

Jonas Wolff

## **De-Idealizing the Democratic Civil Peace**

On the Political Economy of Democratic Stabilization and Pacification in South America

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Author's Address:

Jonas Wolff

Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF)

Leimenrode 29

60322 Frankfurt am Main/Germany

Phone: +49 (0)69/959104-49

E-Mail: wolff@hsfk.de

Internet: <http://www.prif.org>

*In the liberal concept of a “democratic civil peace”, an idealistic understanding of democratic stabilization and pacification prevails: Democracy is seen to guarantee political stability and social peace by offering comprehensive representation and participation in political decisions while producing outcomes broadly in accordance with the common interest of society. This contrasts with the procedural quality and the material achievements of most, if not all, really existing democracies. South America is a paradigmatic case: Here, the legitimation of liberal democracy through both procedure and performance is weak and yet ‘third wave democracies’ have managed to survive even harsh economic and political crises. The paper presents a conceptual framework to analyze historically specific patterns of democratic stabilization and pacification. A comparative analysis of the processes of socio-political de- and re-stabilization in Argentina and Ecuador since the late 1990s shows how a ‘de-idealized’ perspective on the democratic civil peace helps explain the viability of democratic regimes that systematically deviate from the ideal-type conditions for democratic survival that have been proposed in the literature.*

## **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

These days, liberal democracy is generally understood as the ultimate means of peacefully resolving socio-political conflict. If countries are to be politically stable and socially pacified, at least in the mid to long run, there is no alternative to democratization –thus the virtual consensus (not only) in the global North-West. Yet, most real-existing democracies are far from corresponding to the idealized image democracy is granted with when it comes to explaining the domestic peace. The persistence of democracy in South America is a case in point. In spite of extreme social inequalities, persistently high poverty rates and regular economic crises, for all the far-reaching ‘deficiencies’ of political institutions that have been identified in the literature, and despite the socio-political crises that have recently escalated into virtual crises of democracy in countries like Argentina, Bolivia, or Ecuador, the region’s democratic regimes have shown a remarkable endurance (Wolff 2005). This experience is rather disturbing for conventional approaches to the “democratic civil peace” (Hegre *et al.* 2001) as the empirical claim regarding the positive relation between democracy and domestic peace is apparently confirmed in the absence of central liberal-democratic assumptions and mechanisms that are supposed to explain democracy’s capacity for stabilization and pacification.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper presents selected results of my dissertation project conducted at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) (cf. Wolff 2007b). The case studies draw on field research –and, especially, on 75 interviews conducted with representatives from social movements, political institutions and the scientific community– in Argentina and Ecuador between October 2004 and March 2005. The support of the Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung (DSF) and of the Internationale Promotions-Centrum (IPC) at the Goethe Universität Frankfurt is gratefully acknowledged. The author thanks the offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Buenos Aires and Quito for their hospitality.

To date, scholars have focused on establishing (and testing) –via large-N studies– the causal *effect* of the democratic civil peace.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the specific dynamics of democratization processes and their effects on the escalation of (internal and external) conflict and violence have been analyzed in quantitative and qualitative studies.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the causal *mechanisms* that –in the ‘positive’ cases of a sustained democratic civil peace– lead from democracy to domestic peace have usually been assumed rather than empirically traced. This corresponds with the idealistic notion of democracy mentioned above that large-N studies refer to when explaining democracy’s capacity to sustain the domestic peace. The present paper sets out to contribute to closing this gap in the research on the democratic civil peace. After summarizing the liberal mainstream view of the democratic civil peace (2.), it, firstly, conceptualizes a broader politico-economic perspective on the relation between democracy and domestic peace that integrates and yet transcends the narrow democratic theorist view (3.). Secondly, the processes of socio-political de- and re-stabilization in Argentina and Ecuador since the late 1990s are traced in order to identify the mechanisms of democratic stabilization and pacification at work.<sup>4</sup> The analysis of these two cases shows how the proposed ‘de-idealized’ perspective helps explain the viability of democratic regimes that systematically deviate from the ideal-type conditions for democratic survival that have been proposed in the literature (4.).

