

Ups and Downs in Latin American Democratization: Elections, Legitimacy and Democratic Resilience (2020–2025)

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Executive Summary

This policy brief examines the trajectory of democratization in Latin America and the Caribbean between 2020 and 2025, a period defined by a profound structural paradox: the continued holding of regular and competitive elections coexists with a sustained erosion of democratic legitimacy, declining institutional trust, and weakening state capacity to guarantee rights, security, and shared rules. Rather than experiencing abrupt authoritarian breakdowns, the region is undergoing processes of gradual democratic hollowing, in which electoral democracy formally persists while its substantive foundations are increasingly strained.

Drawing on comparative evidence from V-Dem, International IDEA, Latinobarómetro, LAPOP, and electoral observation missions conducted by the OAS and the European Union, the brief identifies a pattern of incremental autocratization characterized by disruptive institutional reforms, extreme political polarization, judicialization of politics, systematic disinformation, criminal infiltration of political systems, and a growing unwillingness to accept electoral defeat. These dynamics do not eliminate elections, but progressively weaken checks and balances, political representation, social cohesion, and public confidence in democratic governance.

The year 2025 represents a critical inflection point, closing an unusually dense 2024–2025 super electoral cycle across South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. This cycle included presidential, legislative, and judicial elections, as well as referendums and popular consultations, placing unprecedented pressure on electoral authorities and political systems. Comparative analysis of cases such as Mexico’s popular election of the judiciary, Ecuador’s elections conducted amid acute criminal violence, Peru’s chronic de-institutionalization, and the contrasting trajectories of Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Jamaica, Guyana, and Belize reveals both democratic resilience and deep structural vulnerabilities. At the same time, Venezuela and Cuba continue to consolidate non-competitive regimes, widening the region’s democratic gap.

The brief argues that democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean has neither collapsed nor consolidated. Instead, it has entered a prolonged phase of fragile resilience, in which normative support for democracy remains significant—and has even increased in recent years—while trust in institutions, political parties, and state authority continues to erode. Elections remain the primary mechanism of political competition, but their capacity to generate legitimacy, accountability, and collective trust is increasingly contested.

For Demos Tunisia and partners working in the Global South, the central policy challenge is no longer whether elections take place, but whether democratic systems can restore the credibility of electoral outcomes, protect institutional autonomy, confront criminal capture and illicit financing, integrate democracy and security agendas, and meaningfully incorporate younger generations into democratic life. Addressing these

challenges requires coordinated, comparative, and forward-looking interventions that go beyond electoral procedures and focus on rebuilding the substantive conditions that allow democracy to function, endure, and deliver legitimate outcomes.

1. Regional Overview: Resilient but Strained Democracy

Major comparative indices converge on the assessment that Latin America and the Caribbean are not undergoing an abrupt democratic collapse, but rather a gradual and cumulative erosion. The V-Dem project identifies processes of incremental autocratization; International IDEA documents sustained declines in pillars such as representation, checks on power, and civil liberties; while Latinobarómetro highlights a central paradox: normative support for democracy is increasing, yet trust in democratic institutions continues to decline.^[1]

The Latinobarómetro 2024 Report – Resilient Democracy introduces a crucial analytical shift. After more than a decade of democratic deterioration (2010–2023), 2024 marks a halt and partial reversal of the negative trend. Public support for democracy increased by four percentage points, reaching 52%, the highest level in over a decade. At the same time, the region recorded record-high positive personal economic expectations and growing support for the market economy, even as citizens clearly identify the region’s unresolved structural shortcomings.^[2]

The 2024 elections ended the wave of automatic alternation, with incumbents re-elected in several countries, and marked the closure of post-pandemic economic pessimism. However, a critical contradiction has emerged: people believe their personal future will be better than that of their countries, increasing pressure on governments and raising expectations of immediate change.

