

The Symbiotic Relationship between Order and Disorder

James Robinson

Harvard

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Introduction: Liberty and Order?

- Marco Palacios argues that Colombia has seen “neither liberty nor order.”
- But the phenomenon is more complicated than this. In Colombia there is liberty and its absence, order and disorder, all at the same time.
- Example #1: The mass fraud implemented by paramilitaries in Colombian elections after 2002.
- Example #2: The ‘false positive scandal’ - Colombian army soldiers thought is acceptable to illegally assassinate 3,000 (??) people for promotions and holidays.
- What I want to emphasize here is not just how extraordinary these things are, but also how the judiciary has tried to clean them up.

The Twenty Senators who received most votes in “Paramilitary municipalities”

Table A1: Top 20 Senators By Vote Share in Paramilitary Areas Using Displaced

Senator		Third Parties (1)	Reelection (2)	Justice and Peace Law (3)	Status (4)	% Votes In Paramilitary Zones (5)
FLOR MODESTA	GNECCO ARREGOCES	yes	yes	yes		65.67
JAIRO ENRIQUE	MERLANO FERNANDEZ	yes	yes	yes	Arrested (Not Guilty)	65.37
SALOMON DE JESUS	SAADE ABDALA	no	yes		Investigated	65.23
DIEB NICOLAS	MALOOF CUSE	yes	yes	yes	Arrested (Guilty)	61.17
MAURICIO	PIMIENTO BARRERA	yes	yes	yes	Arrested (Guilty)	58.74
ALVARO ALFONSO	GARCIA ROMERO	yes			Arrested (Guilty)	52.46
CARLOS ARTURO	CLAVIJO VARGAS	yes			Arrested	50.94
JUAN CARLOS	MARTINEZ SINISTERRA	yes	yes		Arrested	42.02
JESUS LEON	PUELLO CHAMIE	no	yes			38.95
WILLIAM ALFONSO	MONTES MEDINA	yes	yes	yes	Arrested (Not Guilty)	34.22
ALVARO	ARAUJO CASTRO	yes		yes	Arrested	32.66
PIEDAD DEL SOCORRO	ZUCCARDI DE GARCIA	no	yes	yes		31.72
VICENTE	BLEL SAAD	yes	yes	yes	Arrested	29.51
LUIS EDUARDO	VIVES LACOUTURE	yes	yes	yes	Arrested (Guilty)	27.86
PIEDAD	CORDOBA	no	no	no		27.63
GABRIEL	ACOSTA BENDEK	yes				26.05
HUGO	SERRANO GOMEZ	no	no			25.09
MIGUEL ALFONSO	DE LA ESPRIELLA BURG	yes	yes	yes	Arrested (Guilty)	23.96
LUIS ALBERTO	GIL CASTILLO	yes	yes		Arrested	23.83
RUBEN DARIO	QUINTERO VILLADA	yes			Arrested	23.34

Source: Acemoglu, Daron, James A. Robinson and Rafael J. Santos (2009) “The Monopoly of Violence: Evidence from Colombia,” Unpublished.

A Stable Equilibrium?

- How is it possible to have order and disorder at the same time?
- This doesn't sound like a stable equilibrium. Either a society will fall apart converge to complete disorder (such as in many African countries like the Congo, Liberia or Sierra Leone) or instead it will eliminate disorder and converge to complete order.
- But order and disorder have been living together for a long time in Colombia.
- Consider the 1922 presidential election.
- There are also many case studies of long-running disorder - Trujillo in Valle at least since the 1920s.

