoon, the cabinet was called to *Mburuvicha Róga*, the Presidential residence, for an urgent meeting. About

an hour later, the speaker of the senate, Rafael Casabianca, telephoned the President offering to mediate in the name of the Congress. In his office, Casabianca received senators loyal to Oviedo who proposed that Wasmosy resign and that Casabianca assume the Presidency. He refused this 'offer', however, on the grounds that it was unconstitutional.²¹

The first official public information concerning the crisis came at about half past six on the 22nd of April when the US embassy released an official statement. The embassies of Brazil, also representing Mercosur, and Argentina followed suit. The major opposition parties²² then announced their support for the President's decision. Finally, the voice of the President himself was heard, confirming the situation. By this time, a limited number of students and other civilians had taken to the streets to demonstrate their support for democracy. Among these were representatives of the center-left alliance Partido Encuentro Nacional (PEN), unionists, journalists, NGO members and independent intellectuals. The most important political leader that remained present during the crisis was Carlos Filizzola, elected leader of PEN and Mayor of Asunción.

In the meantime, Rafael Casabianca had held a personal meeting with Oviedo. The latter proposed that both the President and the vice President resign so that Casabianca could assume the Presidency. When Casabianca returned to the Presidential residence with this 'proposal', it was rejected. Threats were made against the *Mburuvicha Róga*, and, early the following morning, President Wasmosy went to bed at the US Embassy. Technically speaking he had gone into exile.

Early in the morning of the 23rd of April, the democratic institutions also received support from the airforce, the navy, the national police and representatives of the judiciary. The entire international community showed its support for the institutional structure, rather than for the government. The people also went out into the streets, despite an apparent threat. The airforce and the navy both reasserted their firm support for the institutions of government, as did the Parliament. According to Facetti (interview, 1997), all these developments together were the reason why many of the army rank and file lost faith in Oviedo.

By Tuesday the 23rd, the immediate crisis was more or less over. Technically it went on and, of course, Lino Oviedo had not yet resigned. In real terms, however, the crisis, according to Facetti, had passed. During this phase, negotiations were held through emissaries (i.e. friends of Oviedo and friends of Wasmosy) and it was suggested that Oviedo be appointed Minister of Defense. Later that same day, the President decided that Oviedo should be appointed Minister of Defense, thereby allowing

him to resign the post of Commander in Chief without losing face. At a lunch attended by a number of ambassadors, only the Secretary General of the OAS, César Gaviria, actively supported the naming of Oviedo as Minister of Defense. Although the other ambassadors were none too happy with the President's proposed settlement, they nevertheless accepted it since they considered it to be a domestic issue (Ibid.). The news of the appointment came as a great disappointment to the people outside the Presidential Palace. "There are no winners, nor losers. Return to your homes with tranquillity", said the President.²³ Many decided to return home, but some, especially young people, stayed. The general feeling was that the rebel, Oviedo, was about to be rewarded, not punished.

During the ceremonies of *El día del Jinete*²⁴ on April 23, Oviedo received a phone call from Brazilian general Zenildo Lucena, who had once been his instructor. The message was from Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who let it be known that if there were a coup in Paraguay, he would impose severe economic and political sanctions on Paraguay.²⁵ The Secretary General of the OAS also held a press conference announcing his support for the democratic Government of Paraguay. An extraordinary session of the OAS held in Washington on the same day reiterated the same position. Similar support also came from the Security Council of the UN.

During the morning of the 24th of April, Oviedo handed over command of the armed forces to Oscar Rodrigo Díaz Delmás in a theatrical ceremony, repeatedly hugging President Wasmosy.

This step was necessary for Oviedo to assume the post of Minister of Defense. The people in the streets, however, remained firm in their opposition to the promotion of the General. Having moved a considerable way towards democracy, Oviedo's proposed appointment made them fearful that there would be an unjust solution to the crisis. For the President, the way the crisis was about to be resolved would prevent him from harvesting the fruits of the long awaited decision to curb the influence of the armed forces in Paraguayan politics.