Latinobarómetro emphasizes that after nearly thirty years of measurement (1995–2024), democracy in Latin America has neither collapsed nor fully consolidated. Democratic consolidation remains slow, uneven, and conflictual, marked by recurring advances and setbacks. Two structural challenges persist: the dismantling of inequality and the dismantling of authoritarian legacies, the latter being significantly more complex. Political parties appear exhausted, parliaments delegitimized, judicial systems questioned, and elites discredited. Yet recent experiences in countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic demonstrate that political leadership can reverse climates of disenchantment and reactivate democratic attitudes.

In this context, Latin American democracy is becoming resilient, but in an uneven and fragile manner, coexisting with deeply weakened democratic systems.

2. The 2024–2025 Super Electoral Cycle: Competition Under Pressure

The 2024–2025 electoral calendar was one of the densest in recent decades, with national, subnational elections and popular consultations held across nearly all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional electoral calendars produced by CAPEL/IIDH, UNIORE, and Reformas Políticas reveal an unprecedented simultaneity of electoral processes, significantly increasing institutional and political pressure on democratic systems.^[3]

Electoral observation missions identified common regional patterns:

- Extreme party system fragmentation and high electoral volatility
- Judicialization of political disputes and controversial electoral reforms
- Intensive use of digital disinformation and emerging technologies, including AI
- Political violence linked to organized crime and territorial control
- Growing citizen disengagement, particularly among young people

While most electoral processes were technically sound, one of the most significant challenges was the acceptance of electoral defeat as a basic democratic norm. In several countries, results were contested without conclusive evidence, undermining trust in electoral authorities and deepening political polarization.

3. Critical Axes of Democratization: Comparative Lessons

3.1 Disruptive Institutional Reforms and Democratic Checks and Balances

The popular election of the judiciary in Mexico (2025) represents an unprecedented global milestone. The OAS Electoral Observation Mission recognized the organizational capacity of the process, but warned of extremely low turnout (approximately 13%), high levels of invalid voting, and structural risks to judicial independence. This case illustrates how reforms promoted under the banner of democratization can undermine checks and balances when they lack broad consensus and public deliberation. Mexico has thus become a central laboratory for global debates on the limits of plebiscitary democracy applied to non-majoritarian institutions.

3.2 Security, Legitimacy, and Governability

Ecuador clearly exemplifies the challenges of maintaining security, legitimacy, and governability in highly contested democratic contexts. The general elections and the presidential runoff in April 2025 took place amid high levels of criminal violence, states of emergency, and the militarisation of security forces, particularly in regions affected by organized crime and illicit economies. Electoral observation missions reported that procedures were conducted according to regulations and with formal normality, but

noted that widespread insecurity significantly affects political competition, campaigns, and voter participation, especially in vulnerable communities.^[4]

During the April 2025 presidential runoff, the initial refusal of a candidate to recognize the official results amplified regional concerns about the erosion of norms regarding the acceptance of electoral defeat, reinforcing perceptions of political instability and undermining trust in democratic institutions.^[5]

In contrast, the referendum and popular consultation held in November 2025 were fully rejected by voters. This outcome was interpreted both as a punishment vote against government performance and as evidence of deficiencies in communication, citizen participation, and democratic deliberation. The lack of access to clear information, combined with limited spaces for meaningful public debate, contributed to low understanding of the proposals and distrust in the consultation process.^[6]

Recent journalistic investigations have documented how contractors linked to criminal actors have penetrated political campaigns and state institutions, financing candidacies or influencing public decisions. These connections allow criminal networks to operate within formal state structures, affecting transparency, accountability, and the impartiality of electoral and judicial institutions. The presence of these actors in campaigns and public institutions not only compromises governance but also erodes democratic legitimacy, generating perceptions of political capture and systemic corruption.

This scenario illustrates the interconnection between security and democratic legitimacy. Persistent violence and criminal infiltration limit citizens' ability to participate freely in political life and challenge the state's capacity to enforce law and order. Electoral administration, while technically competent, faces constraints imposed by territorial control by criminal actors, fragile local institutions, and social polarization, demonstrating that governability depends not only on electoral procedures but also on broader structural conditions of security, institutional strength, and public trust. Ecuador shows how electoral democracy can be formally maintained while deep vulnerabilities in legitimacy and governance persist, creating systemic risks for democratic resilience.