But, first of all, some brief clarifications are indicated regarding the central concepts used. The article uses *democracy* in a minimalist and formal sense, treating all those political regimes as democracies that comply with the basic features of polyarchy, i.e. whose authorities with factual legislative and executive powers are chosen in competitive elections open to inclusive participation (Dahl 1998; Lindblom 1977). In the same manner, a narrow notion of peace in terms of the so-called ‘negative peace’ is applied that is associated with the absence of (civil) war and open violent conflict (Brock 2002). The *democratic civil peace* refers, thus, to a constellation where simultaneously the basic features of democracy are maintained and socio-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Muller/Weede (1990), Goemans (1997), Krain and Myers (1997), Hegre *et al.* (2001), Licklider (2001), Henderson (2002: 103-23), Collier *et al.* (2005) and Gates *et al.* (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mansfield and Snyder (2005), Snyder (2000), Gleditsch and Ward (2000), and Hegre *et al.* (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Case selection follows three considerations. First, in order to identify mechanisms of democratic stabilization and pacification, countries are needed where the democratic civil peace has been successfully established in the first place. Second, as in a ‘normal’ (non-crisis) situation democracy’s capacity to reproduce the domestic peace hides behind the routine of democratic politics, it is reasonable to look at situations where processes of socio-political destabilization and conflict escalation challenge the democratic civil peace. Third, ‘positive’ cases should be selected, i.e. countries where the democratic civil peace is successfully reproduced; democratic stabilization and pacification, in the end, is what is to be explained. In general, Latin America is the region where the puzzle for the democratic civil peace thesis most clearly arises, as this region is characterized by the persistence of a peculiar “triangle” consisting of “electoral democracy, poverty and inequality” (UNDP 2004: 38). Within Latin

political conflict does not escalate into the systematic, collective and lethal use of violence. Hence political destabilization and the escalation of socio-political conflict have to be contained and, conversely, (political) *stabilization* and (socio-political) *pacification* can be understood as the two tasks democracy has to fulfill in order to (re-)produce the democratic civil peace. In this sense, the article refers to *mechanisms of democratic stabilization and pacification* as those processes that are assumed to causally connect democracy and domestic peace.

## 2. The Liberal Self-Image: The Idealistic Explanation of the Democratic Civil Peace

The “civilization” of societal relations in modern or modernizing and thus “by definition conflict- and violence-prone societies” (Senghaas 1993: 1) can be regarded as democracy’s prime achievement. “What is democracy”, Norberto Bobbio (1987: 156) asks rhetorically, “other than a set of rules [...] for the solution of conflicts without bloodshed?” Following Dieter Senghaas (1995: 222), the domestic peace “should be understood as a political process that is non-violent and aims at preventing the use of force, a process which via communication and compromise produces the conditions that social groups [...] can live together without mutually threatening their existence, their sense of justice or the vital interests of some or more members so seriously that they regard it necessary –after having applied all peaceful measures– to resort to violence”. The notion of a *democratic* civil peace implies that democracy constitutes precisely such a political process of “civilised –i.e., [...] non-violent– resolution of unavoidable conflict” (Senghaas 2005: 4) and in this way establishes an order of stable and peaceful social relations.

The quantitative research on the relation between regime type and domestic peace generally confirms the existence of a “democratic civil peace” (Hegre *et al.* 2001): Democratic regimes are more stable than others and –at least, in the long run– less vulnerable to large-scale violence and civil war (Hegre *et al.* 2001; Gates *et al.* 2006; Krain and Myers 1997).<sup>5</sup> At the same time, they are less affected by rebellions and revolutions ‘from below’ (Jenkins and Schock 1992: 173) as well as by political repression (Davenport 1999: 83; 2004) and intentional killings ‘from above’ (Rummel 1995; Davenport 2004). The explanation put forward for this virtue of democracy is straightforward and twofold. From a rationalist perspective, Adam Przeworski (1991: x) argues that for democracy to be durable, it “must simultaneously offer to all such forces a fair chance to compete within the institutional framework and to generate substantive outcomes: It must be fair and effective”. Correspondingly, Håvard Hegre (2004: 34) emphasizes that democracies “both allow discontent to be expressed and have mechanisms to handle it”. Theories of liberal democracy essentially agree. On the one hand, democratic pro-

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America, Argentina and Ecuador most clearly followed the wanted dynamic of socio-political de-stabilization leading to open crises of democracy that ‘short of collapse’ gave way to processes of re-stabilization.

<sup>5</sup> Yet, some large-N studies report contradictory results (cf. Collier *et al.* 2005: 13; Licklider 2001: 44, 46).

cedures enable the broad participation of social groups and, thus, the translation of social interests and values into the political system in a way that its actors and actions appear as generally representing society as a whole (input legitimacy). On the other hand, the democratic system has to produce outcomes that are seen as representing the public interest and as solving problems (Scharpf 1998: 88): Especially as democratic regimes embedded in capitalist societies are confronted with a “nondemocratic economic system“ that “inevitably“ produces unequal endowments of economic, social, and thus political resources (Dahl 1998: 179, 177), legitimacy through procedure has to be complemented by legitimacy through performance (output legitimacy) (cf. Scharpf 1998: 81-3; Habermas 1998: 100-1, 117-8).