Members of the Cabinet supposedly reacted to the President's decision by threatening to resign (Ibid.:132-133). Both Chambers of Parliament prepared resolutions against the naming of Oviedo as Minister of Defense. By noon on the 24th of April, the President went to his mansion *Santa Teresa* for reflection. Of central concern to him was the solid opposition to his plan, especially since the imminent threat of violence was gone. Somewhat simplifying the situation, one could say that

no one wanted Oviedo as Minister of Defense, and that Oviedo himself had by now lost his power base.

A ceremony had been prepared for Oviedo to swear the ministerial oath at the Government Palace during the morning of the 25th of April. The President arrived late due to bad weather while returning to Asunción from his mansion *Santa Teresa*. On his arrival to the capital, he was informed that Oviedo was waiting, ready to swear the ministerial oath. He also was notified that ten thousand persons had gathered in front of the palace to witness the ceremony.

Nobody but the President himself knows exactly how and when he finally decided not to appoint Oviedo Minister of Defense. He had, as he expressed it in his office that morning, "listened to the voice of the people".²⁶ He then delivered a message explaining that the actions he had taken, and which had not been welcomed by Paraguayan society, were steps in a strategy to avoid violence. Finally, however, he had decided to swallow his own pride, and let the final decision be that of the people of Paraguay. The April Crisis was definitely over. Later that same day, the now retired, General Oviedo launched his political campaign for the Presidency. That, however, is another story.

A central feature of the April Crisis was that the US and the Brazilian embassies released information concerning the crisis before the political parties or any of the other internal actors. The representatives of Mercosur and the US also took a much firmer stand than did the internal actors. This is evidence of the weakness of the civil society in Paraguay. Thanks to the international community's solid support during the crisis, however, the citizens of Paraguay did not feel abandoned. This was the key factor in inter-relating the roles of the international community and of civic society. The mass media played a vital role in communicating this international support to the people of Paraguay.

Internal Actors in the April Crisis

The civil society, which in general terms must be judged to be very weak in Paraguay, nevertheless grew in importance as the crisis evolved. Contrary to a common argument (Valenzuela, 1997:50), I however believe that the citizens who demonstrated in the streets of Asunción initially played a very limited role in the April Crisis. It has become exceedingly clear to me through my interviews, that the civil society of Paraguay never would have dared to go into the streets without the support of the international community. The true role of the civil society has to be separated from the myth produced by the mass media and some groups of

'intellectuals' in Paraguay. The response in the streets was not massive. The crowd never exceeded 10,000 persons. It was mainly the educated young middle-class that went out into the streets, and who subsequently received extensive attention in the media because they were positioned outside the Government building (Interviews: Palau, 1997; Cacace, 1997; Acevedo, 1997).

During the April Crisis, it was the international community that played the most important role in resolving the crisis. According to Manuel Godoy (Interview, 1997), it was the US ambassador, Robert Service, who told the parliamentarians to go and occupy the congress. The people in general did not know how to react. In other countries people pour into the streets in a crisis. In Paraguay, due to the lack of democratic traditions and the people's acceptance of political repression, the citizens were hesitant to act during the crisis. In this regard it also was the international community that made the people understand the importance of taking to the streets.

When the first dust had settled, however, the people in the streets took over the role of guardians of justice and morals. At this stage, the international society, as I mentioned above, had adopted a "wait-and-see strategy" in order not to interfere in domestic affairs. President Wasmosy had decided to promote Oviedo to the post of Minister of Defense, allowing the General to save face, while still depriving him of direct control over the military. But, as the President became aware of the overwhelming opposition to this decision among the citizens, he changed his decision at the last minute (Interview: Casabianca, 1997).

The most important internal support for Wasmosy in April of 1996 came from the navy, the airforce and the police, dividing the armed forces into two camps, and from the mass media. The role of the armed forces has been central in Paraguayan society since the end of the Chaco-War in 1936. Since 1947, when the civil war ended, 'had occurred. The pact between the armed forces and the Colorado-party was later consolidated in 1954 with the Stroessner coup. The April Crisis marked a change in this relationship. Since then the strongest section of the armed forces, the cavalry, has started to lose some of its influence. But, above all, the April Crisis caused many officers to understand the interdependence between Paraguayan politics and the international context of globalization and subregional integration in Mercosur (Interview: Martini, 1997).