3.3 Chronic De-institutionalization

Peru represents one of the deepest democratic setbacks in the region. Reports by International IDEA and human rights organizations document a simultaneous deterioration in political representation, press freedom, and governability.^[7] Although elections continue to be held, the proliferation of candidates, party weakness, and the legitimacy crisis affecting both Congress and the Executive reflect a process of persistent de-institutionalization, where electoral democracy survives without stability or public trust.^[8]

This phenomenon is further aggravated by the frequent turnover of presidents and executive instability in recent years. Since 2018, Peru has experienced multiple presidential changes, including resignations, impeachments, and vacancy proceedings,

resulting in short-lived administrations with limited capacity to implement long-term policies. Such frequent rotation weakens administrative continuity, reduces institutional credibility, and generates political uncertainty that directly affects citizen trust and international perceptions of the country's democratic stability.

Additionally, de-institutionalization is evident in the inability of Congress to consolidate stable majorities, the judicialization of politics, and extreme party fragmentation. The media, while active, face pressures and attacks that undermine press freedom and contribute to social polarization. In this context, Peruvian democracy functions formally, with periodic elections, but lacks the strong institutional foundations needed to ensure effective governance, stability, and sustained citizen confidence.

3.4 Alternation under Polarization

Chile, Colombia, and Brazil demonstrate electoral resilience through peaceful alternation of power and relatively robust institutional frameworks that allow governments to change without major disruptions to democratic procedures. These cases show that, despite historic and structural challenges, democratic mechanisms such as elections, legislative processes, and judicial oversight continue to operate effectively. For instance, Chile has maintained regular presidential and parliamentary elections, even amid intense social mobilizations and debates over constitutional reforms. Colombia has seen alternation between parties while simultaneously managing peace agreements and regional security concerns. Brazil continues to conduct elections under strong legal frameworks and active civil society oversight, despite political polarization and attempts to challenge institutional boundaries.

However, these countries also face persistent challenges that strain democratic governance. High levels of political polarization limit cross-party negotiation and consensus-building, while legislative fragmentation—with multiple parties holding small shares of seats—complicates coalition-building and policymaking. Erosion of the party system reduces the clarity of political alternatives and weakens the link between citizens and their representatives. Additionally, the proliferation of disinformation, especially through social media and emerging digital platforms, has deepened societal divides and eroded trust in electoral outcomes and government institutions. These dynamics affect not only governance efficiency but also public confidence in democratic norms.

Despite these constraints, democracy continues to function in Chile, Colombia, and Brazil, demonstrating resilience in electoral management, institutional checks, and civic engagement. Yet, the permanent strain imposed by polarization, disinformation, and institutional limitations highlights the fragility of democratic consolidation in contexts where social divisions, economic inequalities, and political contestation intersect. These countries exemplify that electoral alternation alone is insufficient to guarantee democratic stability; durable governance requires continuous efforts to strengthen institutions, foster inclusive political dialogue, and counter polarizing forces.

3.5 Central America: Elections under Pressure and Authoritarian Closure

Between 2024 and 2025, Central America exhibits a pattern of differentiated democratic erosion, where the formal holding of elections coexists with procedural disputes, restrictive institutional reforms, and, in some cases, the complete closure of political competition. The region spans a continuum ranging from weakened electoral democracies to fully non-competitive authoritarian regimes.

