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Foreword

In an effort to contribute to the underway debate on political reform in Ecuador, CORDES has deemed it worthwhile to publish an essay that corporation president Dr. Osvaldo Hurtado wrote for the quarterly *Diplomacia, Estrategia y Política* (DEP) published by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations. This essay has also been published in the Spanish journal *La Ilustración Liberal* and in the electronic newspaper *Libertad Digital*. It is a revised, expanded, and updated version of an article published in 2004 by our newsletter "Carta Económica" and the Quito-based newspaper *Hoy*, to commemorate 25 years of Ecuadorian democracy. After two editions in Spanish, we are proud to present this first English edition.

Dr. Hurtado's ponderings are the outgrowth of numerous studies that he has conducted on Ecuadorian realities, as well as his personal experiences when he chaired the commission that prepared bills on referendums, elections and parties (1977) and when he served as Vice-President of the Republic and chairman of the National Development Council (1979-81), President of the Republic (1981-84), and chairman of the Constituent Assembly (1997-98).

This essay does not make any specific recommendations about the changes required by democratic institutions in Ecuador. However, since it examines, in detail, the obstacles that have made previous political reforms fail, it should arouse interest among the people and institutions that are determined to modify the constitutional norms, a path that the country has pursued on innumerable occasions in the past.

One novel idea that readers will find in this essay by former president Hurtado is the proposal that there are structural, ideological, and cultural obstacles in Ecuador which, because they are deeply rooted in people's cultural traits and behaviors, end up thwarting even those political institutions that are well thought-out and well designed. This should lead not only to reforming constitutions and laws, but also to promoting the mobilization of all sectors of Ecuadorian society, in order to produce a profound change in the citizens' ways of thinking and acting.

Elsewhere, those who are familiar with the CORDES president's previous texts will once again find in the pages of this essay a systematic, objective, and well-grounded presentation of his reflections, expressed with a candor that will provoke more than one embarrassment.

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Vicente Albornoz
Director General, CORDES

STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF ECUADORIAN DEMOCRACY

Oswaldo Hurtado*

Visitors to Ecuador are surprised by the remarkable diversity of nature in such a small geographical area. So many beautiful snow-capped mountains cannot be found in any other Latin American country. The geology of the Galapagos Islands and its amazing flora and fauna are unique on the planet, and Ecuador is one of only twelve countries worldwide with such a large number of plant and animal species. Quito's artistic treasures and its colonial capital figure among the most important on the continent. In only four hours by car or thirty minutes by plane, one can travel from Quito to tropical beaches, to mountains covered in snow year-round, or to the Amazon rainforest. A climate without extreme temperatures makes people's lives easier and means that the country only needs to import wheat because it can produce a wide variety of crops all year round. In addition to this bounty of nature, there are abundant hydropower resources in the Andes Mountains and other valuable export commodities. Thus, one might think that Ecuador lacks for nothing to be a prosperous country able to offer its inhabitants widespread well-being.

* President of CORDES.

Even though its democracy was frequently interrupted and dictatorial governments were numerous, the country did not suffer from the tyrannies that afflicted other Latin American countries. Some of the twentieth-century military governments were actually tolerant and progressive. Early on, at the turn of the last century, the Liberal Revolution introduced freedom of thought and expression, as well as separation of the Church and State, and put an end to the cloistered existence in which the country had lived for centuries. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 also contributed to this. Ecuadorians have not had to deal with the guerrilla groups and drug traffickers that plague its neighbors. In fact, in the 1980s, Ecuador was considered an island of peace in a convulsed Latin America. It was actually the first country in the region to recover democracy (1977-79) through a civilian-military agreement that served as a model of peaceful transition later followed by other Latin American countries.

So why was a country with such a considerable natural bounty and an environment of peace and freedom one of the most backward in Latin America? And why did it only recently, in 1972, begin to leave that condition behind, not because of its own effort, but rather because of the miraculous discovery of oil?