Regional Actors in the April Crisis

Mercosur has played a central role for Paraguayan democracy by underlining the irreversibility of the democratization process. Politicians

and the military in Paraguay are now aware that they cannot rule the Country without taking the international community, and especially their closest neighbors, into account. There is also a general understanding that democracy is a prerequisite for participating in Mercosur, as well as in the wider world economy. Without doubt, there is a relationship between Paraguay's participation in Mercosur, and the fact that the attempted coup during the April Crisis did not succeed. Mercosur plays a more important role politically than economically. According to Acevedo, Mercosur so far has not benefited Paraguay economically. But, if there had not been international pressure, or international support, the April Crisis would have succeeded (Interview, Acevedo, 1997).

The other countries of Mercosur, including Chile and Bolivia, were concerned with the defense of the democratic institutions of Paraguay because of their own recent history. People in the region accuse democracy of failing to deliver economic development. Thus, if one of the countries in the area reverts into authoritarian rule, there would be a risk that others would follow, since this authoritarian government would deliver solutions. They might be good or bad, but solutions there would be! The countries of Mercosur acted not only out of solidarity with Paraguay, but from a firm conviction that democracy is the best system for the whole of Continent (Interview: Facetti, 1997). According to Carlos Martini, the other countries of Mercosur intervened in the April Crisis because they were afraid that it might start a 'domino effect'. If democracy failed in Paraguay, it would signal that military coups are still a real threat in the region. It could be argued that they indirectly were defending their own institutional stability (Interview: Martini, 1997).

With economic interdependence, political decisions affect neighboring countries very strongly. In a first step, in the Mercosur region, this has led to a process of economic integration. Accompanying such a process of integration there is always a transformation of sovereignty. In the April Crisis, this was made very clear through the intervention of the regional leaders (Interview: Baareiro, 1997). One of the important topics for discussion in the Mercosur area is democracy. Any country that aspires to participate in the process has to have a democratic structure. The intervention in the April Crisis by the other countries of Mercosur was due to the global conditions we live in. Within the project of globalization, the stability of markets depends on the stability of political life. That is why the other countries of Mercosur intervened in the April Crisis. The civilian elite was concerned with political stability for economic reasons. The

civilian governments wanted to avoid a military insurrection (Interviews: Céspedes, 1997 and Casabianca, 1997).

Global Actors in the April Crisis

The reasons for a country, or a group of countries, to interfere in other countries' affairs, can vary. But, as the UN report on social effects of globalization states, the end of the Cold War has made intervention a politically viable option (UNRISD, 1995:8). Increased media coverage has made conflicts more visible, and an increasingly globalized economy has prompted countries to intervene out of fear for spillover effects into their own spheres of interest.

The global actors were defending general values, such as human rights and democracy, during the April Crisis. I would relate these actions to the process of globalization. First of all, it was an example of the 'post Cold War spirit', making it possible to defend values other than strategic ones. Secondly, it showed that the international community is placing limits on the *real* sovereignty of states by expecting that all states meet a number of minimum requirements in order to be accepted as legitimate actors on the international scene.

The US, together with the Mercosur countries, intervened directly in the April Crisis. Some of the ambassadors of the EU also played important parts, says the former ambassador to Spain, Euclides Acevedo (Interview: Acevedo, 1997). The US intervened as a consequence of the new line in US foreign politics, starting with the Carter years, defending human rights and democracy (Interview: Balmelli, 1997). A link between the US and Mercosur was also OAS that demonstrated the ability to take swift action in the early stages of a crisis.

The final section will conclude this paper by looking at the role played by Mercosur in the April Crisis, and how spillover effects between economic co-operation and political decisions point to a new era of changing levels of governance.