The November 2025 general elections in Honduras were marked by significant delays in the transmission and publication of results, technical failures, and a narrow margin between leading candidates. International electoral observation missions did not identify systematic fraud; however, they described the delays as unjustifiable and warned that they seriously undermined public confidence and the credibility of electoral authorities. The Honduran case illustrates how procedural deficiencies—even in the absence of proven fraud—can erode democratic legitimacy when electoral outcomes are not timely, transparent, and fully verifiable.[9]

In El Salvador, democratic deterioration has advanced primarily through legal and constitutional reforms that have altered the rules of political competition. Changes to the legislative and municipal electoral systems, combined with the removal of presidential term limits and the extension of mandates, have weakened institutional checks and concentrated power in the executive branch. Although elections continue to be held, the resulting normative framework increasingly constrains effective competition, pluralism, and democratic accountability.[10]

Nicaragua represents the most extreme case of authoritarian closure in the subregion. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the country is experiencing a rupture of democratic order characterized by the absolute concentration of power, the cancellation of legal status of opposition political parties, the persecution, imprisonment, and forced exile of political leaders, and the full control of electoral authorities by the Executive. In this context, electoral processes no longer function as mechanisms of genuine political competition but operate solely as instruments of regime ratification, lacking minimum guarantees of political pluralism and the effective exercise of civil and political rights, thereby consolidating a closed authoritarian system.[11]

Taken together, Central America demonstrates that the existence of elections alone is insufficient to sustain democracy. Democratic legitimacy depends on procedural integrity, institutional independence, and the effective protection of political rights—conditions that remain deeply compromised across much of the region.

3.6 The Caribbean: Strong Institutions, Uneven Legitimacy

The 2025 elections in Jamaica and Guyana provide a revealing contrast in how electoral processes can uphold democratic norms under different contexts. In Jamaica, the general elections were marked by peaceful campaigns, institutional professionalism, and adherence to political codes of conduct, reflecting a high degree of civic maturity.

The OAS Electoral Observation Mission (OAS/EOM) congratulated the people and authorities for conducting the elections, highlighting the orderly voting process, the commitment of polling staff and electoral officials, and the respectful acceptance of results by both the government and the opposition, including the re-election of Prime Minister Andrew Holness. However, voter turnout was low, at around 39.5% of registered voters, indicating democratic fatigue and citizen disengagement, and posing challenges for mobilization and the strengthening of public trust in the electoral system.^[12]

In contrast, the 2025 General and Regional Elections in Guyana represented a substantial effort to restore trust and institutional credibility following the post-electoral crisis of 2020. The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) implemented technical and procedural reforms to improve transparency, inclusiveness, and administrative efficiency, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Positive aspects included the professional management of polling stations, effective communication of results, and the inclusion of international and civil society observers, which strengthened confidence in the process. These elections took place in a complex context, as Guyana is also involved in a territorial dispute with Venezuela over the Essequibo region, adding an additional factor of political and geopolitical tension. Nevertheless, the electoral process was considered one of the most transparent and professionally managed in the country's recent history, although ethnic-partisan tensions and disputes over electoral authority continue to pose challenges for long-term democratic legitimacy.

Together, these cases illustrate different democratic contexts in the Caribbean. While Jamaica demonstrates the resilience of institutional frameworks in the face of citizen disengagement, Guyana highlights the critical role of technical reforms, institutional professionalization, and international support in reinforcing electoral credibility in a polarized society.^[13] Both examples underline that peaceful and credible elections alone are not sufficient; democratic legitimacy requires trust, citizen participation, and continuous institutional strengthening, even in contexts of geopolitical tension.

3.7 Non-Competitive Regimes and Authoritarian Consolidation under Geopolitical Stress

3.7.1 Venezuela in the Current Conjuncture

In the current conjuncture, Venezuela is undergoing an intensified phase of authoritarian consolidation following a sequence of electoral processes marked by serious legitimacy and transparency deficits. The presidential elections of 2024 were widely questioned by international actors due to the absence of verifiable results, the exclusion of key opposition candidates through selective disqualifications, and the lack of independent electoral oversight, leading several regional and international bodies to refrain from recognising the process as democratic.^[14]

These elections unfolded within a broader context of institutional capture, in which both electoral and judicial authorities have operated under effective subordination to the executive branch, eroding constitutional checks and balances and preventing meaningful political competition. As a result, electoral processes have functioned less as mechanisms of democratic accountability and more as instruments of regime reproduction.[15]