Moreover, why has a democracy inaugurated scarcely two years after Spanish democracy marched in place whereas Spain has managed to achieve economic, social, and political progress?

The answer is always the same: for the nineteenth century, the twentieth century, and the years since 1979, when the current democratic period began. The country has not progressed, and Ecuadorians have not improved their living conditions as much as they could have, for strictly political reasons.

From the time the Republic was established in 1830 until 1979, dictatorial governments outnumbered democratic ones; and they lasted less than two years on average. Even though there have been no dictatorships since 1979, there have been autocratic presidents that have disregarded the Constitution or that have risen to office through "constitutional" coups. These, too, have lasted just over two years on average.

In conditions of such extreme political instability, it was impossible for Ecuador to develop. Whereas the countries that did progress had stable governments that persevered for decades in their struggle to attain long-term objectives, especially in the areas of the economy and education, quite a few Ecuadorian presidents inaugurated their terms in office with the promise of "refounding" the Republic. This illusion even led some of them to reverse positive policies implemented by their predecessors.

For more than two hundred years, the world's most prosperous country, the United States, has had a single constitution that has always been respected by presidents, legislators, and citizens. Ecuador, on the other hand, has had so many constitutions (20) that an entire library shelf could be filled with their volumes. These texts have mattered little in the day-to-day life of Ecuadorian democracy. The contemporary success stories of development in China, Spain, and Chile share the common features of political stability and economic continuity, achieved despite their different constitutional systems: the first being a one-party system, the second a parliamentary system, and the third a presidential system.

RESULTS OF DEMOCRACY

The current democratic period is the longest in Ecuadorian history. In the last thirty years, important economic and social progress has been made, in large part thanks to the sizable revenues generated by oil.

Illiteracy has been reduced to 8%, infant and overall mortality has decreased significantly, life expectancy has surpassed the age of 70, coverage of education and health care services has expanded to almost all of the population, indigenous groups have recovered their sense of cultural identity and gained important participation in public life, and the number of women has equaled the number of men in schools and colleges. Cities have also made notable progress; and the long-standing territorial dispute that kept Ecuador's security permanently at risk and was so costly for the nation's economy was finally settled.

Thanks to democracy, human rights have been protected and people have been able to enjoy an environment of tolerance and freedom; to participate in the free election of officials; and to express their opinion through the media, public protests, political parties, and civil-society organizations.

However, democracy as an institution has been extremely vulnerable, especially at the end of the last century. It has managed to survive due to the acceptance, as a *fait accompli*, of abuses of power, constitutional violations, and ruptures in the state of law by governments and congresses. These have been tolerated and even applauded, by significant numbers of citizens.

Despite the progress noted, democracy has failed in its missions to develop Ecuador and to build an equitable society that would offer

equal opportunities for everyone. Economic growth has barely been higher than population growth. Poverty indexes have continued to be high and even worsened in the years of recurring economic crises. The quality of the services offered by the federal government has deteriorated, particularly the public education utilized by children and young people from lower social classes.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the economy stabilized thanks to dollarization, and significant growth took place (5% annually). This progress made it possible to reduce poverty. Meanwhile, however, the unjust distribution of wealth did not change, and Ecuador did not manage to close the gap with respect to other Latin American countries.

External factors and catastrophes of different kinds have led to significant economic downturns. For example, the decline in the value of exports, world crises, armed conflicts along the southern border, earthquakes, floods, droughts, and plagues entailed substantial economic losses. The negative effects of these unfortunate events must be put in perspective, however, since catastrophes and international setbacks were occasional and transitory, the border conflict was settled in 1998, and there were periods in which the prices for the country's export commodities were high. Such was the case of oil in the years 2007 and 2008.

