Tracking Civil Liberty in Latin American and (Post-)Communist Countries

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About the Author

Svend-Erik Skaaning is a doctoral candidate at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. His research interests include Comparative Methodology (including QCA-methods), Civil Liberty, Political Development in Latin American and Post-Communist Countries, Democratization and Liberal Political Theory. The working title of his PHD project is “Democracy besides Elections: An Exploration into the Development and Causes of Respect for Civil Liberties in Latin American and Post-Communist Countries.” The dissertation addresses the extent of civil liberty (freedom of: opinion and expression, assembly and association, religion, movement and residence as well as independent courts) in 20 Latin American and 28 post-communist countries. Skaaning has constructed his own dataset and index on civil liberties based on coding of the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices from 1977 to 2003, which he uses in his descriptive analysis of the development and as the dependent variable in the subsequent causal assessment.

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A case may be made for the view that change is the better policy. ... It can also be argued that the actual facts of history provide an indication of the benefits of change. ... [but] Even if we admit that it is allowable to make a change, does this hold true, or not, of all laws and in all constitutions? And again, should change be attempted by any person whatsoever, or only by certain persons?  
- Aristotle (1962: 72-73 [bk. II, §17-25, 1268b-1269a])

Abstract

The paper utilizes a new dataset on civil liberties covering 20 Latin American and 28 post-communist countries from 1977 to 2003. It is shown that, despite the overall trend in the direction of more liberal regimes in both regions, significant intraregional and interregional disparities existed in this period. The communist regimes were characterized by a stable and severe repression of all civil liberties to a higher degree than other autocracies. Consequently, their collapse initiated a very sudden and steep improvement in the level of civil liberty. In comparison, the Latin American wave was more gradual, uneven and modest; the patterns of repression were more diverse, and the average respect for the specific liberal rights was higher across the period. After the Cold War, however, the gap decreased and the Latin American countries became more homogeneous while the group of former communist countries turned more heterogeneous.

The paper also identifies some regional similarities. The liberal rights were practically respected in the same order throughout the period, i.e., freedom of religion, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and independent courts. Moreover, semi-liberal regimes often constituted a plurality in both regions after 1991. Finally, both Latin American and post-communist countries faced tendencies towards a greater gap between the respect for self-government and civil liberty, respectively, and increasing sub-regional homogeneity.

All in all, the paper provides a comparative account of regime changes that answers some research questions in itself. More important, though, the revealed patterns also suggest hypotheses and propositions that may help explain the regional and country specific similarities and differences found.

The regime changes in Latin America from the mid-1970s onwards and the breakdown of the communist regimes around 1989-1991 were generally received with widespread enthusiasm on behalf of liberal democracy. Even the end of history was proclaimed, in the light of the failures of military and party dictatorships, to provide viable alternatives (Fukuyama, 1992). Others have based a similar optimism on developments in international law assuming that “almost all nations observe
almost all principles of international law and almost all of their obligations almost all of the time” (Henkin, quoted in Hathaway, 2002: 1937). Virtually all of the 20 Latin American and 28 post-communist countries examined have signed and ratified international human rights treatises (as well as national constitutions) that address the civil liberties in consideration (Skaaning, 2006a: 13). A correspondence between formal and practised rights commitments, though, is far from self-evident. Actually, almost any deviation from perfect compliance would constitute a negative gap, so the presence and extent of civil liberty violations gives an indication of the statement’s validity.

Whether the empirical evidence supports the optimistic perspectives is highly questionable and deserves further scrutiny. The Civil Liberty Dataset, compiled by the author (Skaaning, 2006b), provides a good basis for evaluating these positions with regard to civil liberties. By mapping the actual enjoyment and exercise of civil liberties by individuals and groups over space and time – disregarding formal commitments – the patterns will disclose whether the optimism was well-founded. Simultaneously, the results of an extensive descriptive analysis will clarify whether one or more waves of liberalization, understood as general movements towards more liberal regimes, have taken place in the observed period, 1977-2003. It will also show if such trends have been interrupted by stagnation or reverse waves. The enquiry is of course inspired by Huntington’s (1991) claim that a third wave of democratization began with the regime changes in Portugal in 1974 and then moved on to Spain, Greece and Latin America and eventually became a worldwide phenomenon. His statement has lately been revised by scholars who have introduced the notion of a fourth wave of democratization. A wave distinguished from the former either by reference to quantitative differences, i.e., a sudden steep increase in numbers (Doorenspleet, 2005: 44-48), or