In January 2026, the capture of former president Nicolás Maduro by United States authorities marked a critical rupture in Venezuela's political trajectory. However, rather than triggering a democratic transition, effective control of the state apparatus was transferred de facto to Delcy Rodríguez, a central figure within the former ruling elite. This succession has underscored the continuity of authoritarian governance structures in the absence of Maduro, with power exercised without a renewed electoral mandate.[16]

While the post-capture period has included limited measures such as the approval of a partial political amnesty and the release of some detainees, these actions have not restored core democratic guarantees nor established conditions for free, fair, and competitive elections. From a normative perspective, Venezuela remains governed under a framework of de facto authority without democratic legitimacy, where political rights continue to be constrained and institutional autonomy remains severely compromised.[17]

International responses, particularly from the United States, have emphasised that any durable political stabilisation in Venezuela will require the organisation of genuinely free and democratic elections. At the same time, these actors acknowledge that current internal conditions—marked by institutional weakness, fragmented opposition capacity, and security concerns—preclude an immediate electoral solution.[18] The result is a hybrid scenario: a post-Maduro Venezuela that is no longer personalised around a single leader, yet remains structurally authoritarian.

Taken together, the Venezuelan case illustrates how non-competitive regimes can survive leadership rupture by preserving institutional control and recalibrating authority without restoring popular sovereignty. This configuration poses a significant challenge to democratic theory and practice in the hemisphere, highlighting the limits of leadership removal as a pathway to democratic reconstruction in contexts of deep institutional capture.

3.7.2 Cuba: Structural Non-Competition and the Permanence of Single-Party Rule

Cuba represents a structurally consolidated non-competitive regime in which political pluralism is constitutionally and institutionally precluded. The Communist Party of Cuba retains a monopoly over political power, and electoral processes are organised within a single-party framework that does not permit opposition parties, competitive platforms, or genuine electoral alternation. Elections to the National Assembly of People's Power

function primarily as mechanisms of regime ratification rather than as instruments of political choice or accountability.

The absence of electoral competition in Cuba is reinforced by systematic restrictions on civil and political liberties. Independent political organisation, free media, and autonomous civil society activity are tightly controlled, while the judicial system lacks independence and is frequently employed to sanction dissent. Periodic episodes of social protest have been met with repression, surveillance, and criminalisation of activists, journalists, and emerging civic actors, limiting the space for political contestation or institutional reform.

Unlike Venezuela, Cuba does not currently rely on an active territorial dispute to mobilise nationalist sentiment. Instead, the regime sustains its legitimacy through a persistent narrative of external threat and siege, particularly vis-à-vis the United States. This discourse of permanent aggression and sovereignty under attack has long served to justify political control, restrict freedoms, and frame domestic dissent as externally orchestrated, thereby reinforcing authoritarian stability without the need for overt electoral manipulation.

Regionally, Cuba's continued political closure contributes to normative fragmentation within the inter-American system. While its migration dynamics, diplomatic influence, and symbolic role differ from Venezuela's, the Cuban case underscores the durability of authoritarian governance when institutional design, party monopoly, and sovereignty-based narratives converge. Together, Venezuela and Cuba illustrate distinct but complementary pathways through which non-competitive regimes persist in the hemisphere, challenging democratic norms and limiting the effectiveness of traditional mechanisms of democratic engagement and promotion.

4. Youth and Democracy: Between Disenchantment and Mobilization

Youth are a central actor in the current democratic cycle, yet their engagement reflects a complex duality. Studies by CELAG,^[19] FES,^[20] and KAS^[21] consistently show low levels of party identification and weak ties to traditional political organizations, accompanied by strong criticism of political institutions and elites. Young people often perceive parties, parliaments, and government institutions as inefficient, corrupt, or unresponsive to social demands, which fuels widespread institutional disenchantment.

At the same time, youth are increasingly visible through new forms of social and digital mobilisation. They leverage social media, grassroots movements, community initiatives, and issue-based campaigns to express demands, shape public debates, and influence policy agendas. Movements around climate change, education, gender rights, and anti-corruption exemplify the capacity of young citizens to organise autonomously, often bypassing traditional party structures.