VIII. CHANGING LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE

It is clear that sovereignty is not what it used to be, particularly not in economic matters. After the end of the Cold War, economic interdependence has been allowed to follow the course of its inner logic and to spread across the world. Gone are the all-inclusive restrictions imposed by strategic military and security concerns in a bipolarized world. With the process of globalization in economic matters, it is no longer meaningful to talk of national economic sovereignty. It is not, however,

impossible to hold on to, or even to develop, a new form of political sovereignty. What is happening is that countries are forced to integrate economically, and, through spillover effects, this also leads to varying degrees of political integration. What is important to isolate, however, is the untouchable status of every nation's right to its own political identity. With the end of the Cold War, we are witnessing the emergence of a new *formal sovereignty*, embedded in an economic interdependence imposed by a globalizing economy. The limits to a nation's sovereignty are defined by the international regime that establishes the 'rules of the game' in international relations. But, as the case of the April Crisis in Paraguay suggests, the influence of the international community only reaches so far. The space in which to act that a state enjoys is what I call *real sovereignty*. The international regime requires stable democratic institutions that live up to the formal demands of democracy. When it comes to their content, however, this empirical case suggests that this is a matter left to the citizens themselves.

The possibly clearest, and to me the most surprising, conclusion that I have arrived at is the very limited role played by internal actors in the April Crisis, at least initially. The external actors played the most influential part at the outset of the crisis. Their rapid reaction and firm stand in defense of the democratic institutions of Paraguay played a vital role in putting a halt to the immediate threat. Following the initial phase of the crisis, negotiations were undertaken to solve the crisis. The idea that Oviedo would be named Minister of Defense was floated, and to this proposal the international society maintained neutrality. The argument was that this was an internal affair. This is interesting since it establishes a limit to what the international community considers legitimate intervention. In other words, this case suggests that a country enjoys *real* sovereignty within the general limits of the 'rules of the game' imposed by the international community.

The realities of today's world demand an increased level of co-operation among actors. In the process of interaction, states and people not only agree on technical solutions to particular problems, but they also engage in a socialization-process. Bonds will be created that are more important than just institutional systems. Economic interdependence, which is growing rapidly in the process of globalization, will, through spillover effects, affect domestic political decisions. Instead of the nation-state being the principal actor, the world in the future will consist of a multitude of units based on functional needs. Levels of governance will change within a new historical context.

IX. DID REGIONAL INTEGRATION SAVE DEMOCRACY IN PARAGUAY?

It is impossible to separate the influence of global actors from that of regional actors in the April Crisis. The close coordination between Mercosur and global actors throughout the crisis suggests that it was the totality of external forces that halted the crisis. Nevertheless, the very existence of such a regional organization appears to have helped in resolving the crisis. The regional integration process has generated a kind of political interdependence, thus making the intervention of these countries more urgent and based on broader motives. The countries of Mercosur feared that a failure of the democratic process in Paraguay might lead to a domino effect, since it would signal that military coups are still a real threat in the region. If global actors had been alone in trying to defend a fragile democracy in a region with other states that perhaps were authoritarian, I believe it very unlikely that they would have been successful. It is exceedingly clear, however, that internal actors played an important role only after support from outside the country had been firmly established.

Even though Mercosur is an intergovernmental organization, the coordinated actions taken during the April Crisis suggest that a 'supranational mentality' is forming around Mercosur. It is interesting to note that many of my interviewees deny that Mercosur is a political organization, but that they, nevertheless, heavily applaud the actions taken to defend democracy in Paraguay. Hence, the conclusion may be drawn that even if Mercosur is basically a tool for economic integration, it also influences political decisions taken at the domestic level in Paraguay. Whether this implies a future move from informal to formal governance at the regional level is still an open question.

This question is of great importance because the democratization process in Paraguay, until recently, has been limited in scope. Democratic institutions have been formed, but the consolidation of democracy is still to come, and the legacy of the Stroessner era still casts a shadow over Paraguayan society. To achieve a final consolidation, support from the international community is necessary, but not sufficient. What is needed is an internal process of enlightenment, as well as political will and courage on the part of the civil society. There are signs pointing in this direction, but there is still a long way to go.