1 Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.
2 Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (including Czechoslovakia, USSR and Yugoslavia before their dissolution).
3 1) Independence of courts; 2) freedom of opinion and expression; 3) freedom of assembly and association; 4) freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and 5) freedom of movement and residence.
qualitative differences, i.e., the post-communist setting was characterized by another transitional logic (McFaul, 2002). I do not intend to participate directly in this debate, although the interfaces with my study are obvious.

The purpose of this paper is thus to give a broad descriptive overview of the dominant trends concerning the respect for civil liberties on an aggregate and disaggregate level based on intra- and interregional comparisons. The paper proceeds in four stages. The first part reveals the trends in respect for the five aspects of civil liberty covered by the Civil Liberty Dataset. The second section provides a broad overview of the overall development in state observance of civil liberty as compared to developments with regard to resembling human rights issues, i.e., rights to self-government and personal integrity. Furthermore, a distinction between four regime types is provided based on the CLI scores in order to track more qualitative regime changes over time. Subsequently, the individual countries are at the centre of attention, when their individual changes are compared on a sub-regional basis. Finally, the conclusion sums up the major findings.

I. Trends in Respect for Specific Civil Liberties

The Civil Liberty Dataset allows us to track and compare the development in respect for different civil liberties on a disaggregate level. A comparison of the mean levels of respect across different regions, periods and rights unveils many interesting tendencies. Figure 1 illustrates that the communist countries were characterized by pronounced stability in their severe repression of all civil liberties. Especially the possibilities to express, assemble and associate freely as well as the independence of the courts were restricted, but also the practise of religion and mobility were highly suppressed by the public authorities under communist rule.

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4 Although belonging to the communist bloc, Cuba is treated as a Latin American case.
5 All of the liberties were assessed on the basis of a four-point scale (1-4) – one indicating the lowest level of respect.
At the very end of this period, the attitude to religion and movement was somewhat relaxed – probably due to the glasnost (openness) policy introduced by Gorbachev in the late 1980s. Subsequently, the collapse of communism (1989-1991) led to an extremely steep increase in the respect for all civil liberties. The peak in 1991 was followed by a setback; primarily a consequence of the successor states of the Soviet Union being, on average, less liberal than the former federation. Many of the new presidents tightened their grip on power after a short period of uncertainty and tried to consolidate their position through civil liberty violations. The outbreak of civil wars in the former Yugoslavian republics, Georgia, Tajikistan, Moldova, and Russia as well as the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (cf. Horowitz, 2005) contributed to poor performance in these countries, whereas the institutionalization and consolidation of democratic practices in East-Central Europe pulled in the opposite direction. The last decade has been characterized by stable or slightly increasing levels of respect for most liberties. Only the respect for freedom of religion has moved against the main trend. The revival of religious oppression has been predominant in the former
Soviet republics with Muslim majorities due to simple lack of toleration and/or the circumstance that certain religious communities were considered to represent an oppositional threat.

As shown in figure 2, respect for different civil liberties has not moved in tandem to the same degree in Latin America.