The relation between democracy and domestic peace can then be summarized in two mechanisms of democratic stabilization and pacification that together effectively mitigate socio-political conflict. The democratic procedures allow for and stimulate the transformation of the modes of processing socio-political conflict: Democracy offers channels and mechanisms for the institutionalized and peaceful management of conflict. At the same time, the openness and responsiveness of the democratic system implies that pressing problems are taken up and dealt with politically, thereby reducing the sources of conflict. Conflict mitigation as conflict moderation cum conflict alleviation explains the democratic civil peace (see Table 1).

Yet, the empirical evidence as accumulated in large-N studies is not that clear-cut and linear. A virtually consensual finding reads that the relation between democracy and the level of domestic violence takes the shape of an inverted-U with semi-democratic or anocratic regimes being the most unstable and violence-prone political systems as compared to autocratic and democratic ones (cf. Hegre *et al.* 2001; Henderson 2002: 103-23; Marshall and Gurr 2003: 19-20; Muller and Weede 1990). This finding, however, does not lead scholars to question the above model of democratic stabilization and pacification. The curvilinear relation between democracy and domestic peace is attributed to specific authoritarian mechanisms of stabilization and pacification: In contrast to democracy’s capacity to mitigate conflict, coherent autocratic regimes effectively repress conflict. The dangerous intermediate zone is then explained by a problem of “institutional inconsistency” (Gates *et al.* 2006):<sup>6</sup> These intermediate regimes “are not so repressive as to inhibit collective action but are not open enough to provide effective peaceful channels of political participation” (Schock 1996: 105; cf. Hegre *et al.* 2001: 33).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A second dimension of the curvilinear relationship between democracy and domestic peace will not be dealt with here: the (possible) conflict-enhancing effect of democratization as a process of *regime change* (in contrast to mixed political systems as particularly conflict-prone *regime types*). This – contested – finding is, again, not read as undermining the model of democratic stabilization and pacification, but is explained by specific dynamics of democratization processes (cf. Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder 2005; Hegre *et al.* 2001)

<sup>7</sup> Similarly, stable democracies and autocracies are seen as able to at least moderate the translation of economic inequalities into violent political conflict (Schock 1996). Corresponding statistical results are reported for the

While it is precisely the vulnerability of the democratic regime to social protest that largely immunizes it against rebellions and revolutions that would threaten the system (Jenkins and Schock 1992: 173; cf. Tarrow 1998: 161), semi-democratic/semi-authoritarian regimes present potential challengers with the opportunities for rebellion (by renouncing strategies of comprehensive repression) without being able to effectively answer such claims (in the sense of moderating and alleviating socio-political conflict) (cf. Hegre *et al.* 2001: 33).

In the end, the curvilinear finding confirms the model of democratic stabilization and pacification as dual conflict mitigation. This model can be called idealistic in the sense that it explains the democratic civil peace by drawing on the ideal of democracy –the domestic peace is guaranteed as all social groups can make their claims heard and dealt with in a peaceful manner– rather than the ‘realist’ concept of democracy as polyarchy proposed by Dahl and Lindblom.<sup>8</sup> A phenomenon that is measured by referring to a ‘realistically downsized’ concept of procedural democracy is thus explained by drawing on an amazingly ambitious notion of substantial democracy. In addition, for democratic regimes embedded in capitalist societies, comprehensive conflict mitigation cannot in fact explain the democratic civil peace. The existence of structural inequalities that endow minorities with disproportionate property and welfare implies that democratic conflict alleviation systematically violates one crucial condition for the domestic peace Senhaas mentions (see above, 2.): the respect for “the vital interests of some or more members”. Only when the democratic process is sufficiently contained,<sup>9</sup> the socially and economically mighty will submit themselves to the democratic rules of the game (Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992: 8; cf. Przeworski 1991: 10-50). This condition for successful conflict *moderation* –oriented at social groups that normally hold alternative, non-democratic voice and exit options– contradicts a basic premise of conflict *alleviation*: the orientation of democratic policies towards the service of broad societal interests. Thus, in order to secure the democratic civil peace, the “dilemma of equity-enhancing reform versus accommodation of the powers-that-be” (Weyland 1995: 130) must be dealt with.

