Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies

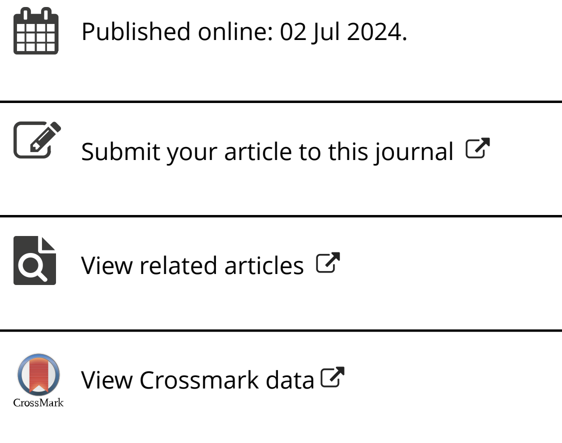
ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cjil20

Democratization and inclusion: what women's enfranchisement tells us about the second wave of democracy

Isabel Castillo

To cite this article: Isabel Castillo (02 Jul 2024): Democratization and inclusion: what women's enfranchisement tells us about the second wave of democracy, Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies, DOI: 10.1080/14701847.2024.2374142

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14701847.2024.2374142



Published online: 02 Jul 2024.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=cjil20

JOURNAL OF IBERIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/14701847.2024.2374142

Democratization and inclusion: what women's enfranchisement tells us about the second wave of democracy

Isabel Castillo

Facultad de Gobierno, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile

ABSTRACT
Most Latin American countries enfranchised women during the second wave of democracy. But how did this expansion of participation relate to other dimensions of democracy? In this essay, I use Robert Dahl's two dimensions of democracy and evaluate what women's inclusion tells us about democratization during this period. Using 14 countries as base for this analysis, I make three central claims: First, I present data on moments of expansion of inclusion and increased competitiveness and whether they coincided, confirming the late 1940s as the most significant period of democratization as both dimensions often advanced together. Second, I identify sequences of democratization based on whether contestation came before, at the same time, or after the expansion of participation to women and the characteristics of each of these sequences. Based on these sequences, I identify a revolutionary path, a democratic path, and an authoritarian path to women's suffrage. Finally, using methodological notions of the trivialness and importance of necessary conditions, I conceptualize the dimensions of democratization and argue that the relative importance of inclusiveness has varied over time.

KEYWORDS
Women's suffrage; inclusion; democratization; competition

Introduction

Fourteen out of nineteen Latin American countries enfranchised women during the period referred to as the second wave of democracy (1943–1963) addressed and problematized in this dossier.[1] As Figure 1 shows, suffrage extensions concentrated in the second half of the 1940s, with Paraguay being the last enfranchiser in 1961. The incorporation of women into electoral politics, both as voters and as elected representatives, was a central characteristic of this period. Nonetheless, the political inclusion of women has received little attention, particularly in its relationship to broader political processes. In this article, I analyze the timing and context of suffrage expansion to women and evaluate how zooming in on those reforms can inform broader democratization processes in the period.

The conceptualization, measurement, and classification of democracies remains a central issue in the study of political regimes. When looking at historical cases, the

CONTACT Isabel Castillo isabel.castillo@gobierno.uchile.cl Facultad de Gobierno, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile

© 2024 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

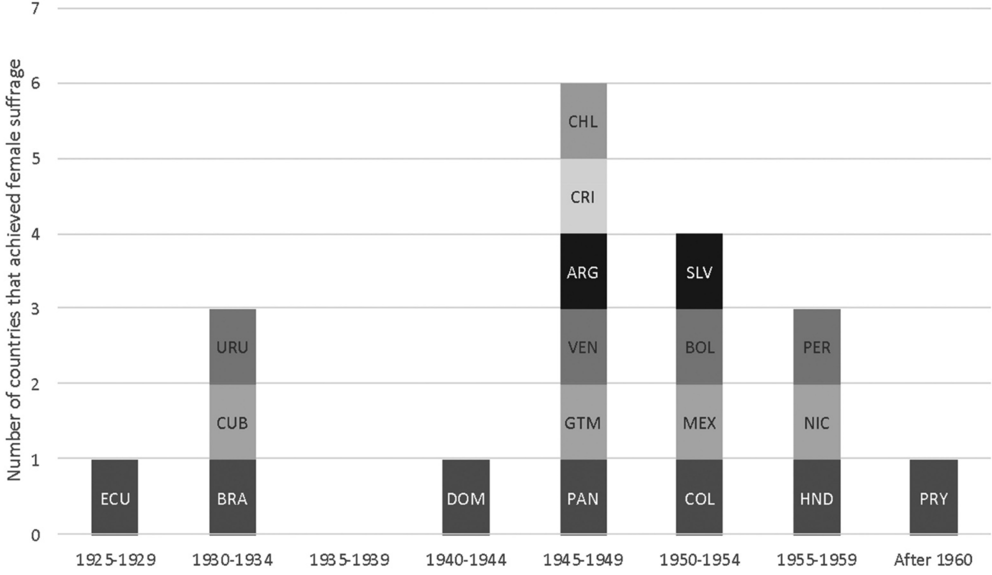


Figure 1. Timing of women's enfranchisement in latin America. Source: Castillo (2019, 17).