**Figure 2: Mean Level of Respect for Civil Liberties in Latin American Countries, 1977-2003**

The average observance of court independence has been rather invariable on a low level across the observed years. The respect of the other rights were higher, particularly freedom of religion and movement, and tended to improve steadily until the mid-1990s. The trend was only interrupted by a short decrease around 1992, when, among other events, coups in Peru, Guatemala and Haiti affected the civil liberty performance in a negative way. The positive developments, though, reached a maximum between 1995 and 1997, after which some deterioration reoccurred. The quite flagrant decline in respect for freedom of assembly and association primarily reflects that public authorities often handled an increasing number of mass demonstrations illegitimately by introducing bans or acting in an improper violent or harassing way.
Comparing the regions, the average score on respect for all rights was more than one point higher in Latin America before the sudden breakdown of the communist regimes. Except for independence of courts, where the regions had the same scores, the same pattern existed after the Cold War.⁶ Beyond this turning point, however, the gap decreased to differences of around half a point. Another remarkable finding revealed by the figures above is the similar ranking of right observance. In both the post-communist and the Latin American region, freedom of religion and movement are least violated, followed by freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and independent courts, in that order. Thus, the emerging picture is that the rights with more distinct political aspects, i.e., the latter three, tend to be subjected to oppression to a higher degree, and that the successful establishment and functioning of an independent judiciary is a difficult and unlikely achievement.

II. Trends in General Respect for Civil Liberty

To uncover the general development in civil liberty oppression, the assigned scores for the five rights were combined in the Civil Liberty Index (CLI) through simple addition (cf. Skaaning, 2006b: 25-27). However, even though such a description is valuable in itself, a comparison of this development with the level and trends in respect for some of the most resembling human rights issues, i.e., personal integrity rights and self-government rights (Skaaning, 2006a; 2006b), could provide an initial basis for evaluating their internal relationship. The POLITY IV⁷ (POLITY) scores are used to indicate the amount of self-government, whereas the CIRI Personal Integrity Rights Index⁸ (PIRI) is chosen to reflect the observance of personal integrity. These measures are not

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⁶ If nothing else is indicated, the periods referred to as communist/Cold War and post-Cold War are 1977-1988 and 1992-2003, respectively.

⁷ The scores are the difference of two sub-indices measuring democraticness and autocraticness based on five indicators: competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, constraints on executive, regulation of participation and competitiveness of participation (Marshall & Jaggers, 2002). I use data from the POLITY2 variable, where the standardized authority codes have been converted to conventional polity scores.

⁸ The measure is a simple, additive index based on four indicators: extrajudicial killings, disappearances, political imprisonment and torture (Cingranelli & Richards, 1999; Cingranelli & Richards, 2004).
flawless (cf. Munck & Verkuilen, 2002; Skaaning 2006b), but they are certainly among the best available data sources for the present purpose. All measures are rescaled to range from 0 to 100 and their mean scores for the (post-)communist and Latin American countries are displayed in figures 3 and 4, respectively.

**Figure 3: Mean Level of Respect for Rights in the (Post-)Communist Region, 1979-2003**

![Graph showing the mean level of respect for rights in the (post-)communist region from 1979 to 2003.](image)

The development in the CLI scores shows a diminutive improvement throughout the 1980s from a very low starting point. Then, as already noticed on the disaggregate level, a sudden and vast increase took place in connection with the fall of communism, after which a period of general stability was reintroduced on a higher level. Political scientists have applied at least two concepts to capture similar tendencies. One of them is a particular version of a punctuated equilibrium model imported from evolutionary biology by Krasner (1988). It emphasizes moments of openness and rapid innovation followed by long periods of stasis or inertia. Another is that of a critical

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9 As a test of robustness, the regional scores provided by the Freedom House (2004) Civil Liberty Rating (CLR) were rescaled and compared the CLI scores. This procedure showed that the lines did not diverge much; the only difference was that the CLR line declined a bit more after 1991 and then increased slightly again until it reached the virtually exact same level in the last years.
conjuncture, which Collier and Collier (1991: 29; cf. Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 37) define as a period of significant change typically occurring in different ways in different countries and that is expected to produce distinct legacies. The first concept seems to be a good description of the trend, whereas the second offers more analytical value by pointing to the lasting consequences and the likely variation of changes experienced by individual countries.