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relation between regime type and political repression. Again, stable autocracy and full democracy are accompanied by low levels of state repression while a “threshold of democratic pacification” is detected: Only above a certain level of democracy, democratization reduces the amount of repression (Davenport and Armstrong 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Democracy as described by Dahl and Lindblom clashes with the idea of comprehensive conflict mitigation: “Parliamentary democracy as we know it is really bourgeois democracy, a system with democratic forms and bourgeois domination in which the most fundamental decisions are taken not in the interests of all, as prescribed by classical democratic doctrine, but in the interests of the bourgeoisie.” (Dahl 1986: 12; cf. Lindblom 1977)

<sup>9</sup> E.g., by constitutionally securing property and minority rights, by removing political decisions to agencies that are not submitted to direct democratic control, by concentrating political competition on the contest between a view major political parties that compete for the political ‘center’ and/or by establishing an ideological-cultural hegemony that excludes overly ‘radical’ propositions from the field of ‘serious’ political offers.

As the existence of polyarchy constitutes the “main sociopolitical process for approximating (although not achieving) democracy“ (Dahl and Lindblom 1953: 41), the two mechanisms of conflict mitigation can be expected to be relevant parts of an explanation of the democratic civil peace, but there should be ‘something else’ that complements the limited –and, in part, contradictory– amount of conflict moderation and alleviation in really existing democracies. When moving from the now well-documented causal *effect* of the democratic civil peace towards establishing the causal *mechanisms* that connect democracy and domestic peace, we should thus abandon overly idealistic conceptions of democracy and look more closely at the working of those political regimes we are used to call democratic. This said, the present paper does *not* scrutinize the ‘political inconsistency’ explanation of the (potentially) conflict-prone ‘grey zone’ between autocracy and democracy. Instead, it aims at strengthening our understanding of the democratic civil peace where it already exists by moving beyond a purely idealistic conception of democratic conflict regulation.

### **3. Approaching Real-Existing Democracies: A Broader Perspective on Democratic Stabilization and Pacification**

The explanation proposed by the literature for the ‘autocratic domestic peace’ –namely, that autocratic regimes effectively repress (potential) opponents– reveals that the two mechanisms of conflict moderation and alleviation are not the only modes to manage socio-political conflict. Conflict repression, again, can be divided into two types: the *obstruction* of manifest conflict that is based on lowering the capacity for social organization; and *conflict inhibition* that operates through reducing the capacity for collective action. In the former instance, the very formation of conflictive groups is obstructed while in the latter the concrete mobilization and action of already existing groups is inhibited (cf. Tilly 1978: 100). In addition to this distinction between different objects of repression, it is necessary to differentiate two very dissimilar modes of repression: the political/intentional repression and the societal/structural repression. The former ‘top down’ version incorporates a broad range of intentional political action from legally constraining social organization and political activism through discretionary nonviolent measures that (selectively) raise the costs of mobilization and collective action to the open and violent repression of specific social groups.<sup>10</sup> The societal ‘bottom up’ type consists of a broad range of socio-economic, politico-institutional and cognitive-ideological

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<sup>10</sup> “For example, a government can raise a group’s mobilization costs (and thereby raise its costs of collective action) by disrupting its organization, by making communications difficult or inaccessible, by freezing necessary resources such as guns and manpower. Standard repressive measures such as suspending newspapers, drafting strikers, forbidding assemblies, and arresting leaders illustrate the antimobilization avenue. Or a government can operate directly on the costs of collective action by raising penalties, making the targets of the action inaccessible, or inducing a waste of the mobilized resources [...].“ (Tilly 1978: 100)

factors that have a regulative/repressive impact –in terms of non-intentional structuration (Giddens 1984)– as they reduce the capacities and incentives on the part of (potentially) contentious persons and groups to organize, mobilize, and act politically by shaping their preferences, opportunities and interpretations (cf. Waisman 1999: 47-9).

Whereas conflict mitigation enhances the legitimacy of the respective political system, conflict repression inhibits non-mitigated conflict from escalating excessively and, thus, reduces the amount of legitimacy that is required for successful stabilization and pacification (see Table 1). To explain stabilization and pacification, the existence of (latent) conflict in the sense of contradictory interests and values is *per se* unproblematic. A challenge to the political system emerges only if and when these conflictive preferences are articulated by social actors with relevant political resources –and this can be avoided either by political/intentional or via societal/structural repression. The latter concept draws on Barrington Moore’s “forms and mechanisms of self-repression”, “social processes that contain collective endeavors to identify with the human causes of pain and suffering, to reduce or to resist them” (Moore 1984: 116-20). The aim is to heuristically grasp important socio-political dynamics that are missed when one presupposes that all social groups are generally capable of acting collectively and of challenging the political system to a relevant extent.