question becomes even more central, as there remains a tension between theoretically grounded definitions and those using common standards of the period. For example, although universal suffrage is understood as a key component of democracy, many authors, particularly those using quantitative methods and large datasets, loosen this requirement when working with historical cases. The main reason behind this decision is the need to increase the number of observations, defending the use of a "retrospective standard" or "the standards of the era" as a way to avoid charges of anachronism (Drake 2009; Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán 2001). This practice, however, leads to a discrepancy between conceptualization and measurement (Paxton 2000), given that in conceptualizations of democracy, universal suffrage is generally understood as a necessary condition (e.g. Collier 1999; Levitsky and Way 2010). It is also not clear when women's suffrage became a standard according to these arguments. In 1933, the Inter-American Commission of Women issued a resolution recommending women's suffrage to party states (Towns 2010, 106). Was women's suffrage the "standard of the era" when most Latin American countries enfranchised women? When all countries did?

In this article, I argue that we must look at women's inclusion to understand democracy during the second wave. Studying the (usually) single most extensive process of enfranchisement across countries in the region will contribute to conceptual consistency and a better understanding of mid-twentieth-century Latin American political regimes. With this purpose, I consider Robert Dahl's (1971) two dimensions of democracy – inclusiveness and competition – and evaluate how both dimensions interacted during the period of analysis. I show that while competition moved in two small waves or ripples in the late 1940s and the late 1950s, only the first of these periods coincided with an expansion of suffrage to women and illiterates. I then identify different sequences of democratization in Latin America during the second wave based on how the two dimensions interacted. Third, I discuss how this analysis

has implications for understanding the relative importance of competition and inclusion in conceptualizations of democracy. I end with some conclusions and possibilities for future research.

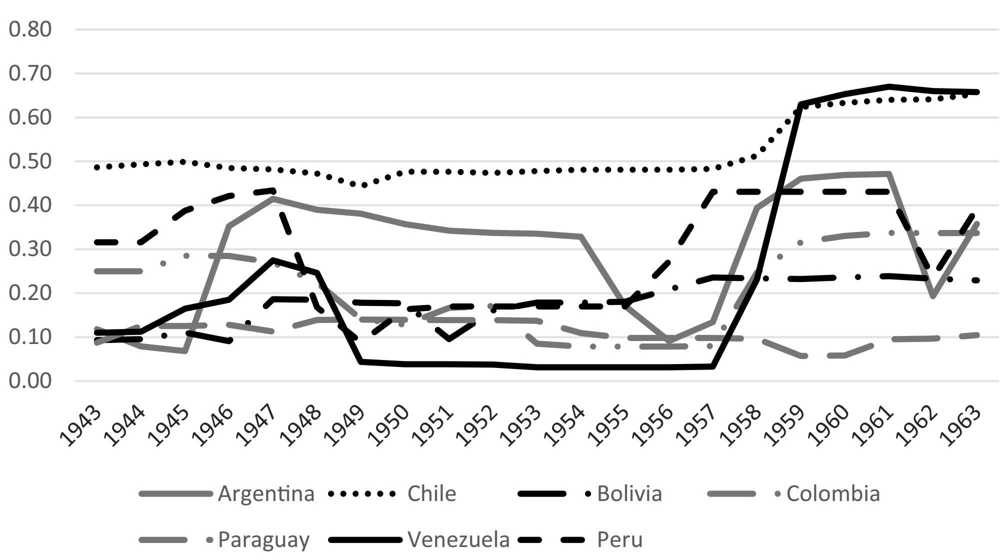
Liberalization during the second wave

The immediate postwar years (1944–8) have been heralded as a period of political opening and democratization in Latin America (Bethell and Roxborough 1992; Rock 1994). Multiple countries liberalized, often for the first time in their history, in a process that combined a shift to the political left and labor militancy (Bethell and Roxborough 1992, 2). Notably, during these years, no country moved in the opposite direction.

The rising of a new hegemonic power and a new international order, or what Gunitsky (2017) calls a "hegemonic shock," pushed this wave of democratization. In the case of Latin America, this occurred through a combination of inducement and emulation. The global struggle against fascism translated into the promotion of democratic values both at a discursive level and through a set of institutions created after the end of the war. Among the latter are the United Nations, the Humans Rights Declarations, and the organization of the Pan-American system. In addition to promoting democracy in general, the founding documents of these organizations included equal rights between the sexes, and the Humans Rights Declaration explicitly reaffirmed the principle of universal suffrage. In Ann Town's terms, equal suffrage became a "standard of civilization" in Latin American states during this period (Towns 2010, 114–15). Thus, in addition to increased competition, the second half of the 1940s was a promising context for expanding suffrage.

The incentives for change from hegemonic shocks, however, are short-lived. Figure 2 below shows how competitiveness – a combination of indicators of free and fair elections, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and having elected officials – moved during this period in both South and Central America. In Central America, regimes were more stable, with constant lower levels of competition. The most significant exceptions are Guatemala and especially Costa Rica. In South America, on the other hand, the ups and downs indicate that it was common to have an important process of democratization followed by a new regression and democratization again. So, against Samuel Huntington's broad classification of waves, South America shows two small waves of democratization and a counterwave, all during the 1943–1963 period (Smith 2012, 28–29).