Moving on to compare the developments in different rights aspects, the figure shows that the respect for civil liberty and democratic self-governance to a large degree went hand in hand across the period; at least until 1996 when an increase in the POLITY score widened the gap. This indicates that the late improvements in the electoral dimension of democracy have not been followed by similar advances with regard to civil liberty issues. The principal focus on elections by international, and to some degree also national, democracy promoting actors could partly explain this situation. Another likely reason is that it is relatively easier to achieve a good record by holding free and fair elections than to prevent discrimination and other more or less covert civil liberty violations.

As to personal integrity rights, they were not violated as much during the last decade of communism as the other rights. This reflects that the terror of the Stalinist period had been replaced by less violent, although still repressive, practices. Moreover, changes in this field began earlier and were more gradual. After the communist breakdown, the level of respect for personal integrity rights was fairly similar to the respect for civil liberty and self-government, but it tended to be more volatile.

The average CLI score for Latin American countries only increased steadily since 1979.\textsuperscript{10} It started out from a medium level and reached a maximum in the mid-1990s followed by a modest,

\textsuperscript{10} Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Cuba are not included until this year.
but noteworthy, decline. In contrast, the respect for self-government was very low in the beginning of the observed period and was later characterized by a rather large and rapid increase until 1990. In the last years, especially 1997-2001, the stabilization of the POLITY scores on a high level and the decrease in CLI implied a widening of the gap between them.

**Figure 4: Mean Level of Respect for Rights in the Latin American Region, 1977-2003**

The respect for personal integrity rights shows yet another pattern. Besides being more volatile, a permanent increase did not occur before 1991 and even after it continued on a comparatively low level. The previous, and in some cases ongoing, struggle between governments and different guerrilla movements in Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Bolivia (cf. Castro, 1999; Wickham-Crowley, 1993), as well as the often brutal fight against the production

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11 A test for robustness, similar to the one described in footnote 7, was carried out for Latin America. It showed that in the beginning of the period the CLI scores were, rather continuously, five points higher than the CLR line until 1990. In the following period, the CLR line declined further until 1993, and it did not show the same tendency to decline again after the mid-1990s. As from year 2000, the lines show the same trend and are placed on fairly similar levels. Some of the difference most likely attributable to differences in focus and measurement (cf. Skaaning, 2006b).
and transport of narcotics (cf. Youngers & Rosin, 2004), have undoubtedly contributed to the poor performance in this human rights area.

An interregional comparison exposes a large difference of respect for civil liberty before the end of the Cold War. Not considering social and economic issues, it apparently constituted the most prominent aspect when it comes to a general disparity. The scores for personal integrity were quite similar during this period, and personal, military or party autocracies in both settings did not hold free and fair elections. Thus, when Kirkpatrick wrote her notorious essay about dictatorships and double standards (1979), in which she declared communist regimes to be worse than other kinds of autocracies, she was right in referring to a systemic difference; a pattern also found on the case level (see below). On the other hand, the argument would have been on more solid ground if she had made a more direct reference to civil liberties as a, and maybe the, crucial aspect distinguishing communist regimes from other autocracies; especially with regard to consolidated regimes.

The super power rivalry between the Soviet Union and the USA, the principal motivation behind Kirkpatrick’s statement, certainly limited the agenda of regime change and diversity in both Latin American and communist countries (McFaul, 2006). USA intervened directly or indirectly in Latin America if crucial economic interest were thought to be at stake and/or if a (potential) government was considered to be too left-leaning and maybe a challenge to alliance relationships. Apart from intervening in Guatemala in 1954, the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Chile in 1973 as well as in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala during the 1980s, USA provided financial, military and moral support to non-democratic regimes (Barnett, 1968; Grandin, 2004). Under certain conditions, though, USA did support liberalization attempts. After the Cold War, the US foreign policy shifted to a more unconditional promotion of liberal-democratic practices (Carothers, 1999; von Hippel, 2000). In comparison, in the Soviet sphere of interest, limits on regime change

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12 The experiences of the Latin American countries were quite dissimilar ranging from mass disappearances and killings in Guatemala and El Salvador to full respect of personal integrity in Costa Rica, whereas not many people were killed in the communist countries, but in all of them other violations such as political imprisonments occurred.
were even more rigid than in Latin America in that any type of transition was prevented. Some of the most obvious manifestations of this mantra were the crackdowns of popular uprisings in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Poland (1956, 1970, 1976, 1981) (Ekiert, 1996; Mason, 1996: 19-28).