### 3.1 Societal/Structural Conflict Repression

The need for democracy to comprehensively mitigate socio-political conflict is based –if implicitly– on the notion of generalized societal capacities to organize and act collectively. However, studies in the traditions of Mancur Olson, John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, and Charles Tilly have argued that the emergence of (contentious) collective action is far from being the automatic result of political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization or “relative deprivation” (Gurr 1970). Quite on the contrary, social organization, political mobilization and collective action have to be seen as complex processes that depend on specific (external) conditions and (internal) dynamics.<sup>11</sup> With a view to societal/structural conflict repression, those factors are of concern that determine the capacities and incentives for political mobilization and action on the part of social actors. In this regard, it is possible to distinguish intra-organizational, cognitive-ideological, politico-institutional, and socio-economic dimensions. As regards the *intra-organizational dimension*, Olson (1965) has emphasized that the capacity to provide selective incentives is crucial for the organization, mobilization and action of social

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<sup>11</sup> In their model to explain civil war, Collier *et al.* (2005) make exactly this point – even if within a narrow rationalist framework –, when they emphasize the relevance of specific resources (through primary commodity exports or diasporas) enabling (potential) rebels to mobilize support. Conversely, in the absence of such specific resources available the organization of conflictive groups would be obstructed and/or their continued collective action inhibited without any attempts (by the state) to moderate and/or alleviate the underlying conflict.

groups. Inversely, the manipulation of such incentive structures by state actors –via the provision of competing incentives (clientelism, patronage)– yields a mechanism of political/intentional conflict repression.<sup>12</sup> Studies in the tradition of the resource-mobilization approach (cf. Jenkins 1985; Tarrow 1998: 16) have broadened this rational choice perspective to argue that a group’s economic, communicative, and human resources, the type of organization and its professionalism, the degree of preexisting group organization, and the existence of strategic ‘movement entrepreneurs’ are vital for successful contentious mobilization. At the *cognitive-ideological level*, four conditions for socio-political mobilization and collective action can be identified: It is not enough that a certain grievance exists somewhat ‘objectively’; a situation of deprivation has to be perceived as such, i.e., as wrong and unjust; a shared interpretation regarding the definition of the problem has to emerge; this problem has to be perceived as resolvable; and feasible options for action have to be developed. These conditions have been made explicit mainly by constructivist studies focusing on processes of framing, i.e., on the discursive construction of shared interpretations regarding problem situation, context and options (cf. Tarrow 1998: 106-22; McAdam *et al.* 2001: 41, 44). Collective identities, emotional commitments and moral-based solidarity complement selective incentives in resolving the ‘free-rider problem’ (Jenkins 1985: 9-10).

*Politico-institutional factors* center on the state as the main point of reference and the prime target of contentious collective action (Rucht and Neidhardt 2001: 553). In a more general sense, studies in the tradition of Charles Tilly (1978) highlight the relevance of political opportunity structures (cf. McAdam *et al.* 2001). Besides the fact that political/intentional repression raises the costs of contentious action, this approach emphasizes that political institutions, by offering incentives and opportunities for mobilization and action, shape such processes rather indirectly (Tarrow 1998a: 7). Concrete opportunities evolve when institutional changes create new avenues for participation, when political realignments and intra-elite conflicts facilitate ‘challenges’, and when ‘systemic’ groups are interested in alliances with ‘outsiders’ (*ibid.*: 76; Jenkins 1985: 17). Finally, *socio-economic variables* have contradictory implications. The very grievances causing relative deprivation –e.g., poverty and social inequality– that should stimulate contentious collective action can at the same time systematically inhibit the translation of those grievances into manifest conflict. Poverty and unemployment suggest defensive activities to guarantee subsistence rather than offensive strategies of mobilization (Tilly 1978: 75); descending into poverty and/or unemployment is regularly accompanied by demoralization and individuation (Waisman 1999: 47). Fragmented social structures in general, heterogeneous and mainly informal labor markets in particular, systematically hamper the emergence of

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<sup>12</sup> The second determinant of collective action capacities mentioned by Olson –coercion– points to the significance of the politico-institutional dimension: It is mainly the state that can grant –as, e.g., in corporatist regimes– social organization the right to compulsory membership and/or the monopoly on representation.

common socio-political identities as well as shared perceptions regarding problem situation, context and options. Fragmentation, social descent and insecurity tend to destroy precisely those social networks that are “indispensable structural conditions for the development and stabilization of social movements”: the “social relays’ in the ambit of markets, neighborhoods, universities, firms, clubs etc.” that are vital for the translation of deprivation into mobilization and action (Rucht and Neidhardt 2001: 550). Seen from a rationalist perspective, poverty, low wages and high rates of unemployment lower the opportunity costs of political activism and thus enable rebellion (Collier *et al.* 2005: 17). At the same time, however, these conditions facilitate clientelist and populist modes of political integration and co-optation.

