

**JORGE ROVIRA MAS\***

**ON DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION  
IN THE SOUTH: COMMENTS ON  
FREMPONG'S PAPER**

FIRST OF ALL, I would like to congratulate CLACSO-APISA-CODES-RIA for the organization of this unique and important event and I want thank Ciska Raventós Vorst, my colleague at the Social Sciences Research Institute of the Universidad de Costa Rica, for her invitation to come here and comment on this interesting paper. Last, but not least, I want to express my greetings to Professor Frempong today – March 6th 2007– when the people in the Republic of Ghana are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their Independence.

I have organized my comments in five points or propositions.

**MY FIRST POINT IS THIS**

This paper, from a theoretical point of view, falls within the mainstream approach for the study of the third wave of democratization, known as the *transition/consolidation paradigm*. This wave began in South Europe in 1974 (Portugal and Greece in 1974, and Spain in 1975) and since then has spread all over the world.

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The start of the systematic analysis of this process, specifically the transition to democracy from authoritarian regimes, was spurred by the book edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Lawrence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986). A decade later, these efforts were further explored through two new books devoted to the problems of democratic consolidation: *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies. Themes and Perspectives* and *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies. Regional Challenges* (1997), both edited by Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien.

Although not commonly acknowledged, it was in Central America where the third wave first started in Latin America. The first process of this kind was the *replacement*<sup>1</sup> in 1979 of the Somoza authoritarian regime by the sandinistas in Nicaragua. Immediately after that, in Honduras in 1980, the transition to democracy began when the military government gave up power and, by means of *transplacement*, started the election processes which has held up to this day. The same thing came about in El Salvador (1980, 1982, 1984), and by *transformation* in Guatemala (1984, 1985)<sup>2</sup>, the last country in this region that began the transition and completed the first steps of the democratic consolidation dynamic. In fact, the transition to democracy in Central America as a whole took a long time, from 1979 to 1996, and concluded with the signing of Peace Accords in Guatemala in December of the latter year. All this included civil wars within countries, the low intensity war against the sandinistas in Nicaragua held by the Reagan Administration (1981-1989) in the United States, as well as intense, extended diplomatic work, in which many Latin American governments participated, for around fifteen years.

In my work on the different processes of democratic consolidation in Central America, I have reached the conclusion that there are

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1 We can theoretically distinguish "[...] three broad types of processes. Transformations (or in Linz 's phrase, *reforma*) occurred when the elites in power took the lead in bringing about democracy. Replacement (Linz 's *ruptura*) occurred when opposition groups took the lead in bringing about democracy, and the authoritarian regime collapsed or was overthrown. What might be termed transplacement or "*ruptforma*" occurred when democratization resulted largely from joint action by government and opposition groups". See S. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (USA: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), P. 114.

2 The earliest and deepest analysis about the elections in Central America and their political meaning along the eighties of the past century were developed by Edelberto Torres Rivas. See especially his book *La democracia posible*, San José: Editorial Universitaria de Centro América-Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1987; and his articles, "Democracias de baja intensidad", *Pensamiento Iberoamericano*, 15, Madrid, 1989, and "Centroamérica: La transición autoritaria a la democracia", *Polémica*, 4, Segunda Época, San José de Costa Rica, March 1988.

six crucial factors in searching for democratic consolidation (Rovira Mas, 1992; 1996; 2000; 2002). They are:

- Number 1: The democratic commitment of the elites.
- Number 2: The civil-military relations.
- Number 3: The dynamics of the party system or how well it is functioning in order to institutionalize the main political conflicts in society.
- Number 4: The electoral institutions, their independence from the main formal or real powers in society and their performance to establish the legitimacy of the elections.
- Number 5: The development of a civic or democratic political culture.
- Number 6: The economic performance of the society over the long run. This factor is important because of its indirect influence on the legitimacy of the political regime.

Having said this, my point here is: How have the main political actors that are undertaking the democratic consolidation process in Ghana dealt with the military factor? How have civilians established supremacy over the military there?

This has been a very important issue in Central America and no less in Latin America in general.

### **MY SECOND POINT IS THIS**

As we all know, Juan Linz stated (1990) that democracies with a parliamentary system of government are more durable than others with presidentialism. This thesis was confirmed by Przeworski, Álvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (1997) in their important paper "What Makes Democracies Endure?" delivered to the Taipei Conference of 1995 on democratic consolidation.

British colonies have had a tendency towards this kind of institutional arrangement and Ghana was a British colony. Therefore, I would like to ask Professor Frempong why you chose presidentialism in your country and which historical and cultural factors were relevant, and what kind of political background intervened in choosing it?

### **MY THIRD POINT IS**

Uruguay was the first country in the world to establish state funding for electoral party campaigns as early as 1928, and the second one was Costa Rica in 1956 (Casas, 2002). This is and has been a very important and disputed issue in modern democracies and, of course, in

those that emerged during the third wave of democratization.

Therefore, how do parties fund their electoral campaigns in Ghana? Is there public funding or only private, and how has this influenced electoral competition and democratic consolidation processes?

#### **MY FOURTH POINT IS ANOTHER QUESTION**

We not only have to look at political actors, institutions and the processes of building democratic environments that have been taking place due to the positive outcomes of the transitions and the consolidation of democracies in the South.

What is also important, from a sociological perspective, is to look at the social classes and social forces that have been the main promoters and supporters of democratization. This is what my question is about in the case of Ghana: Which forces have been involved in relation to the level of development of capitalism in this African country?

#### **AND MY LAST POINT IS THIS ONE**

When I read the paper and took into account the factors that the author mentioned in order to comprehend the multiple initiatives undertaken by a certain number of public and private institutions in the name of democratic consolidation, one *idea* and one *institution* stood out for me as the most important things to remember.

The idea is this one. The origin and number of initiatives that different groups of society undertake for democratic consolidation is very important. But, at the same time, as important as this is the cooperation between them, and the capacity for jointly building a *momentum* from many sectors and parts of the society in favor of democracy.

Of all the institutions mentioned in the paper, I am most impressed by a real innovative one: the creation in 1994 of the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC). I think that it was a brilliant political idea, given the circumstances of Ghana after the elections of 1992 and the Constitution adopted in 1993. Even though the composition of the Electoral Commission was very narrow and the influence of the Executive Power in the nomination of its members was very large, this has been a way for the political parties to be indirectly incorporated into the administration of the electoral process. This is always an important point at the very beginning of the institutionalization of democracy.

In some cases in Central America, when guerrillas transformed themselves into political parties and signed Peace Accords, as occurred in 1992 in El Salvador, the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) asked for a chair within the Electoral Court. This was their way to assure conditions to supervise the general elections of 1994, when all the main political actors participated for the first time.

But this issue is always a central one for the democratic commitment of the elites. In Ghana they solved it in an unusual and workable way.

This idea and this institution are indeed innovative lessons from Ghana which can give us a better understanding of the democratic consolidation processes in the South.

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