More negative still for national development were certain political factors that kept good government from becoming an everyday phenomenon and that kept strong, respectable institutions from facilitating the work of the presidents. For these reasons, the governments could not persevere in maintaining macroeconomic stability and ensure the sufficient and sustained economic growth so necessary for Ecuador's development. These government con-

straints were caused by governability problems that it has not been possible to correct despite political reforms made with that aim in the constitutions of 1979, 1998, and 2008.

Since these problems are structural in nature, the constitutional reforms have not yielded the desired effects and have conspired against the success of the governments, regardless of the presidents' ideology and political orientation. Costly macroeconomic stabilization programs failed; promising growth processes were curtailed; the opportunities offered by the international economy were wasted; responses to world crises were poor; and little attention was paid to programs geared to improving the quality of education, reducing poverty, and promoting social inequity.

Eight structural problems affect Ecuadorian democracy, some of them difficult to correct because they are cultural in nature and are deeply rooted in the national soul.

POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

In the current democratic period, the number of parties represented in the National Congress has been about twelve. Those that disappeared or became weaker were substituted for by new forces founded by caudillos interested in obtaining the presidency of the Republic. Of the twelve presidents that the country has had in this period, only two have belonged to the same political organization (the DP) --one by succession-- and none have managed to win more than one presidential election. In all of the legislative periods, "independent" parliamentary blocks have been formed, composed of congressmen that abandoned the political affiliations or labels under which they were elected in order to put themselves at the service of the Government in exchange for favors and benefits.

The parties that won the presidential elections never managed to garner fifty percent of the national votes and sufficient seats in the legislature to form a parliamentary majority, not even when President Correa was re-elected in the first round of voting in April 2009.

The constitutional institutions designed by the 1979 and 1998 constitutions sought to correct this fragmentation of the party system by requiring that a party obtain 5% of the votes in general, multi-level elections. These did not work, however. The political organizations on their way to extinction managed to get Congress to revoke that provision, or the Supreme Court to declare it unconstitutional, or the Constitutional Court to disregard the decisions of the Supreme Electoral Board; or this organization simply did not apply it.

Something similar occurred with Election Law regulations which sought to control campaign spending: they were established early on in 1979 but declared unconstitutional in 1983, at the request of the media and a presidential candidate. Since the inclusion of these regulations in the Constitution of 1998, parties and candidates have continued to have excessive spending. The Constitution of 2008 attempted to correct inequitable spending through public financing of campaigns; however, President Correa's government made a mockery of that arrangement by putting public resources at the service of his re-election.

Citizens have also encouraged political fragmentation through their volatile electoral behavior and their tendency to shift their political orientation and spread their votes among multiple candidates when casting ballots in presidential and legislative elections. Also contributing has been the discourse in favor of minorities,

even of those that were not very representative, which were disproportionately protected without taking into account the fact that stable, successful democracies are based on solid, simplified political parties.

The absence of a party system with the characteristics described above weakened the democratic system and prevented the country from enjoying political stability, economic continuity, and juridical security. Under these conditions, it was not possible to agree on State policies and make the changes needed to adapt to the new realities and challenges of a globalized world. Nor was it possible for the governments to have a legislative majority that could back their initiatives and moderate the destabilizing opposition that the chairmen of the National Congress have experienced.

CONFLICTS

Democracy is a political system in which dialogue and negotiation make it possible to bring positions closer together, reach agreements, facilitate decisions, and promote initiatives of national interest. These practices tend to be inherent to a pluralistic society and to constitute an inevitable need in a politically fragmented country such as Ecuador without a majority party.

A political system's capacity to foster consensus does not depend only on the soundness of the institutions and the incentives that they can offer for the consensus to be reached, but also on the way that political players act. In Ecuador, their behavior has not been compatible with dialogue, negotiation, and commitments. The influential presence in public life of dogmatic, passionate leaders determined to impose their positions, reluctant to value their adversaries' viewpoints, and with a propensity to verbal violence have

closed the doors to constructive dialogue and posed all sorts of obstacles to political negotiation. Public life has been so harsh and petty that opposition politicians and parties intransigently censured the economic policy of the government in office but, when they won the elections, applied that same policy with only slight modifications.