### 3.2 Informal Modes of Conflict Regulation

The research on social movements, rebellion and political violence shows thus that there are good reasons to suppose that what is here called societal/structural repression may constitute a relevant mechanism of stabilization and pacification in democratic regimes. And as really existing democracies around the world demonstrate, systematic limits on collective action capacities, e.g. via socio-economic disempowerment, are obviously compatible with a democratic political regime. This holds to a lesser extent for political/intentional repression. Obviously, the capabilities of democratic regimes to openly repress conflictive groups are restricted by democratic/constitutional procedures and basic human rights standards. Yet, within the limits of the rule of law non-violent and even violent variants of political repression are possible and indeed usual in democratic settings. In addition, political measures can fulfill repressive functions –in the sense of conflict obstruction and/or inhibition– via informal institutions such as clientelism. This points to a further need for broadening the perspective on democratic stabilization and pacification: Conflict mitigation as well as conflict repression do not only follow formal-democratic procedures; informal mechanisms of moderating, alleviating, obstructing and/or inhibiting socio-political conflict have to be included in the explanation of the democratic civil peace. This, at least, is obviously necessary when we aim at extending our theories beyond the democracies in the global North-West (cf. Helmke and Levitsky 2004) . In a democratic setting, social claims do not have to be processed through formal institutions. Lobbying, processes of dialogue and negotiation outside (or at the margin of) democratic institutions, clientelist deals and networks, and outright corruption are informal ways to moderate and alleviate conflict by peaceful means. They offer channels for making social claims heard without resorting to violence and mechanisms for effectively responding to these claims politically (cf. Wolff 2007a). The working of clientelism is a case in point (cf. Roniger 1994: 211-4): For the (collective or individual) client, the direct and particularistic relation to the patron provides a basis to make claims (conflict moderation) and get concrete problems solved (conflict alleviation); for the (collective or individual) patron, the asymmetric relation

of dominance implied by clientelism offers largely peaceful instruments to reduce the capacities of social groups to organize autonomously and to mobilize contentious collective action (political/intentional conflict repression). As argued above, a heterogeneous and atomized socio-economic setting characterized by weak collective identities that already undermines social capacities for collective action (societal/structural repression), in addition, makes individuals and groups vulnerable to clientelist offers. The potential relevance of political/intentional repression, of societal/structural repression and of informal mechanisms of conflict regulation together make a clear case for an analytical perspective that treats the differences between really existing democracies and the democratic ideal not as mere ‘shortcomings’, but as potentially important elements that –although possibly bothering from a normative perspective– help overcome or manage the contradictions and ambivalences inherent in the relation between democracy and domestic peace in socially disparate societies.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4. Democratic Stabilization and Pacification at Work: The Crisis and Persistence of the Democratic Civil Peace in Argentina and Ecuador**

The mechanisms of democratic stabilization and pacification developed above offer a heuristic framework to analyze historically specific configuration of the democratic civil peace. In this second part of the paper, I will now apply the concept to the empirical analysis of two South American democracies (Argentina, Ecuador) that escape the idealistic conceptualization of the democratic civil peace and yet correspond to its expected outcome. In order to explain the persistence of the democratic civil peace, the general question to be posed is: How do really existing democratic regimes successfully reproduce and transform the societal order in a way that processes of political destabilization and socio-political conflict escalation are contained to an extent consistent with the persistence of democracy and social peace? More precisely, I will analyze the mechanisms of stabilization and pacification that enabled the democratic regimes in Argentina and Ecuador to manage socio-political conflict in a way that escalatory processes were stopped, at the latest, short of collapse.