Suppose we combine the information from Figures 1 and 2. In that case, we can see that a group of countries – Guatemala, Venezuela, Argentina, and Costa Rica, if we extend it until 1949 – went through broad democratization processes in the postwar years, expanding competition and participation during the same period. As I discuss in greater detail in the next section, except for Argentina, these cases of democratization resulted from political revolutions that led to the drafting of a new constitution. The literature on the postwar democratic spring – particularly that of the 1990s – has paid little attention to the issue of women's suffrage, focusing instead in the role of labor and the left (Bethell and Roxborough 1992; Rock 1994). However, suppose we include suffrage expansion in addition to competition. In that case, the data confirm the second half of the 1940s as the most relevant juncture for democratization in Latin America before the third wave.



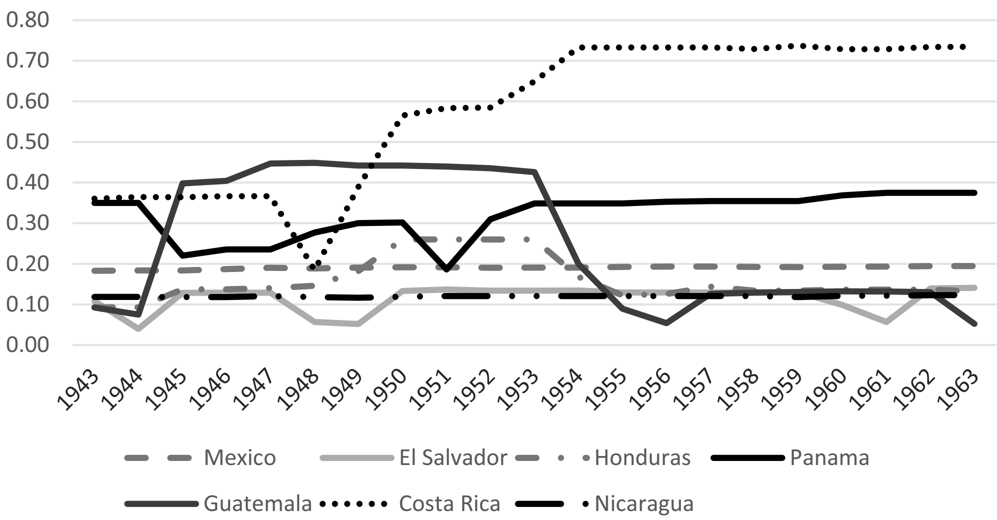


Figure 2. Political regime's competitiveness, 1943–1963. Source: V-Dem, recalculating the Electoral Democracy Index without the suffrage variable (free and fair elections, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and having elected officials) (Coppedge et al. 2022, 43).

Considering women's suffrage also sheds light on the variation across these postwar democratization processes that are often lumped together. Peru is an interesting case that significantly increased competition in the postwar period and yet failed to expand suffrage. The postwar democratization was incarnated by the reformist government of

José Luis Bustamante y Rivero, elected in 1945 in alliance with the recently legalized *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA, which had been outlawed since 1932 by being considered a "subversive party"). The context seemed propitious. However, women's suffrage was not part of the government or APRA's program and was a source of conflict within the party. The first time Haya de la Torre ran for the presidency in 1931, he had a comprehensive program on women's rights elaborated by the Women's Section, headed by poet Magda Portal. After returning from her exile in Chile in 1945, she took the position of general secretary for female training within APRA. In this role, she travelled all over the country, making propaganda for the party (Reedy 2000). She also openly defended women's participation in all aspects of national life (*La Tribuna*, 26 May 1945). However, as Haya de la Torre started moderating his initial positions and having more and more control over the party, many of the more progressive elements of the program were left aside. In 1948, during the Second Aprista Party Congress, Haya de la Torre refused to allow women voting rights within the party. Thus, the revised manifesto did not include suffrage in equal terms, as the proposed age for women was 25 years old and only 18 years old for men.

The second small competitiveness wave in the late 1950s mainly came *after* women's enfranchisement. This second wave occurred in countries that enfranchised women in the late 1940s or early 1950s, meaning that suffrage was often expanded in contexts of low competition. In the next section, I further explore the relationship between the two dimensions of democracy and identify the sequences of democratization.

Sequences of democratization during the second wave

Thus far, the discussion has shown that women's enfranchisement in Latin America concentrated in the decade following the end of World War II, 1945–1955. Competition, on the other hand, saw two peaks during the second wave, the late 1940s and late 1950s, that only partially coincided with the franchise's expansion. Literature on the second wave of democratization has focused chiefly on the democratic spring of the 1940s, and studies of women's suffrage are usually single case studies that do not consider the regional context. In other words, democratization along the competition and inclusion dimensions tend to be analyzed separately.

In this section, I put together both dimensions and present the sequences of democratization that countries followed during the second wave. To do so, I first map countries onto Dahl's two dimensions of democracy, regardless of the timing of enfranchisement. Using V-Dem data, Figure 3 locates how countries moved along the competitiveness and inclusiveness dimensions the year before and after women's enfranchisement.