Fraudulent Ballots cast in the 1922 Colombian Presidential Election

Department	Total votes	Pedro Nel Ospina	Benjamin Herrera	Ospina-Herrera	Stuffed Ballots	Stuffed	Total Population in 1918
						Ballots/Total votes	
Antioquia	76,420	47,987	28,403	19,584	11,658	15.3%	821,027
Arauca	425	146	278	-132	10	2.4%	6,070
Atlantico	9,905	4,840	5,064	-224	1,488	15.0%	117,915
Bolivar	49,548	33,650	15,888	17,762	29,207	58.9%	416,561
Boyaca	83,764	61,977	21,747	40,230	39,688	47.4%	590,587
Caldas	50,186	28,610	21,566	7,044	7,104	14.2%	419,697
Caqueta	363	270	93	177	124	34.1%	2,957
Casanare	68	10	58	-48	1	2.1%	1,382
Cauca	23,024	13,644	9,367	4,277	8,416	36.6%	238,071
Choco	7,214	3,467	3,746	-279	2,649	36.7%	61,371
Cundinamarca	117,471	76,634	40,723	35,911	48,517	41.3%	800,439
Guajira	1,460	1,063	397	666	1,407	96.4%	2,908
Huila	13,864	8,830	4,997	3,833	2,513	18.1%	181,202
Magdalena	18,577	11,657	6,918	4,739	7,465	40.2%	186,254
Meta	2,477	1,255	1,221	34	808	32.6%	10,695
Narino	29,843	23,880	5,959	17,921	4,237	14.2%	327,367
Norte de Santander	35,705	26,894	8,804	18,090	17,449	48.9%	222,552
Putumayo	850	660	190	470	414	48.7%	5,009
San Andres y Providencia	566	465	100	365	0	0.0%	5,953
Santander	55,492	37,784	17,699	20,085	23,926	43.1%	439,161
Tolima	39,083	19,019	20,057	-1,038	18,485	47.3%	320,084
Valle	35,547	17,284	18,249	-965	4,440	12.5%	266,371
TOTAL	651,852	420,026	231,524	188,502	230,007	35.3%	5,443,633

Source: Chaves, Isaías N, Leopoldo Fergusson and James A. Robinson (2009) “He who Counts Elects: Determinants of Fraud in the 1922 Colombian Presidential Elections,” Unpublished.

Order and Disorder in Symbiotic Equilibrium

- The natural model which predicts that this simultaneity is unstable is not correct.
- I conjecture that there are many mechanisms that make order and disorder complements not alternatives.
- Let me outline three.