##### **4.1 The *Status Quo Ante*: The Transition to a Democratic Civil Peace of Low Intensity**

Beginning with the transition to democracy in Ecuador in 1979, the so-called third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991) brought democracy to entire South America. And in spite of well-founded expectations to the contrary, the region’s democracies –with the temporary exception of Peru under Fujimori– have persisted and survived even serious challenges (Wolff 2005: 58-60; cf. Mainwaring 1999; Encarnación 2003; Philip 2003). There is abundant empirical evidence that this transition to an –in historical comparison remarkably– durable democ-

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<sup>13</sup> On these contradictions and ambivalences see in greater detail Wolff (2007b: 41-6).

ratic civil peace cannot be ascribed simply to the introduction of democratic regimes that fulfill the dual tasks of conflict mitigation as outlined above. By offering institutionalized access to the political system via elections and political parties and by abolishing the authoritarian regimes as a prime source of popular resistance, the introduction of democracy did lead to a significant decline in contentious collective action, i.e. to conflict moderation and alleviation. Yet, at the same time, the outbreak of the debt crisis and the adoption of neo-liberally guided restructuring of state and society implied diverse hardships for broad parts of the respective societies. Nevertheless, these hardships generally correlated with a reduction in contentious collective action (Kurtz 2004), a coincidence that can plausibly be attributed to the processes conceptualized here as societal/structural conflict repression.

Economic crisis and reform led to rising un- and under-employment, the precarization and informalization of labor, and the reduction of public sector employment which seriously weakened organized labor and popular sector organizations in general. By transforming the state –which included the dismantling of state-corporatist institutions and a selective retreat from certain state functions– neo-liberal restructuring also meant an important “erosion of the state referents for collective action” (Garretón 2001: 244) that added to the ideological crisis of the Left after the demise of the Soviet Union and paralleled the discursive depoliticization implied by the technocratic nature of the hegemonic neo-liberal thinking (Wolff 2005: 62-7).<sup>14</sup> Those broad sectors of society whose interests and values were at best only very partially included and realized in democratic politics were, thus, characterized by systematically limited capacities for organization, mobilization and collective action. This socio-political configuration where societal/structural repression compensates for a limited amount of conflict mitigation can be called a “democratic civil peace of low intensity” (ibid.: 75).<sup>15</sup> Due to space constraints, the present paper cannot describe how this general configuration played out in post-transition Argentina and Ecuador (cf. Wolff 2007b: 118-29, 208-24), but identifies the mechanisms of democratic stabilization and pacification at work by focusing on the crisis of precisely this configuration.

#### **4.2 The Democratic Civil Peace Challenged: The Crisis and Persistence of Democracy**

At the end of the 1990s, South America entered a renewed period of economic stagnation that in some countries escalated in outright crises. Among the most dramatic cases are Argentina

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<sup>14</sup> On the ambivalent nature of this ‘double transformation’ see Kurtz (2004), Smith *et al.* (1994), Oxhorn and Starr (1999), and Weyland (2004).

<sup>15</sup> Intensity, here, refers explicitly to the democratic *quality* –as measured against basic democratic principles (inclusive participation, equal representation, free and fair competition, and balanced responsiveness). Intensity, however, has to be distinguished from the *solidity* of the democratic civil peace: The latter depends not on the amount of conflict mitigation, but on the balance between mitigation and (societal/structural) repression.

and Ecuador. In both countries mutually reinforcing debt, currency and banking crises led to a economic breakdown of extraordinary depth – comparable from a ‘Northern’ perspective only to the Great Depression of the 1930s: At the height of the crisis, GDP per capita collapsed by 12.1% (Argentina, 2002) and 9.7% (Ecuador, 1999), respectively (UNDP 2004b: 154, Tab. 95).<sup>16</sup> The financial collapse forced Argentina to abandon its currency board system –whereby the Argentine *peso* had been fixed to the US dollar since 1991– producing a devaluation of the currency by up to 400%; in Ecuador, conversely, the progressive decline of the Ecuadorian *sucre* drove the country to entirely abandon its own currency and officially adopt the US dollar. Both measures implied a dramatic process of economic restructuring with corresponding socio-economic hardships for broad parts of society.

Escalating social protests accompanied these economic crises and indeed led to open political crises in both countries. In Argentina, a virtual ‘explosion’ of mass protests in December 2001 led to the resignation of elected President Fernando de la Rúa and three of his successors; during the first half of 2002, *cacerolazos* –i.e., pot-banging protests by the urban middle sectors– and *piquetes* –i.e., street blockades by unemployed workers– throughout the country put the interim government led by Eduardo Duhalde under constant pressure. In Ecuador, 1999 saw a whole series of social protests by virtually all social groups. In January 2000, the decision of President Jamil Mahuad to adopt the US dollar as Ecuador’s national currency provoked renewed protests by trade unions, leftist organizations and, especially, the country’s strong indigenous movement; in alliance with ‘rebellious’ sectors among the military, the indigenous movement organized around the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) took Congress, the Supreme Court and, finally, toppled Mahuad. Although this rebellion-turned-coup –under heavy pressure from the ‘international community’– was quickly reversed by the military high command and the presidency handed to former Vice President Gustavo Noboa, the indigenous movement in January 2002 again took to the streets to stage a massive *levantamiento* (uprising) in order to coerce Noboa into negotiating CONAIE’s demands.