Focusing on civil liberty, the communist hegemon tolerated less deviation and change as indicated by the low standard deviation (13.02) and lack of change with regard to the communist countries as compared to the significant changes and higher standard deviation (22.19) that characterized the Latin American countries from 1977 to 1988. However, the poor performance of Albania, Yugoslavia and Romania before 1989 and Cuba after 1991 – under less or no influence from the Soviet Union – underlines that communist rule in itself hindered even a minimal amount of civil liberty. In the post-Cold War period, the general level of respect for civil liberty apparently stabilized, but with regard to standard deviation a contrasting pattern emerged as the Latin American countries became more homogeneous (18.00) and the post-communist countries more heterogeneous (21.71).

An alternative way to present an overview of the general development is to distinguish between four different regime types by introducing three thresholds. As the attributes are considered to be (partly) substitutable and not necessary nor sufficient, the index values have, rather straightforward, been divided into four parts of equal range (0≤anti-liberal≥25; 25<illiberal≥50; 50<semi-liberal≥75; 75<liberal≤100). The labels of the categories reflect the level of liberality they represent.

Figure 5 displays the development between these regime types in the communist and the subsequent post-communist setting. In the beginning of the period, the majority of the communist

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13 In the following, regime type does not refer to all aspects of the political regime concept (cf. Skaaning, 2006c), but only to the respect for civil liberty.

14 Otherwise, we would have to comply with such logic by introducing other classification rules that had to be used on the disaggregate scores (cf. Lauth, 2004: 325-326).
regimes were directly anti-liberal with a few exceptions (i.e., Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia) that were illiberal. No liberal or even semi-liberal regimes existed before 1989, but from then on the liberalization efforts led to a steep decrease in the share of anti-liberal regimes and a corresponding increase in the other regime types. As mentioned above, the decrease in 1992 is an effect of Soviet and Yugoslav dissolutions resulting in more countries in the region with a civil liberty record somewhat worse than the average in 1991. From 1993 and onwards, the ratio between different regime types was characterized by overall stability. The share of liberal regimes improved slightly, and the semi-liberal regimes constituted the plurality and almost the absolute majority.

Figure 5: General Patterns in Regime Types in the (Post-)Communist Region, 1979-2003

In contrast, Latin American semi-liberal regimes were common throughout the whole period, and in the new millennium 70% of all regimes were within this category. Another regional difference is the proportion of illiberal regimes that, although significant in the late 1970s and early 1980s, totally disappeared as from 1995 (see figure 6). Anti-liberal regimes did not gain a strong foothold in the region. In fact, across all the years in consideration, Cuba is the only country continuously
earning this label; thereby it underlines the repressive nature of practised communism, as discussed above.

Figure 6: General Patterns in Regime Types in the Latin American Region, 1977-2003

Only the Nicaraguan case in 1986, ruled by the socialist Sandinistas, is also classified as an anti-liberal regime. The fluctuation displayed in the figure between semi-liberal and liberal regimes is a consequence of the circumstance that many regimes achieve scores that place them in the border region between these regime types with the result that small changes give the impression that they are more fundamental than they really are.

III. Trends in Respect for Civil Liberty in Specific Countries

By now we have focused on the general developments in specific liberties and overall civil liberty, but the individual countries have not really been at the centre of attention yet. The next section will thus uncover and comment on the most striking tendencies in all the countries included in this
study. Through comparisons of five to eight neighbouring countries, the country specific patterns are presented in the context of sub-regional patterns.

**III.i Communist and Post-Communist Countries**

A first look at the East-Central European trajectories shows that the level of repression was quite harsh in Czechoslovakia till the very end of communist rule, whereas citizens in Hungary and Poland experienced somewhat more respect for their civil liberties. In Poland, though, labour demonstrations and the creation of an independent trade union, Solidarity, in 1980 led to the declaration of martial law in December 1981. This act had a (short-term) negative impact on civil liberty as shown in figure 7.