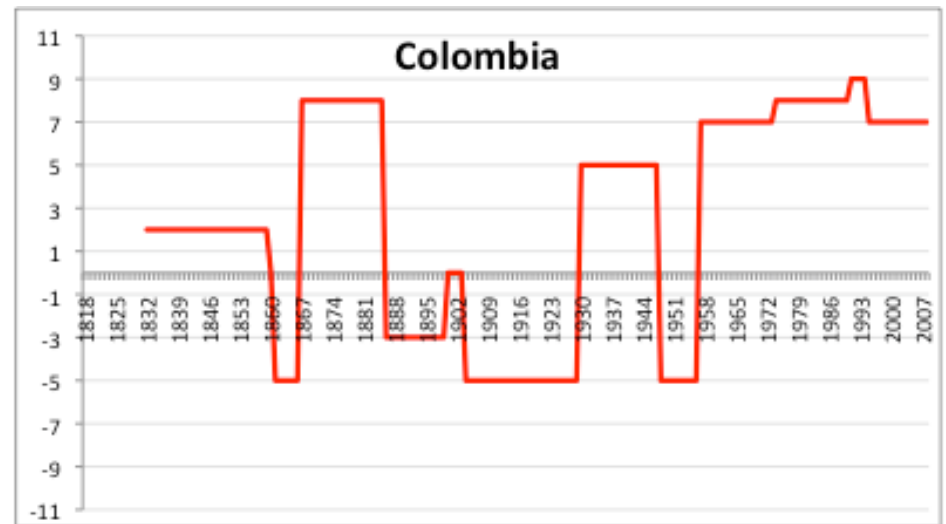
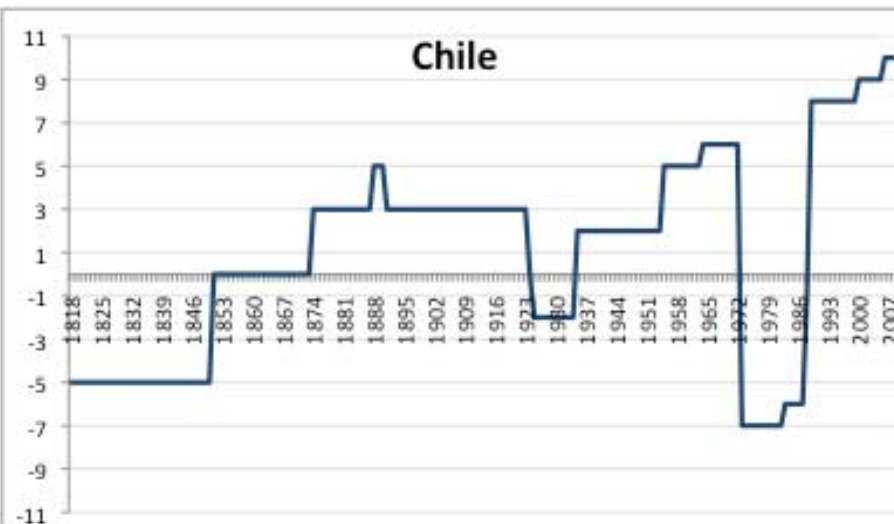
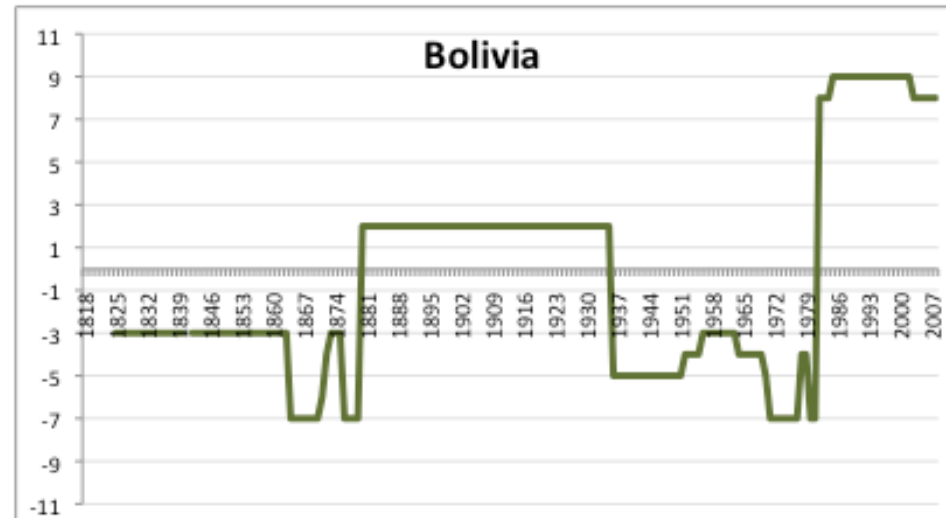
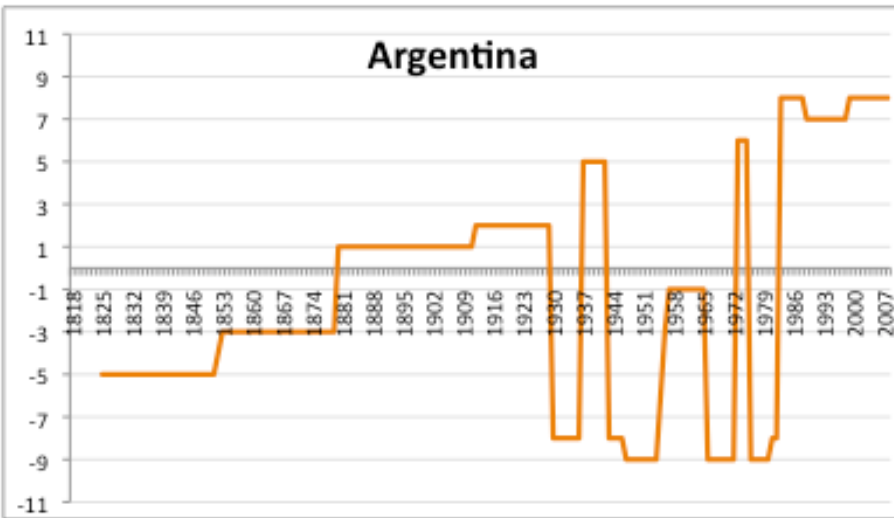
Mechanism #1: Disorder lowers the supply price of votes

