**South of the Border: The Rise of the New Left**

Kelsey Holtz

4817369

SISU-214 (001)

Professor Giraudy

1 April 2021

Word Count: 705

At the beginning of the 21st century Latin America began to undergo a massive political swing to the left that resulted in the creation of the New Left. The New Left has many characteristics and beliefs that flowed throughout the policies and governments of many Latin American countries (*The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*). The New Left has strong beliefs in electoral democracy, state regulation of the market, and independence from centralized power. Along with the main beliefs, there are also main policies that include a commitment to reducing poverty and inequality, redistribution of resources, the use of public authority to erode social hierarchies, and a need to strengthen the voice of marginalized groups (Class #13 Notes). All of these policies and beliefs are used by both the contestatory left and the moderate left with the main difference being that the actions done by the contestatory left are generally more extreme.

Throughout Latin America there are many examples of the New Left for both the contestatory and moderate lefts. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez was a left-wing politician who fit into the mold of the contestatory left which is more antagonistic towards neoliberalism which is displayed in many of his policies (Stone). By increasing the role of the state in the market and in trade he was able to reduce inequality throughout the country. Some of his main policies that helped reduce inequality and poverty were increasing the production of agriculture, such as corn production, and also increased the revenue from oil, which was a large problem for the United States (Stone). Another example of a prevalent New Left leader from Latin America is Evo Morales who was the first Indigenous person to become president in Bolivia. Morales, similarly, to Chavez, was also a contestatory left wing leader and was more strictly enforcing left wing policies. Things like the energy industry and the metal industry were reformed and nationalized so that the people of Bolivia could benefit from their labors more than foreign investors (Stone). Morales embraced his Indigenous heritage and through his policies, such as education reform, he was able to fight for more equality for indigenous people as well as other marginalized groups (Stone).

The policies of the New Left often had the goal of fighting for marginalized groups, like in the case of Morales in Bolivia, and this allowed for increased equality that many people favored. Throughout Latin America things like, racial equality, ethnic equality, economic equality, indigenous rights, and deepened democracy were now being fought for which positively impacted the people in Latin America. Along with that, social programs were being expanded so that a larger percentage of the population had access to those benefits (*The Resurgence of the Latin American Left)*. Although these policies were extremely helpful for Latin American countries and the citizens of those countries, many democratic countries, like the United States felt considerable tension growing with Latin American countries.

Although many of the New Left leaders were elected democratically, the lack of possibility for political opposition suggests that the democracies in Latin America are not as democratically run as they should be (*The Resurgence of the Latin American Left)*. Because of a lack of political opposition, many of the New Left leaders could be categorized as populist personas that interact highly with the public in order to secure re-election (Class #13 Notes). The way in which democracy within Latin America interacts with the New Left is much different than how capitalist democratic countries, like the United States, interact with Latin America and its New Left policies. The United States interaction with the New Left was definitely not a positive outlook on how Latin America was running. During the beginning of the New Left, President Bush was in office and did not think highly of the new governments forming in Latin America. Because of the economic reforms and nationalization of resources, prices rose for things like oil, and the United States struggled economically to purchase from Latin American countries (Stone). This struggle that the United States dealt with was turned into a view against the New Left that overshadowed the positive reforms that resulted from the New Left and a decrease in neoliberalism. Although the United States and other countries and corporations disliked the New Left, the New Left in Latin America created many social reforms and helped out many marginalized groups that elevated Latin America socially and economically.

Bibliography

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