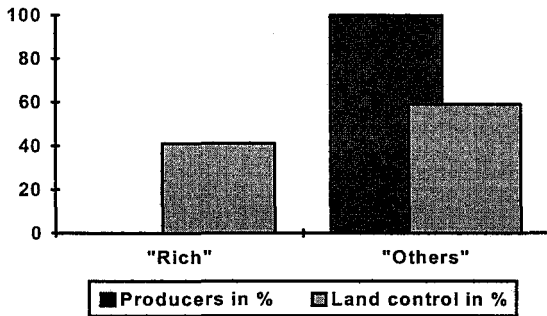
Paraguay has plugged into the process of regional integration. As feedback, the 'eye of the international community' has come to play a significant role in defending democratic institutions in Paraguay. The development and consolidation of democracy in Paraguay, however, is a

job for domestic forces. The responsibility lies on the civil society, being the bearer of public demand for a real change. In the case of Paraguay, legal reforms and the defeat of corruption are the most important changes needed before anything like a consolidated democracy can be established. The question of consolidating democracy, however, is closely related to education and to economic development. The problem is that as long as the government is not spending more money on education and on improving the conditions of the poorest groups, so that they can participate in educational activities, the people will be unable to judge the real value and reliability of the politicians.

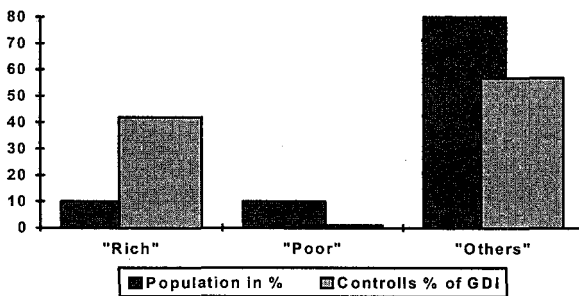
Paraguay has traditionally been an authoritarian state prone to isolationism. My argument here has been that in an earlier historical context, the attempted coup would have succeeded. Internal institutions and civil society have never been strong enough to defend democracy, nor are they so today. But, the attempted coup in April 1996 failed because Paraguay is now inserted into a new historical context. Global forces demand that Paraguay follows the 'rules of the game'. And, due to the increasing economic and political interdependence within the region, the Mercosur countries were allowed to play a decisive role in the rescue of the democratic institutions of Paraguay during the April Crisis of 1996.

APPENDIX, THE COLONIAL LEGACY

The most important 'colonial legacy' in Paraguay is the unequal distribution of land. 0,1 % of the population controls 41 % of the land.²⁷



There is of course a close relation to the unequal distribution of income that can be observed today. The richest ten percent of the population control 42% of GDI, while the poorest 10% only control 1%.²⁸