These conflict-ridden political relations have been prejudicial to the country's democratic institutions and development. It has not been possible to form lasting alliances that would strengthen the action of governments, permit the adoption of State policies, and facilitate their implementation in the long term through successive administrations. Those who hoped to gain power showed obstinate, disloyal opposition without taking into account the fact that the country's progress depended on the success of the Government. In the public affairs debate, instead of clarifying issues through the exchange of reasoned viewpoints and technical grounds for discrepancies, an effort was made to morally discredit adversaries through personal attacks that were often malicious.

Political relations have been so discordant that, with only two exceptions, the presidents, upon concluding their terms in office, were not interested in leaving the economy in order. One president even said that he did not see why he should; and another, in the last months of his administration, made decisions that aggravated economic problems, with the deliberate aim of being detrimental to his successor's administration. In 2004, two former presidents promoted an unconstitutional motion to have the president of the Republic impeached, whereby they unleashed a conflict that led to the arbitrary dismantling of the Supreme Court of Justice and the removal of the head of state.

The political stumbling-blocks brought about by intransigent parties and social organizations turned the military into arbiters of Ecuadorian democracy. The three presidents that left office (Abdalá Bucaram, Jamil Mahuad and Lucio Gutiérrez) did not lose power when Congress made the decision to remove them but rather when the armed forces notified them that their "support had been withdrawn."

ILLEGALITIES

The rule of law is not possible in a society in which few citizens are spontaneously willing to respect it under any circumstance. So, its application depends on the coercion exercised by officials and judges rather than individuals' voluntary decision to subject their acts to juridical principles. When offenders are numerous, snowballing occurs and the avalanche ends up affecting even those institutions in charge of guaranteeing rights, enforcing obligations, ensuring equality before the law, and preserving juridical principles. In societies in which it is customary to ignore such principles, to disregard them on a daily basis, to intentionally misinterpret them, to avoid them through the use of loopholes and shortcuts, and to take advantage of economic and political power to manipulate or bribe judges and other officials, the law ends up being applied discretionally, as a function of conveniences and influences, not justice.

These reasons of a cultural nature explain why governments, congresses, parties, social organizations, economic sectors, businessmen, and many citizens, instead of framing their activities within juridical precepts, act outside them. It is for this reason, and not because of a lack of norms, that the rule of law does not exist in Ecuador. Democratic institutions' sound functioning depends on

this factor, as well as on the ability to offer citizens equal opportunities, the juridical security that is so important to economic agents, and the reciprocal trust on which the progress of contemporary societies rests.

Again, three presidents were removed from office without following constitutional procedures. In the Constitution of 1998, in order to preserve fiscal stability, an article was introduced to give the president of the Republic sole responsibility for initiating bills entailing the creation of public spending. On numerous occasions the National Congress has violated this provision, in a show of noncompliance supported by the presidents themselves. Between 2004 and 2008, the members of the Supreme Court changed four times, following the legislative body's unconstitutional decisions to dissolve it and make new appointments.

The populace's behavior is no different. Noncompliance with laws, breach of contracts and formal agreements, and default on debts are frequent. So is the everyday violation of traffic regulations by drivers and pedestrians. Furthermore, the justice system is not very reliable, in courts or in the administrative offices of the State. Thus, the rights of persons and societies are not always recognized and their obligations are not always established.

POPULISM

Among Latin American countries, Ecuador is perhaps the one where the populist culture is most deeply rooted among citizens in general. This is evident in the fact that the most influential political leaders of the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century have been populists. Such is the

force of populism that its rhetoric and practices not only characterize the parties that call themselves populist (Alianza País, the Partido Social Cristiano, the Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano, the PRIAN and the Movimiento Popular Democrático), but also those of other organizations and a good number of political leaders. It seems obvious to conclude that the populist trend among politicians is a response to others' sentiments and demands since the parties noted above, and others that preceded them, have won the support of over fifty percent of registered voters.