Along the inclusion dimension we can see that with women's suffrage, most countries went from having 50 to 100% of their adult population eligible to vote, or from male suffrage to universal voting rights.[2] The cases that deviate from this trend are those that had literacy restrictions, and the impact of this restriction varied according to literacy rates. Venezuela and Bolivia removed both sex and literacy restrictions together in a broad process of incorporation. In contrast, Chile, Guatemala (for women only), and Peru retained the literacy requirement after enfranchising women.[3] These numbers do not

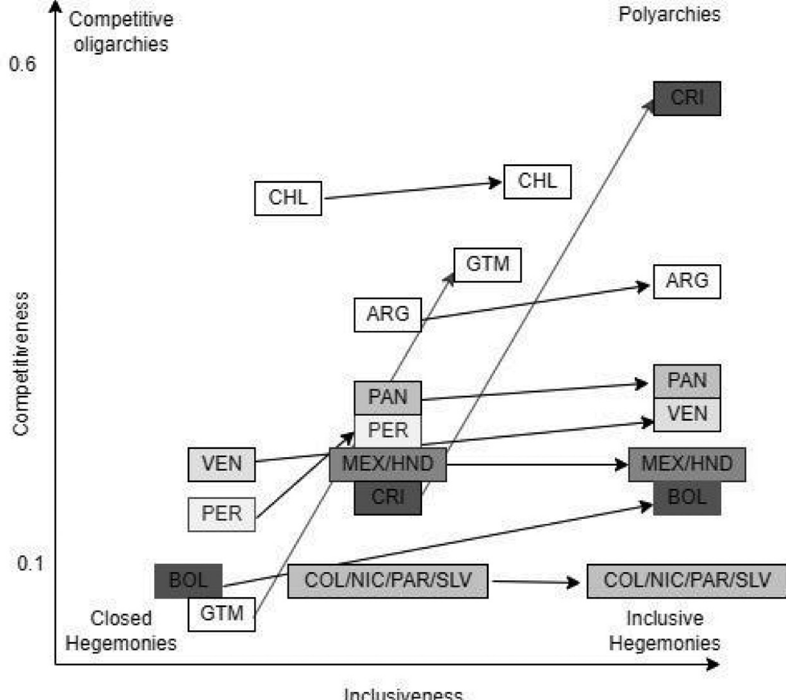


Figure 3. Dahl's dimensions of democracy during women's enfranchisement. Note: For the inclusiveness axis I use the suffrage variable v2x_suffr. The competitiveness axis recalculates the Electoral Democracy Index removing suffrage (Coppedge et al. 2022, 43). It considers the year before and after women's suffrage.

show that the literacy requirement for voting had a particular toll among women, who generally had lower literacy rates (Castillo 2024).

The illiterate vote is a highly understudied issue in Latin American democratization processes. In particular, we know little about why some countries took so long to implement universal suffrage. Guatemala enfranchised illiterate women in 1965, Chile all illiterates in 1970, and Peru only adopted universal suffrage in the 1979 constitution during the re-democratization of the so-called "third wave." While Guatemala and Peru had comparatively high rates of illiteracy, Chile did not, so the exclusion of large, mostly peasant and indigenous segments of the population, although likely relevant, is insufficient as an explanation for the persistence of this institution. One hypothesis is that because illiterates did not organize as such, there was little demand for this reform. But, more research is required on illiterates, suffrage, and the impact of their political incorporation.

On the other hand, the vertical axis shows that enfranchisement took place at different levels of competition; there is little relationship between both dimensions. In the decade following the war's end, most Latin American countries (except for Paraguay) that had not already done so enfranchised women, regardless of their level of competition. One of the most significant processes of inclusion in mid-twentieth-century democracy generally took place in the absence of a competitive regime.

In most cases, enfranchisement concentrated on low levels of competition, as different forms of authoritarian regimes were the norm. Chile is the main exception to enfranchisement with relatively high levels of competition. Chile had the highest pre-enfranchisement levels of competitiveness, having regular elections between 1932 and 1973.[4] In Dahl's terms, the most common shift was from partly closed hegemonies to inclusive hegemonies. In a few cases, the figure indicates that women's enfranchisement was part of broader processes of democratization, as already discussed.

Table 1 summarizes these trends, identifying sequences of democratization during the second wave that correspond to three distinctive paths. First, there are Guatemala, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Bolivia, which enfranchised women amid broader political and social reform processes. I refer to this as the revolutionary path, understanding they were all cases of political revolution, that is, a rapid change "fundamentally altering the rules of the political process" (Herrick and Robins 1976, 320). In Guatemala, Juan José Arévalo's reformist government, elected in 1944 following that year's revolution, inaugurated a decade of social, economic, and political reform. After Jorge Ubico's fall, political parties became better organized, and there was increased political competition. Women's groups, particularly teachers, were actively part of the reformist enterprise (Harms 2020). The 1945 constitution extended suffrage to all men and literate women. This ruling meant only a small share of women were qualified to vote, but it represented a substantial first step for women's incorporation. In Venezuela, voting was expanded during the *Trienio Adeco* (1945–48), the three-year-long experiment with democracy after the coup that overthrew Isaías Medina Angarita. The provisional government led by Rómulo Betancourt inaugurated a period of social reform, drafting a new constitution, and political parties, for the first time, occupied the center of political conflict (Friedman 2010). In the case of Costa Rica, there was also a new constitution in 1949 that enfranchised women. The new constitution was the result of a political agreement following the 1948 civil war, and it inaugurated the most prolonged period of democracy in Latin America and one of the few that did not break down during the second wave.