Notes

- 1 Alfredo Stroessner was Paraguay's dictator during the years 1954-1989.
- 2 In Spanish 'Mercosur' stands for Mercado Común del Sur, meaning The Common Market of the South. The member countries are Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, with Chile and Bolivia being associated members.
- 3 One obvious deficiency is the lack of material from foreign representatives (embassies) in Paraguay. This is due to practical reasons. In the case of the Uruguayan embassy, they declined to answer any questions related to this subject. In the case of the US embassy, I was unable to obtain an interview due to administrative difficulties associated with a change of ambassadors. In the cases of Brazil and Argentina, I was unable to make contact, due to communication difficulties and a lack of time.
- 4 The nation-state is a relatively recent phenomenon. The norm until the eighteenth century, was a great diversity of units coexisting with each other at different levels. It was not until after World War II that the principal part of the earth's surface became covered by nation-states. Very few states are actually true nation-states, with a population that shares a strong linguistic, religious and cultural identity. Nevertheless, I will use the term 'nation-state' as referring to all modern states. This use of the term is closely tied to the notion of sovereignty, something that is determined by the recognition of other states rather than being an inherent right to "national" self-determination. The perception of the state rests on a tacit agreement among people believing, or at least accepting, it as a reality. Hence, the term 'nation-state' is used in accordance with the following definition: "The nation-state, which exists in a complex of other nation-states, is a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence", Giddens (1985), quote on p.121; see also Tilly (1992:1-3, 11) and Buzan (1993:329).
- 5 Gidlund (1993:31-32); I have replaced Gidlund's distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty with the terms *formal* and *real* sovereignty for reasons that are purely stylistic and in no way semantic.
- 6 The use of the term 'international regime' is in accordance with Krasner's often quoted definition which says: International regimes are "...sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given issue-area of international relations." (Krasner, 1982:186).
- 7 The traditional concept of sovereignty is that a supreme power exerts power over a territory independently from external forces. For a discussion of the concept see Gidlund (1993:29-45).
- 8 For an overview see Haas (1980:387-391).
- 9 A 'transformationalist' view, in McGrew's conceptualization. See McGrew (1997) for an interesting attempt to conceptualise globalization. He divides scholars into three categories: Hyper-globalists, Sceptics and Transformationalists.
- 10 Poland, Hungary, The Czech Republic and Slovakia

- 11 See for example the first Minister of Integration in Paraguay Hugo Saguier Caballero, Saguier Caballero (1995:5-6); see also Masi (1996:108).
- 12 Originally the organization was called the Commercial Bureau of the American Republics. It was then renamed the Pan American Union, before it came to be called the Organization of American States. See Skidmore and Smith (1984:328).
- 13 For a critical view, emphasizing the conflict between multilateralism and regionalism, see Cockcroft (1996:678).
- 14 Original members of the Andean Pact were: Bolivia, Chile Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. In 1973 Venezuela joined and in 1976 Chile withdrew.
- 15 By consolidation of democracy I refer to the passing from a minimal, or formal, democracy to a more developed phase where citizens are able to pursue their interests, i.e. giving the democratic institutions their content.
- 16 Machiavelli, 1981, especially pp.53-54. The point was made by Line Bareiro (Interview: Bareiro, 1997).
- 17 This section as a whole is based on formal and informal interviews, newspaper reading and an analysis of all the material used in this essay. A key book, however, that depicts the events of the April Crisis in a comprehensive way, is *Operación Gedeón: Los secretos de un golpe frustrado* by two journalists at the independent newspaper Última Hora, see Costa and Ayala Bogarín (1996). A brief résumé, and a good overview of the actors, is also presented in *Informativo Mujer* (1996:4-6).
- 18 In a note written by Oviedo, not made public at the time, it is made clear that he did not recognize the validity of the President's order; see Costa and Ayala Bogarín (1996:95-96). On March 9, 1998, Oviedo also was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his coup attempt.
- 19 Civil society consists of the social groups, such as families, firms, social movements, media, NGOs and associations, that exist independently of the state. The multiple arenas created by these groups, and their autonomy from the state, prevent society from becoming a shapeless mass. For a discussion of the concept see for example *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, Volume 1 (1995:240-242).
- 20 *Decidamos* is an umbrella NGO comprising several other NGOs. Its foremost aim is to educate and inform the population about civil rights and elections, and to defend democratic values.
- 21 For the speaker of the senate to assume the Presidency, the vice President also would have to be unavailable; *Constitución Nacional* (1992, art.233).
- 22 Partido Encuentro Nacional (PEN) and the Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (PLRA).
- 23 Wasmosy as quoted in Costa and Ayala Bogarín (1996:111). Author's translation.
- 24 National holiday celebrating Saint George, patron of the cavalry.
- 25 According to the Brazilian ambassador to Paraguay Marcio D'Oliveira Dias, as quoted in Costa and Ayala Bogarín (1996:112-113).
- 26 Wasmosy as quoted in Costa and Ayala Bogarín (1996:138).
- 27 Statistics based on the Agropecuario census from 1991; see Borda (1994:15-16).
- 28 Statistics based on the Agropecuario census from 1991; see Borda (1994:15-16).

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