The wasteful public spending of governments, congresses, and municipalities, especially around election time, has kept the country from having orderly economic management. Other important factors have been their reluctance to make the "unpopular" decisions needed to maintain fiscal soundness, their opposition to laws and measures advisable to preserve the health of the economy and foster growth, and the squandering of resources in social welfare programs. Fiscal populism ended up causing devastating economic and social crises, the hardest hit victims of which were the poor, whose interests the populist leaders were supposedly defending. The lack of interest in long-term programs aimed at improving health care and the quality of education hampered the reduction of poverty and the improvement of social equity.

Of the many instances that could be cited, three illustrate the populist nature of Ecuadorian society. In 2005, legislators, political leaders, journalists, editorial writers, and civil-society organizations expressed support for an increase in pensions called for by retirees. The Congress and the Government approved the increase based solely on what retirees in all fairness deserved, without taking into account the availability of the necessary funds or the negative effects for the financial soundness of the Social Security Institute. Under the argument that it was necessary to serve day-to-day

needs, those same players supported a law, unanimously approved by the Congress, which ordered the reimbursement of the reserve funds deposited by workers and employees in the Social Security Institute, despite the fact that this eliminated a very useful savings fund and limited monies for medical and retirement benefits. With similar short-sighted considerations, between 2006 and 2007 savings funds constituted thanks to high oil prices, to protect the economy in times of scarcity, were eliminated. These populist practices have worsened during periods in which the country has earned especially high revenues from high oil prices, as occurred in 2007 and 2008.

The populist parties are also responsible for the constant deterioration of democratic institutions. Their clientele-oriented exercise of power has led them to put public institutions at the service of utilitarian purposes, unnecessarily increase bureaucracy, lower the level of competition, and thereby create conditions for corruption to thrive. Finally, populists' paternalistic preaching and unrestrained demagoguery have kept people from becoming conscious of their responsibilities and building the sense of citizenship required for the sound functioning of democratic institutions and the progress of nations.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

High percentages of poverty and indigence, distressing social injustices, abusive privileges, and the absence of equal opportunities, especially for those that need them most, have led to sentiments of social exclusion or disaffection that have in turn led sectors that are left out to disdain economic stability and growth labeled "neoliberal" and even to question the democratic system.

These sentiments have been exacerbated during economic crises, when devaluations, high rates of inflation, painful adjustments, and --at the end of the century, the loss of deposits due to the banking crisis-- worsened social problems. Since democratic governments have not been able to break the vicious cycle of crisis-adjustment-recovery-crisis, these have become recurring problems.

In the 1980s, popular frustrations were expressed politically by workers organizations grouped under the Frente Unitario de Trabajadores (FUT), whose numerous nationwide strikes besieged the governments of that era.

Due to the union movement's loss of adherence and representativity, in the 1990s indigenous organizations grouped within the CONAIE and the political party Pachakutik assumed representation of popular demands. Through their so-called "uprisings" they paralyzed the highland provinces and sometimes even took over Quito. With such actions, they managed to disparage or even thwart decisions that the governments had to make to preserve macroeconomic stability, reactivate growth, modernize the State, open up the economy to competition, and recover international credibility. The CONAIE became disparaging of democracy and went even further when in the year 2000, when, together with insubordinate members of the military, they provoked a coup against president Jamil Mahuad and proclaimed a fortunately ephemeral dictatorship in which they were directly involved.