Finally, suffrage was expanded in Bolivia following the 1952 revolution led by the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR), after the MNR's triumph in the 1951 elections was not recognized by the government (see Álvarez Gimenez 2024). Following the revolution, the electoral reform that enfranchised women and illiterates constituted the broadest process of inclusion of the second wave. Unlike the previous cases, there was no new constitution to institutionalize the process in Bolivia. Still, the decade-long regime advanced social and political incorporation through reforms such as universal suffrage,

Table 1. Paths and sequences of democratization based on timing of inclusion.

The Revolutionary Path	The Competitive Path	The Authoritarian Path	
Inclusion and competition	Competition theninclusion	Inclusion only	
Guatemala (1945)	Argentina (1947)	Panama (1945)	Competition before and after inclusion
Venezuela (1946)	Chile (1949)	Colombia (1954)	
Costa Rica (1949)		Peru (1955)	
Bolivia (1952)		Honduras (1955)	Competition before
		El Salvador (1950)	No competition during second wave
		Mexico (1953)	
		Nicaragua (1955)	
		Paraguay (1961)	

nationalization of mines, and land reform. In 1956, the country held the first direct general elections, although compared to Guatemala, Venezuela, and Costa Rica, increases in competitiveness after the revolution were limited. These four cases, then, share a process of broad democratization following civil wars or a revolution. Except for Bolivia, institutional change was channeled through a new constitution. The more radical form of change and its institutionalization explain why the inclusion process not only considered women but also illiterates (if they did not already have voting rights) and institutions contributing to political competition.

A second group, with Argentina and Chile, formed the competitive path. These countries (together with Uruguay, not analyzed in this paper as it enfranchised women before the second wave) advanced in competitiveness before enfranchising women, had the most extended cumulative experience with political competition, and their competition levels right before enfranchisement were the highest in the region. In Argentina, after the "infamous decade" (1930–1943) of authoritarianism, electoral fraud, and conservative restoration, a military coup in 1943 prepared the ground for the election (and increased competitiveness) that took Juan Domingo Perón to the presidency in 1946. The following year, with the crucial impulse from Evita Perón, women's suffrage was approved. Chile, as mentioned above, had regular competition since 1932. With the election of Pedro Aguirre Cerda in 1938, the country inaugurated a three-term period of center-left coalition governments headed by the Radical Party. It was in the last of these governments, the administration of President Gabriel González Videla, that women's suffrage was finally passed in 1949. Among other factors, the timing of enfranchisement responded to the government's need to improve its democratic credentials after promoting the outlawing of its former coalition partner, the Communist Party (Tagle Errázuriz 2005).

In this second sequence, Argentina and Chile remained at medium levels of competitiveness and moved horizontally along the inclusion dimension. In the case of Chile, this latter move was only partial as the literacy requirement remained unaltered. Both countries also share (unlike those in the first path) the characteristic of enfranchising women through limited reform processes, that it, through bills entered solely for that purpose. Finally, all the countries in these first two sequences of democratization, except Bolivia, share the timing of enfranchisement in the second half of the 1940s.

The final sequence of second-wave democratization presented in Table 1 above is composed of most countries with women enfranchised amid low levels of competition. In other words, these were all cases of authoritarian suffrage expansion, or the authoritarian path. There are, however, differences in how competitiveness varied during the second wave. Panama, Colombia, and Peru had experienced electoral competition before and after women's suffrage. Panama had a competitive oligarchy since the early twentieth century, but starting in the 1930s, it faced considerable political instability. A coup in 1941 installed Ricardo de la Guardia in the presidency, who suspended the constitution at the end of 1944 and called for elections for a constitutional convention. The decree for the election extended suffrage to women, and two of them were elected to the 51-member convention (Marco Serra 2010). The new constitution ratified universal suffrage.

In Colombia, from 1930 to 1946, there was a period of stable oligarchic liberal hegemony (with a failed discussion of suffrage in 1936), which ended in 1946 with the election of a conservative president, Mariano Ospina Pérez. After the assassination of the

popular opposition leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948, political violence widely increased, and Ospina's government took an authoritarian turn, closing the legislature. Competition would not return until 1958. During this authoritarian decade under General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's government, the sex requirement for suffrage was removed in 1954. As mentioned above, Peru had a window of increased competition between 1945 and 1948. This democratic experience ended with a coup that initiated the government of Manuel Odría. Odría, as he was preparing for a return to competitive elections in 1956, pushed for women's enfranchisement to build his own base of support (Letts Benavides 2015). The reform was finally passed in 1955, with little women's mobilization.

Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Paraguay enfranchised women in a context of persistent authoritarianism during the second wave (and up to the 1980s or later). Honduras experienced a modest increase in competitiveness in the early 1950s, although it ended before the enfranchisement of women. These cases present the exciting puzzle of why undemocratic regimes undertake democratizing reforms. Unlike competitiveness, suffrage did not threaten rulers' hold on power. It is only when elections are competitive that those included can potentially change the balance of power, and electoral calculations become central. At the same time, these non-competitive regimes adopted suffrage, indicating that in the postwar period, particularly from the 1950s onward, women's suffrage became a global normative standard. Reform was a low-cost way of increasing leaders' and regime legitimacy, particularly in foreign powers' eyes, and building their legacy for the future (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2022).

These three sequences of democratization during the second wave correspond to the paths identified by Dahl (1971, Chapter 3). Argentina, and Chile fit Dahl's first path of increasing competition before inclusion, which is the most auspicious for democracy. Costa Rica would also enter this category if we take a longer time frame. Dahl's second and third paths – inclusion before consolidated competition, and both simultaneously – are less favorable to stable democracy. These insights largely coincide with the fates of Latin American democracies during the twentieth century. There are, of course, considerable exceptions. Venezuela, for example, became, after the 1958 Pacto de Punto Fijo, one of the most stable and best-performing democracies in the region. So, as in Dahl's discussion, much depends on the time frame of the analysis. Although there is no determinist relationship between the sequence of democratization and posterior performance, identifying these sequences with a focus on women's suffrage allows us to better understand the nature of democratization in Latin America during the second wave.

Conceptual implications

Beyond its descriptive value, discussing the two dimensions of democracy in the preceding pages also has conceptual implications. The most common definitions of democracy use a classical conceptual structure, meaning that all relevant attributes – free and fair elections, freedom of association, freedom of expression, elected officials, universal suffrage, or others – must be present at the same time (they are individually necessary and jointly sufficient).[5] Yet, not all these attributes are equally important. By importance here I refer to the methodological notion that as conditions become less common and closer to sufficient, they become more critical (Goertz 2006). A classic example is oxygen, which is necessary for fire. Although true, oxygen is almost always present, so when

investigating the causes of a fire, we look for less common elements, such as a spark from a short circuit. In this example, oxygen is a trivial necessary condition, and the short circuit is a more important one. While developed to evaluate causal relationships, the same logic can be used to analyze the constitutive attributes of a concept.

Using these ideas, I first claim that competitiveness is generally a more important necessary condition for democracy than inclusiveness.[6] Second, I sustain that the relative importance of inclusiveness has varied over time, being more critical during the second than the third wave of democratization. Figure 4 summarizes these arguments. Each circle represents one of the dimensions (competitiveness and inclusiveness) while the intersection indicates democratization: only if there is high competition and high inclusion there is democracy. The size of the circles indicates how common these conditions are. In both periods, competitiveness is less common than inclusiveness, but both have become more prevalent in the third wave. The relative importance is visible in that competitiveness constitutes a larger part of the intersection in both periods (is closer to being sufficient), but more so in the third wave, and that there are fewer cases of competitiveness without inclusiveness than vice versa.

As to the first argument, in most discussions of the second wave (and of democratization in general), an increase in electoral competition is understood as democratizing. However, the same is not always true for an expansion of suffrage. For example, we would likely not use the term democratization to refer to the extension of suffrage in Paraguay

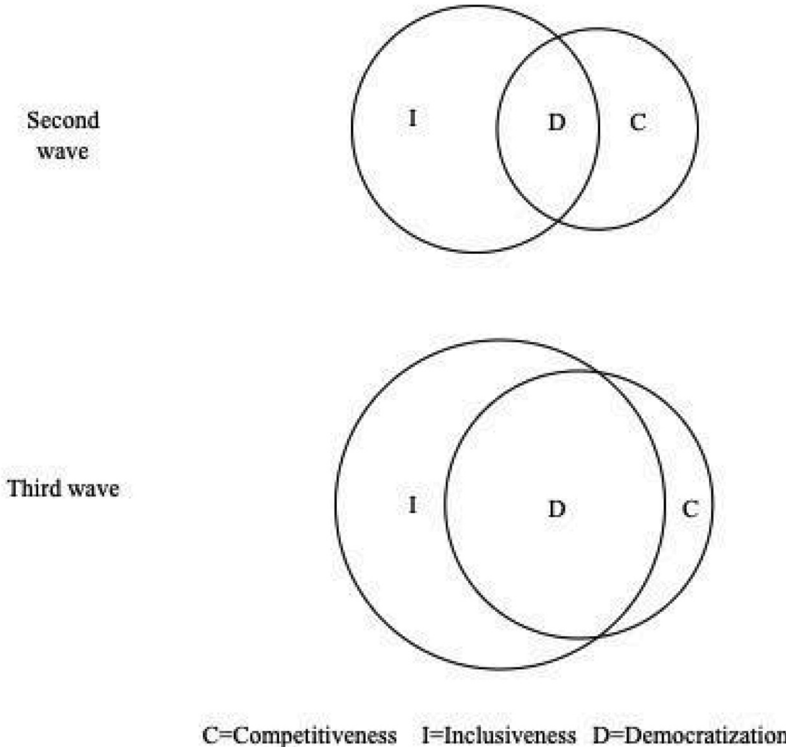


Figure 4. Relative importance of competitiveness and inclusiveness for democratization.

under Stroessner. Cases like the latter, as discussed above, are usually understood as strategies by authoritarian leaders to increase their legitimacy and/or electoral support in non-competitive elections. Some conceptualizations of political regimes focus only on the contestation dimension (e.g. Lueders and Lust 2018, 737). So, even though the omission of women's and illiterates' suffrage is problematic for our understanding of political regimes because it remains a necessary component, as it has been rightly pointed out (Caraway 2004; Paxton 2000), competitiveness comes closer than inclusiveness to being sufficient for democracy.