- The AUC developed a political project at Sante Fé de Ralito and elsewhere in collaboration with regional politicians.
- Coercion and fraud delivered electoral victories for these politicians (see first slide) but they also delivered votes for national politicians.
- Disorder produces votes at very low cost for politicians relative to alternatives - buying votes, making policy concessions.
- The sub-contracting of the violence allows the state plausible deniability and to maintain international recognition.

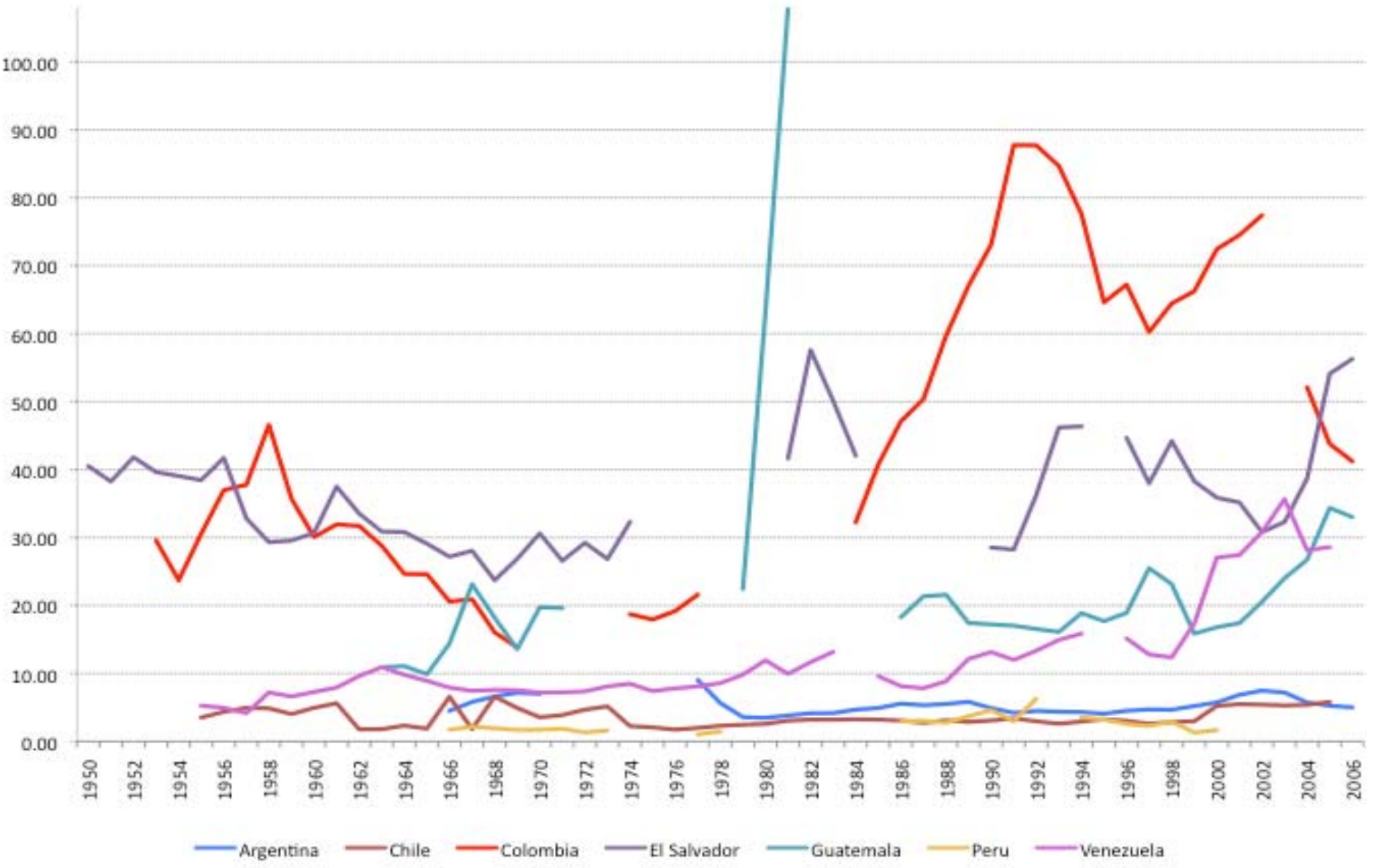
Mechanism #2: Disorder makes democracy 'elite friendly'