INDIVIDUALISM

With regard to public assets, there is a permissive attitude among broad sectors of society, not only among politicians and govern-

ment officials, as widely believed. When their own personal or corporate benefits are at stake, citizens, companies, social organizations, and civil-society groups tend to subordinate general interests to individual ones and to benefit in a utilitarian way from public resources. Since the line between public and private is blurry, the State and authorities are not seen as instances that should protect general interests, demand compliance with obligations, defend the common good, and respond to legitimate rights, but rather as instruments through which individuals and groups can obtain favors, receive benefits, defend privileges, and even get rich. Many believe that the assets of private individuals have an owner, while those of the State do not belong to anyone.

The lack of a virtuous ethical culture explains why corruption has not been eliminated despite the laws issued to deal with it, the organizations created to control it, the punitive actions taken by certain authorities, and various parties and leaders' promises that they would do away with it. Since corruption is a widespread problem, Ecuador, for several years now, has figured among the world's most corrupt countries, according to the perception index prepared by Transparency International.

Of the many examples that can be cited, it is worthwhile to mention a few: the collusive alliance of private individuals, politicians, and public officials to cover up the smuggling of all sorts of goods, as well as the theft of electric power, telephone time, potable water, oil, and fuels, through fraudulent connections. It has been impossible to eradicate these crimes because of the tightly woven web of the criminals' interests and complicity. Furthermore, for a vast majority of Ecuadorians, especially those in coastal provinces, paying taxes is not viewed as citizens' most important commitment to their country and the way they should repay the services received

from the State. It is also common for students to copy homework and to cheat on papers and tests.

Some political parties (the PSC and the PRE), rather than working for public interests, are at the service of private interests, sometimes those of their directors and close circles. However, this does not seem to matter to their numerous supporters. In every election, instead of sanctioning the parties, their supporters once again generously give them their votes. The deterioration that the concept of public interest has experienced has reached such a point that, in order to defend it, at times the IMF, the World Bank, and the IDB have had to intervene and set conditions to safeguard against the detrimental decisions that governments and congresses might make.

LEFTIST THINKING

In Europe and other Latin American countries, traditional leftist thinking is no longer in force and has lost influence and voters. The communist parties that govern China and Vietnam have also made modifications in order to adapt to the new economic and political realities that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Ecuador, however, it continues to be a strong source of inspiration for parties and social organizations, including the indigenous movement.

They close their eyes to the undeniable fact that the statist economic model has ceased to exist in the countries that adopted it. The Third World liberation movements have abandoned their revolutionary ideas; and the parties of the left that govern Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay have adopted a market economy, opened up to the international sphere, and reduced the role of the State. They

forget that the other influential theory of dependency is no longer defended even by its creators, that the countries that have made the most progress are those that have joined the international scene, and that it has been shown that the development of nations is the result of their inhabitants' constant efforts.

Meanwhile, as though none of this had occurred, those parties and social organizations in Ecuador, even those that characterize themselves as center-left, belittle macroeconomic stability, oppose foreign investment, object to international openness, scorn the market, and are determined to maintain the responsibilities that the State had in exploiting natural resources and in managing public services in the 1960s and 1970s.

Due to these rigid ideological positions imposed by the Government, the Congress and protestors in the streets, the conservative left, sometimes using violent methods, has managed to hamper the implementation of economic programs aimed at promoting stability and growth, which they labeled neoliberal. They created all sorts of difficulties for maintaining macroeconomic equilibrium; opening up inefficient, subsidized, and corrupt public enterprises to private investment; and attracting foreign capital to supplement the low level of national savings. These policies would have had positive repercussions in terms of lower inflation, higher economic growth rates, more jobs, and less poverty. This has been seen in the early years of the twenty-first century, when stability and growth enabled general improvement in Ecuadorians' living conditions.

Since it chose to take different paths, the government of such parties (the *Izquierda Democrática*) had the democratic period's worst record in terms of real salaries, social-sector expenditures,

and poverty levels. However, not even that has made these groups change their erroneous positions. The "blindness" has reached such extremes that the CONAIE continues to oppose policies that would propitiate stability and growth, even though their members have reaped social benefits from them, as have all of the popular sectors. This was seen in the reduction in poverty that occurred during the successful early years of the twenty-first century.