Second, and relatedly, after all countries achieved universal suffrage, the inclusiveness dimension stopped being key to understanding formal democracy. As Dahl (1971, 39) pointed out decades ago, suffrage is more easily expanded than contracted. In fact, voting is now rarely formally restricted. Attempts in several parts of the United States to increase requirements for voting – for example, through ID laws – and disenfranchisement of specific groups are comparatively rare. An argument can be made about the importance of participation (or turnout), how participation levels differ considerably across countries and in time, and how certain, usually disadvantaged groups are systematically less likely to vote. However, this type of indicator is generally factored in to analyze the *quality* of democracy and not its existence (Altman and Perez-Linan 2002).

If inclusiveness has become ubiquitous, competitiveness and all the factors that make it possible are comparatively much less common. In the early 21st century, we have seen multiple instances of partly or non-competitive elections, including cases such as Venezuela (since 2015) and Nicaragua (since 2011). More broadly, we are seeing a global decline in democracy due to the contraction of competitiveness, not formal voting rights. And as discussed, a rarer condition becomes closer to sufficiency and thus more essential.

As such, and against approaches that dismiss the importance of women's suffrage during the second wave for not being "a standard of the time," I argue that looking at degrees of inclusion is most relevant when analyzing democracy in mid-twentieth century Latin America. During this period, we found the most variation in degrees of inclusiveness and that universal suffrage was rarer (therefore, more important for democratization).

Conclusions

In an era of democratic backsliding across the world, how we define and measure political regimes remains a fundamental – and still contested – endeavor. For mid-twentieth-century Latin American regimes, the role of women's political inclusion has often been overlooked. In this essay, I argue that analyzing women's enfranchisement can shed important light on the nature of those regimes. Concretely, by looking at both the inclusiveness and competitiveness dimensions of democracy, the preceding pages have shown how, between 1943 and 1963, moves along both dimensions simultaneously were rare. The analysis permits identifying sequences of democratization based on how these two dimensions of democracy interacted, and it has some conceptual implications. Using notions of the importance of necessary conditions (Goertz 2006), I have argued that suffrage was a more important dimension in mid-twentieth century Latin America than it is today.

Women's suffrage, particularly the organization of women toward that goal, has been the focus of many important studies of individual countries. A broad comparative

perspective has been lacking, a perspective that allows illuminating patterns of women's inclusion concerning a country's electoral competitiveness and how some countries experienced broad democratization during the second wave while others saw reform only in the inclusion dimension. This exercise opens up several avenues for future research.

First, in terms of the causes of democratization, it is apparent that competition and inclusion have different causes, but at certain junctures, both are pushed by similar factors. For example, the immediate postwar years point to the importance of the window of opportunity that opened with the victory of the Allies, which strengthened democratic forces. While the impact of this juncture was short-lived in electoral competition, one could argue that it had a more persistent effect on women's inclusion through the change in norms.

It is hard to understand the processes of enfranchisement promoted by authoritarian leaders without going back to the postwar democratic spring and the institutions that emerged from it (i.e. the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights). The transnational women's movement also played an important role in both pushing and diffusing these norms. Women obtained voting rights in European, African, Asian and Latin American countries. Arguments that women had inferior genetics or that voting would mean abandoning the home and the family, common in the 1930s and before, were no longer acceptable (Castillo 2023). There were also critical structural changes in the incorporation of women into the labor market, particularly in occupying professions and positions that had previously been socially condemned. By the 1950s, women's suffrage had become a standard of civilization, a cultural change that had both internal and external roots. Identifying the mechanisms and causes behind cultural change is no easy feat. However, we could point to a new set of norms, which were the product of the post-WWII democratic spring. This new normative consensus allowed suffrage reform when domestic conditions were appropriate.

Second, more can be done to understand how the mid-twentieth century dynamics reflect larger regimes trajectories. Are the sequences of democratization observed during the second wave explained by previous episodes of democratization or are these independent? Do they contribute to understanding later regime trajectories? Was the postwar democratization a critical juncture or another episode in Latin American political regimes' never-ending ups and downs?

Finally, the conceptual implications discussed above provide the basis for a new approach to understanding democracy in different historical contexts. Instead of attempting to follow standards of the time when these standards were being redrawn, it can be more useful to think whether, in different periods, suffrage was more or less important – or conversely, more or less trivial.

Notes

1. I consider Spanish and Portuguese former colonies. Only Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Uruguay enfranchised women before the second wave.
2. These numbers refer to formal rights; turnout rates might have varied considerably.
3. These two processes of inclusion were generally seen as separate. See Castillo (2024)

4. The was a decrease in competitiveness in 1948 after the Communist Party was outlawed, and an improvement of democratic competition in 1958 with the end of the bad and an electoral reform that largely ended vote buying in rural areas (Gamboa 2011).
5. The other common conceptual structure, family resemblance, understands conceptual attributes as substitutable. See Barrenechea and Castillo (2019) for a discussion and implications of the different types of concepts.
6. This is a statement purely based on logical and methodological considerations, not from a normative point of view.