- Let's start with a puzzle: as Rosa Luxemburg put it, in democracy you cast "paper stones" (ballots not real stones). In this standard view democracy is supposed to be a ritualized form of conflict resolution. By creating political equality it buys stability.
- But this is not the story of democracy in Colombia. Persistent democracy has been accompanied for decades by the highest homicide rates in the world.

Democracy since Independence in Latin America (From Polity IV Database)



Homicide Rates in Latin America 1950-2006 (homicides per 100,000 people)



Roots of Colombian Democracy

- The origins of democracy in Colombia are very different from those in other parts of the world
- When the British Prime Minister Earl Grey proposed the First Reform Act in 1832 he argued:

“There is no-one more decided against annual Parliaments, universal suffrage and the ballot, than I am. ... The principle of my reform is, to prevent the necessity of revolution ... reforming to preserve and not to overthrow.”

- In Colombia democracy arose not from popular pressure but as a method for Liberal and Conservative elites to share power.
- It was an elite project which never substituted paper stones for the real ones.

- How can disorder and democracy be in a symbiotic relationship?
- The problem with creating democracy to resolve intra-elite problems is that it is vulnerable to entry by groups with more radical policy agendas.
- Violence is a way of deterring entry - think of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the Unión Patriótica, Jaime Pardo, Bernardo Jaramillo, Luis Carlos Galán, Carlos Pizarro...
- This is one of the ways democracy has been stable in Colombia. In Chile the military had to take over the state to murder 3,000 opponents. In Colombia one can do this without overthrowing democracy.

Mechanism #3: The Need for Enemies

- Once you are in the order/disorder equilibrium many other mechanisms come into play and there are many political disincentives for eliminating disorder.
- For example, imagine there is a politician who has a comparative advantage in eliminating the guerilla (maybe because he particularly hates them, or he has special military experience). If the median voter wants to intensify the fight against the guerilla then this gives such a politician an electoral advantage over other politicians lacking this advantage.
- But such a politician has to keep the guerilla alive or he kills the advantage - he needs enemies to sustain his electoral advantage.

Conclusions

- I think there are many ways in which order feeds disorder and vice versa.
- The poor economic consequences of this are clear. The orderly side of Colombia has delivered good macroeconomic policy avoided populism, etc. The disorderly side has undermined property and human rights and offset the good economic effects of order. This is why Colombia's long-run economic performance is poor despite some positives.
- Why did Colombia get into this equilibrium and not other Latin American countries? My own conjecture is that this is the resilience of the 19th century parties (Mechanisms #1 and #2 are closely related to this).