REGIONALISM

The regional differences are so marked that the political discourse that is welcomed in the Sierra (highlands) is not well received on the Coast, and the party that wins the elections in one region usually tends to have far fewer votes and to lose in the other. This has hampered the formation of parties with representation in all the regions and provinces of the country. The media are read, viewed, and listened to in the region where they are published or broadcast and have a smaller audience in the other. The same phenomenon also occurs with regional sports clubs and other social and cultural activities. The jealousy, suspicion, and conflict that separate Quito and Guayaquil have also kept businessmen from forming national boards to represent them collectively, so each region has its own chamber of commerce.

The centuries-long conflict between the Sierra and the Coast has been used by Partido Social Cristiano leaders and Guayaquil business associations (chambers of production, commerce and industry), as well as by article writers and journalists, to advance specific economic interests. Alleging supposed negative effects for Guayaquil, they have prevented making decisions and legal reforms of national interest and have promoted measures favoring the interests of those they shielded. This has had repercussions in

terms of costly fiscal spending and has been detrimental to national development.

Reforms that sought to moralize customs offices and fight contraband were shelved because of the bizarre claims that "they want to take the customs offices to Quito." In the financial crisis of 1998-1999, 70% of the banking system went broke. Regionalist allegations of those sectors impeded banking officials from taking measures against insolvent banks whose managers had committed felonies (the Banco del Progreso was paradigmatic).

Accusing "Quito centralists" of trying to "do away with Guayaquil banking," they managed to keep bankrupt financial institutions from closing; contaminated others that might have been saved; and by allowing corrupt bankers to keep their positions, gave them time to complete their frauds and destroy the evidence of their crimes. These omissions, in addition to increasing the number of depositors affected, meant that the State had to cover a cost of approximately US\$4 billion, equivalent to 25% of the GDP in the year 2000.

Finally, regional fragmentation has, in certain cases, allowed local and provincial interests to reign paramount over national conveniences and has meant that sentiments of national identity could not be consolidated. These are necessary for populaces to develop community behaviors, be willing to make sacrifices when required to overcome difficult circumstances, and to assume responsibilities necessary for the country to be able to carry out the great tasks that shape the future of nations.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

This candid discussion of political weaknesses and constraints experienced by Ecuadorian democracy and attributable to structural problems, unadvisable behaviors, and erroneous ideas has a three-fold purpose. It seeks to highlight an area that has not received attention from scholars of political issues. It also intends to make people realize that Ecuador's development will depend on the ongoing efforts of its inhabitants, and to help citizens become aware of their mistakes, correct their unadvisable behavior, and assume their civic responsibilities.

Ecuadorians must not continue seeking others to blame, at home or abroad. The parties, the oligarchies, the constitutions, the laws, the governments, imperialism, multinationals and globalization cannot continue to be the scapegoats for national, individual and collective responsibilities.

Except for party fragmentation, the political problems that affect the working of democracy and economic management cannot be solved through reforms of political institutions if changes do not occur in the citizens' ways of being and thinking, i.e., in their ideas, attitudes, and cultural habits.

Change will depend on what officials, educators, learners, and communicators do to this end; but as long as cultural traits are not modified, the reforms to political institutions will continue to yield limited outcomes and the lag in national development will continue.

The political parties' responsibility in the relative failure of Ecuadorian democracy, in its mission to effectively manage national development and constantly improve the populace's well-being, is

shared by economic and social sectors and the mass media, as well as by citizens of every social standing.

It should be kept in mind that politicians are no different from regular citizens since in all societies, including Ecuador, they are merely a mirror of the people, with their virtues and failings.

Even though the analysis herein refers to Ecuador, some elements may also be relevant for other Latin American countries that, *mutatis mutandis*, have to deal with similar structural political problems, ideological constraints, and cultural habits of the kinds discussed above.