**Figure 7: Respect for Civil Liberty in East-Central European Countries**

![Figure 7: Respect for Civil Liberty in East-Central European Countries](image)

In the period following communist rule, civil liberty has been highly observed in all countries. The Czech Republic has represented the vanguard, almost overtaken by Estonia. Latvia and Slovakia, however, have lagged a little behind. Latvia was primarily troubled by a bad treatment of the
Russian minority and by corruption in the court system. In Slovakia, Meciar applied unfair means to strengthen his rule in Slovakia until he was ousted in the 1998 elections.

Moving ahead from a more liberal communist past than Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, the former Yugoslavian countries diverged greatly in their first years of independence (see figure 8). Slovenia outperformed all the others to a remarkable degree. Macedonia followed the rather stable path of Romania, Bulgaria and Albania with its medium-high observance of civil liberty.

**Figure 8: Respect for Civil Liberty in Balkan Countries**

The war-ridden countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro under Milosevic, and Croatia under Tudjman, were overtaken but, then again, all showed significant improvements when the wars came to an end, and new political leaders were elected.

On a generally lower level of sub-regional respect for civil liberty, we find the Eastern European and Caucasian countries (see figure 9), which all constitute former parts of the Soviet Union. Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and – after a downslide and a partial recovery – Armenia are characterized by a medium extent of civil liberty observance. Azerbaijan and Russia, both headed
by former KGB people\textsuperscript{15} in the final years of this study, were less liberal but, on the other hand, not as much as Belarus. During Lukashenka’s rule, the civil liberty record of this country steadily worsened to the point where the repression is hardly distinguishable from practices carried out during the communist era.

**Figure 9: Respect for Civil Liberty in Eastern European and Caucasian Countries**

![Figure 9](image_url)

Similar to late Belarus, some of the former Soviet republics located in Central Asia, i.e., Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, barely designated any civil liberty to their citizens after gaining independence – as shown in figure 10. The conditions were somewhat better in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan but, on the other hand, the trend in these countries was one of decline. In contrast to the other Central Asian trajectories, Mongolia continuously exposed a fairly high degree of respect for civil liberty after a clear cut with an oppressive communist past.

\textsuperscript{15} Aliyev (1993-2003, succeeded by his son) and Putin (1999-), respectively.
III.ii Latin American Countries

Moving on to Latin America and the Central American countries in particular, figure 11 shows that great fluctuation characterized the respect for civil liberty.
In the civil war ravaged countries Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, the respect for civil liberty very much were characterized by similar patterns with a decrease beginning around 1980 and subsequent improvements to a medium-high level; Nicaragua lagged a bit behind and reached a significantly lower minimum in the mid-term of the Sandinista rule. After the end of military rule, Honduras went through a total opposite process until 1990, whereas Costa Rica made up a notable exception with a constant and high level of liberal rights protection.

Among the remaining Middle American countries examined, a medium-high extent of civil liberty observance was found in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Panama (see figure 12).

**Figure 12: Respect for Civil Liberty in Mexico, Panama and Caribbean Countries**

In Panama, General Noriega increased the repression in his last years in power; a situation that was put to an end by a US military invasion in late 1989. After Duvalier’s (Baby Doc) personal rule came to an end in 1986, Haiti experienced turbulent changes. Advances were revised after a military junta took power in 1991. Followed by a US military intervention in 1994, the civil liberty condition improved, but eventually the new stage was not sustained. Concerning Cuba, the country
stands out with the, by far, worst performance on civil liberty issues in Latin America. Furthermore, the communist rule under Castro’s leadership has only shown very slight improvements after the disintegration of the Soviet Union – its former primary alliance partner.

Among the Andean countries, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru gained civil liberty in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the reduced influence of military in politics. In figure 13, however, it is also evident that Peru faced a remarkable setback.