This combination of institutional disillusionment and episodic activism poses a strategic challenge for democratic systems. On one hand, youth disengagement from formal

political channels threatens intergenerational sustainability, weakening party systems and the transmission of civic norms. On the other hand, episodic activism creates opportunities for renewed civic participation, innovation in political engagement, and pressure for institutional reforms, but its impact remains fragmented and inconsistent.

Furthermore, young people face structural barriers that limit meaningful participation, including educational inequalities, economic precarity, limited access to political platforms, and digital divides. The proliferation of disinformation and manipulation of digital spaces also affects how youth perceive politics, sometimes reinforcing distrust or polarisation.

In sum, youth in Latin America and the Caribbean represent both a source of democratic vulnerability and a potential driver of resilience. Harnessing their energy requires intentional policies to strengthen political literacy, institutional trust, participatory mechanisms, and digital literacy, as well as platforms for sustained engagement that can translate episodic activism into durable democratic practices. If these channels are not reinforced, democracies risk losing legitimacy with the next generation, undermining long-term stability and social cohesion.

5. Regional Balance: The Ups and Downs of Democratization

Latin America and the Caribbean continue to display a mixed democratic landscape in which elements of electoral resilience coexist with persistent—and in some cases deepening—structural challenges. Between 2020 and 2025, democracy in the region has neither collapsed nor consolidated. Instead, it is undergoing a prolonged process of redefinition under sustained pressure, where the regular holding of elections increasingly coexists with declining legitimacy, eroding institutional trust, and growing political, social, criminal, and geopolitical tensions.

5.1 Advances (Ups)

5.1.2 Persistence of Competitive Elections

Despite rising polarization, disinformation, criminal violence, and institutional fragility, most countries in the region continue to hold regular and formally competitive elections for executive and legislative offices, and in some cases for judicial authorities. This continuity preserves a minimum procedural democratic baseline and sustains elections as the primary mechanism of political competition and citizen participation.

5.1.2 Peaceful Political Alternation in Several Countries

Countries such as Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic have experienced peaceful transfers of power, demonstrating that democratic institutions can still facilitate alternation even under conditions of high polarization, fragmented party

systems, and constrained governability. These cases indicate that electoral democracy remains operative, although increasingly strained.

5.1.3 Active Electoral Observation and International Cooperation

Regional and international actors—including the OAS, International IDEA, UNDP, AWEB, UNIORE, Transparencia Electoral, and national electoral authorities—have played a central role in electoral observation, technical assistance, and the promotion of transparency standards. Their engagement has helped contain electoral crises, mitigate post-electoral conflicts, and reinforce institutional credibility.

5.1.4 Resilient Normative Support for Democracy

Public opinion data from Latinobarómetro, LAPOP, and national surveys suggest that normative support for democracy remains significant, even as trust in political institutions continues to decline. Citizens still value democracy as a system of government, constituting a fragile but critical source of democratic resilience.

5.2 Setbacks (Downs)

5.2.1 Erosion of Institutional Trust and Political Representation

Confidence in parliaments, political parties, and judicial systems has declined across much of the region, reflecting governance failures, corruption, clientelism, and growing perceptions of elite detachment. This erosion weakens political representation and fuels anti-institutional, populist, and authoritarian responses.

5.2.3 Absence of Binding Electoral Competition

Venezuela illustrates a structural breakdown of elections as binding democratic mechanisms rather than a mere difficulty in accepting electoral defeat. Electoral processes have taken place in a context of disputed integrity, institutional capture, and the absence of independent verification mechanisms, preventing electoral outcomes from functioning as legitimate instruments of political alternation. As a result, elections operate primarily as tools of regime continuity, deepening polarization and further eroding democratic norms and expectations of institutional reconstruction.

5.2.4 Political and Criminal Violence, Territorial Control, and Illicit Influence

In countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, and parts of Central America, organized crime, territorial capture, and politically motivated violence increasingly affect electoral processes. These dynamics restrict citizen participation, distort political competition, and undermine the state's capacity to guarantee security and democratic rights.