Acknowledgements

I am very thankful to the editors of this dossier for putting together the conference on the second wave and the publication of the papers, as well as their comments. For comments on a previous version I also thank Rodrigo Barrenechea. Funding for this research was provided by ANID/FONDECYT/3200323 and COES ANID/FONDAP/1523A0005.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

Altman, D., and A. Perez-Linan. 2002. "Assessing the Quality of Democracy: Freedom Competitiveness and Participation in Eighteen Latin American Countries." *Democratization* 9 (2): 85–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/714000256.

Álvarez Gimenez, E. 2024. "Feminist Movement and Suffrage: How Women Obtained the Right to Vote in Bolivia (1920-1952)." *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*.

Barrenechea, R., and I. Castillo. 2019. "The Many Roads to Rome: Family Resemblance Concepts in the Social Sciences." *Quality & Quantity* 53 (1): 107–130.

Bethell, L., and I. Roxborough, eds. 1992. *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War: Crisis and Containment, 1944–1948*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bjarnegård, E., and P. Zetterberg. 2022. "How Autocrats Weaponize Women's Rights." *Journal of Democracy* 33 (2): 60–75. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0018.

Caraway, T. L. 2004. "Inclusion and Democratization: Class, Gender, Race, and the Extension of Suffrage." *Comparative Politics* 36 (4): 443.

Castillo, I. 2019. Explaining Female Suffrage Reform in Latin America: Motivation Alignment, Cleavages, and Timing of Reform. Ph.D., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.

Castillo, I. 2023. "Motivation Alignment, Historical Cleavages, and Women's Suffrage in Latin America." *Perspectives on Politics* 21 (1): 78–93.

Castillo, I. 2024. "Gender, Ethnicity, Class, and the Breadth of Suffrage in Chile and Peru: Perspectives Among Suffragists." *Historia y Política* 51:228–248. https://doi.org/10.18042/hp.2024.AL.01.

Collier, R. B. 1999. *Paths Toward Democracy. The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*. Cambridge, UK-New York: Cambridge University Press.

Coppedge, M., J. Gerring, C. Henrik Knutsen, S. I. Lindberg, J. Teorell, D. Altman, M. Bernhard, et al. 2022. "V-Dem Codebook V12." *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project*.

Dahl, R. A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Drake, P. 2009. *Between Tyranny and Anarchy: A History of Democracy in Latin America, 1800-2006*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Friedman, E. J. 2010. *Unfinished Transitions: Women and the Gendered Development of Democracy in Venezuela, 1936-1996*. University Park: Penn State Press.

Gamboa, R. 2011. “Reformando Reglas Electorales: La Cédula Única y Los Pactos Electorals En Chile (1958-1962).” *Revista de Ciencia Política* 31 (2): 159–186.
Goertz, G. 2006. “Assessing the Trivialness, Relevance, and Relative Importance of Necessary or Sufficient Conditions in Social Science.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 41 (2): 88–109.
Gunitsky, S. 2017. *Aftershocks: Great Powers and Domestic Reforms in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Harms, P. 2020. *Ladina Social Activism in Guatemala City, 1871-1954*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
Herrick, P. B., Jr, and R. S. Robins. 1976. “Varieties of Latin American Revolutions and Rebellions.” *Journal of Developing Areas* 10 (3): 317–336.
Letts Benavides, L. 2015. “El Origen de La Transición Democrática 1955-1956: El Surgimiento de Una Oposición Política al Gobierno de Odría y La Lucha de Esta Por Elecciones Libres y Competitiva.” M.A. in History, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.
Levitsky, S., and L. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Lueders, H., and E. Lust. 2018. “Multiple Measurements, Elusive Agreement, and Unstable Outcomes in the Study of Regime Change.” *The Journal of Politics*: 736–741. February. https://doi.org/10.1086/696864.
Mainwaring, S., D. Brinks, and A. Pérez-Liñán. 2001. “Classifying Political Regimes in Latin.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (1): 37–65. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687584.
Marco Serra, Y. 2010. “Tras Las Huellas de La Utopía Sufragista - Las Luchas Por El Sufragio Femenino En Panamá, 1923-1946.” *Revista Procesos Sociales - FLACSO* (2): 115–136.
Paxton, P. 2000. “Women’s Suffrage in the Measurement of Democracy: Problems of Operationalization.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (3): 92–111.
Reedy, D. R. 2000. *Magda Portal, la pasionaria peruana: biografía intelectual*. Lima: Ediciones Flora Tristán.
Rock, D., ed. 1994. *Latin America in the 1940s: War and Postwar Transitions*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Smith, P. H. 2012. *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Tagle Errázuriz, J. 2005. “Discursos En Torno al Sufragio Femenino En Chile 1865-1949.” *Historia (Santiago)* 38 (2): 257–286. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0717-71942005000200002.
Towns, A. 2010. *Women and States: Norms and Hierarchies in International Society*. Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press.