**Figure 13: Respect for Civil Liberty in Andean Countries**

![Graph showing civil liberty indices for Andean countries](image)

It happened when Fujimori initiated a self-coup\(^\text{16}\) in 1992. He closed the courts and the legislature, suspended the constitution, and ruled by decree (Cameron, 1998). Colombia and, especially, Venezuela entered the years in consideration with a higher standard of liberal practices. On the other hand, their citizens experienced a worsening of the circumstances through the 1990s. As to the Venezuelan case, it is worth mentioning that the decline began before Chavez became president (1998) but also that it continued under his rule.

\(^{16}\)Serrano unsuccessfully tried to repeat the procedure in Guatemala in 1993.
The countries located in the Southern Cone were all under military rule in the late 1970s but, in the following period, they liberalized and reached rather high civil liberty scores – Argentina and Uruguay quite rapidly; Paraguay and Chile slower and later as shown by figure 14. Brazil began its liberalization process before 1979, the first year the country was assessed, so the progress is not captured by the figure. Anyhow, the scores assigned to Brazil in the first decade seem to overestimate its liberality.

Figure 14: Respect for Civil Liberty in Brazil and Southern Cone Countries

IV. Conclusion
A final comparison allowed by the dataset is not carried out, viz., tracking the development of respect for specific civil liberties in individual countries. First of all, it would be too space consuming and make it difficult to keep a crucial overview. The data presentation in the previous sections has already provided an overwhelming level of information hard to cope with in an adequate and clear manner. Secondly, the disaggregated item scores are highly correlated
(Skaaning, 2006b: 24-25), so such an undertaking would probably not add much to the information already gained from the examination above.

The present analysis has shown that, despite the overall trend in the direction of more liberal regimes in both regions, significant intraregional and interregional disparities were present. Until the end of the Cold War, the communist countries were characterized by a stable and rigorous repression of all civil liberties. Not only was the Soviet superpower less tolerant of deviations than its counterpart. Communism in itself also appears to have entailed an immanent incompatibility with civil liberty and to a higher degree than in other autocracies. As a consequence, its collapse virtually started an iminami\textsuperscript{17} – literally meaning a wave of purification. In comparison, the liberalization wave in Latin America was more gradual, uneven and modest; the patterns of repression were more diverse, and the average respect for the specific liberal rights was higher across the period. After the Cold War, however, the gap decreased, and the Latin American countries became more homogeneous while the group of former communist countries turned more heterogeneous.

Not to forget, a number of regional similarities were also revealed. The liberal rights were practically respected in the same order throughout the period, i.e., freedom of religion, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and, the least respected, independent courts. Moreover, in most of the years after 1991, semi-liberal regimes constituted a plurality in both settings. Finally, Latin American and post-communist countries faced similar tendencies towards a greater gap between the respect for self-government and civil liberty, respectively, and an increasing sub-regional homogeneity.

The inter- and intraregional comparisons generated noteworthy findings that other research designs would not have captured. Among other things, they helped us to judge the validity of the,

\textsuperscript{17}The natural phenomenon is also known as a mega-tsunami and is here understood as a sudden and extremely large scale change (in water movements or something else) caused by a point event (landslide, impact, communist breakdown).
direct or indirect, optimism on behalf of liberal regimes aired in the early 1990s. In spite of significant positive changes, especially until this point, the evidence does not suggest any inevitable trend towards a fully liberal world as many countries lately have shown either stability in their repression of civil liberties or a high degree of volatility in their support for liberal rights.

The tracking of developments in respect for civil liberties in this paper was preceded by other papers providing answers to the questions of what civil liberties are (Skaaning, 2006a), and how they can be measured (Skaaning, 2006b). On this background, a natural next step in the sequence would be an attempt to solve yet another puzzle, namely: What explains the differences in the degree of civil liberty respect in the examined countries? As a response to this crucial question deserves deep theoretical reflection and meticulous empirical testing, these aspects are reserved for detailed treatment elsewhere. However, the patterns elucidated in this paper have already provided an invaluable background for such task by directing our attention to theories that can help explain the regional and country specific similarities and differences found.
References