5.2.5 Opaque Political Party Financing and Criminal Penetration

Weak regulation, limited oversight, and low transparency in political party and campaign financing constitute a growing systemic risk. Illicit financing—linked to organized crime, corruption networks, and private interests—undermines electoral fairness, facilitates state capture, and erodes public trust. In several contexts, political competition is increasingly shaped not by programmatic debate but by unequal access to financial resources and illicit funding streams.

5.2.6. Persistence of Non-competitive Regimes and Geopolitical Constraints

Venezuela and Cuba remain outside regional democratic standards, consolidating non-competitive regimes through institutional capture, political exclusion, and sovereignty-based narratives. In Venezuela, the current conjuncture has generated expectations of a potential democratic opening, particularly among opposition sectors and international actors. However, such prospects remain delayed and highly constrained, shaped both by domestic authoritarian controls and by external geopolitical interests—particularly those of the United States—which complicate the emergence of a genuinely autonomous, citizen-driven, and electorally grounded democratic transition.

5.2.7 Youth Disengagement and Participation Gaps

While young people are highly active in social and digital mobilization, their low identification with political parties and formal institutions poses long-term risks to democratic sustainability. Without effective channels for political incorporation, democracies face an emerging intergenerational legitimacy deficit.

5.3 Overall Assessment

Democracy in Latin America is not collapsing, but it is undergoing a prolonged and contested transformation. Electoral mechanisms persist across much of the region, yet their substantive democratic content is increasingly undermined by inequality, institutional fragility, polarization, illicit financing, criminal influence, and geopolitical pressures. At the same time, citizen commitment to democratic values, electoral continuity, and international cooperation remain essential—though insufficient—sources of democratic resilience.

6. Recommendations for the Global South

1. Reinforce acceptance of electoral outcomes as a core democratic norm, strengthening independent and credible mechanisms for verification, results transmission, and dispute resolution.
2. Protect the independence of electoral and judicial authorities, ensuring effective autonomy from political interference, economic capture, and criminal influence.

3. Regulate institutional reforms that affect democratic rules, aligning them with international standards and subjecting them to broad, inclusive public deliberation.
4. Strengthen national and international electoral observation, recognizing it as a key tool for transparency, conflict prevention, and public trust.
5. Integrate democracy and security agendas, addressing organized crime, territorial control, and political violence as systemic threats to democratic governance.
6. Reform political party and campaign financing, enhancing transparency, oversight, and enforcement to prevent illicit funding and reduce inequalities in political competition.
7. Combat disinformation and regulate the use of artificial intelligence in electoral processes, safeguarding information ecosystems and preventing voter manipulation.
8. Invest in youth participation, civic education, and digital literacy, creating sustained pathways for political inclusion beyond episodic activism.
9. Promote South–South cooperation and democratic learning, facilitating the exchange of best practices in electoral integrity and institutional resilience.
10. Strengthen political parties, transparency, and accountability frameworks, modernizing party governance, reinforcing anti-corruption mechanisms, and expanding access to public information.

The central challenge for democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean is no longer whether elections take place, but whether they retain the capacity to generate legitimacy, accountability, and collective trust. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated action that reconnects electoral integrity, security, and democratic agency.

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Demos Tunisia

Demos Tunisia Democratic Sustainability Forum is a forum for scholars, activists, practitioners, and decision-makers to engage in activities, conversations, workshops, teaching, conferences and debates that are geared towards the promotion of sustainable democracy and democratic sustainability.

Its normative mantra is that solutions to the challenges for fledgling democracies in Tunisia and the wider Arab World must derive from the locale. Solutions will not come from overseas. They are continuously honed through ever-evolving skills of democratic learning and unlearning. Such pedagogic democratic processes represent dynamic interactions of inclusive, collective, local, global (cross-regional), new and old synergies invested into the healthy innovation and flourishing of good government at the levels of attitudes, values, thought, practice and institutions.