As threatening to the political system as these episodes of mass protest and political crisis temporarily appeared in both Argentina and Ecuador, as relatively short-lived they proved in the end. In Argentina, Interim President Duhalde managed to survive until a new president could be elected in April 2003; Néstor Kirchner –although elected by a mere 22%– quickly succeeded in garnering massive support among the population, and at the end of 2003 the macro-political crisis could be regarded as overcome. The amount of social protest had already de-

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<sup>16</sup> Social indicators deteriorated likewise: Urban poverty/indigence rates rose from 28.8%/7.1% (1998) to 57.5%/27.5% (Oct. 2002) in Argentina, from 56.6%/22.2% (1997) to 63.5%/31.3% (1999) in Ecuador; urban unemployment increased from 13.2% (1998) to 21.5% (May 2002) in Argentina, from 9.3% (1997) to 14.4% (1999) in Ecuador (cf. Wolff 2007b: V/XI, Tab. 2/Tab. 6).

clined continuously in 2002 (see Table 2). In Ecuador, the decline in social protests –with the exception of the renewed indigenous uprising in early 2001– is equally clear-cut (see Table 3). In end-2002, Lucio Gutiérrez was elected president as the candidate supported, among others, by the indigenous movement, but when he immediately broke with his election pledges and, during the first eight months in office, with all his allies among the leftist, popular and indigenous sectors, the latter proved unable to mobilize any significant resistance. Thus again, at the end of 2003, the challenge to the Ecuadorian polity exemplified by the coup in 2000 can be regarded as overcome.<sup>17</sup> In both cases, the democratic regimes were able to survive serious crises of democracy that –*ex post*– proved to be “within-regime crises” (Steven Levitsky) only. As will be shown in the following sections, this success in democratic stabilization and pacification can be attributed only in parts to the effective mitigation of socio-political conflict.

#### **4.3 Socio-Political Re-Stabilization and Conflict Regulation in Argentina<sup>18</sup>**

Re-stabilization in Argentina is often explained by pointing to the so-called “K-effect”, referring to President Kirchner’s ability to turn the massive rejection against the political system as a whole into some 80% of public support for him (cf. Natanson 2004). This “K-effect” would indeed directly correspond to the liberal-democratic model: Elections brought to power a new government which by responding to the claims voiced by the (hitherto protesting) population solved the legitimacy crisis of the political system. However, Kirchner only intensified the trend of stabilization and pacification that could be observed well during the interim presidency of Duhalde. Remarkably, the election process in April 2003 itself was characterized less by polarization and/or mobilization than by “apathy and indifference” (Blomeier 2003: 5).

##### *Conflict Alleviation*

Without doubt, alleviating the social consequences of the economic crisis was crucial for taming the mass protests. Since the late 1990s, organizations of unemployed workers had emerged throughout the country, and –by blocking highways and leading the protests in 2001/2002– this *piqueteros* movement had become a serious political problem (Svampa and Pereyra 2004). Making this worse, massive lootings of supermarkets (*saqueos*) accompanied the ‘social explosion’ of December 2001. Upon taking office, Duhalde responded to this challenge by setting up a series of social emergency programs. The most important measure was a monthly pay-

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<sup>17</sup> That Gutiérrez, in the end, was toppled in April 2005 (and replaced by his Vice President Alfredo Palacio) is not to be read as contradicting this observation. The short-term protest movement led by urban middle classes and the ‘traditional’ political parties that led this ‘popular impeachment’ was quite different from the ‘challengers’ this paper is concerned with and did not represent any comparable challenge to the polity and, thus, the democratic civil peace.

<sup>18</sup> This section draws on the empirical analysis in Wolff (2005: 70-75).

ment of about 50 dollars (*Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar*) which started in April 2002 and a year later reached some two million unemployed households (Golbert 2004).

Yet, the alleviation of the worst effects of the crisis was but one function of the *Plan Jefes y Jefas*. On the one hand, the cash transfer did not come near to tackling the problem of poverty, but remained well below the poverty line. On the other, the program started to change the relation between ‘the state’ and ‘the unemployed’: The new financial resources revived the existing party-political patronage networks –especially of the Peronist party to which Duhalde and Kirchner belong (cf. Levitsky 2003, Auyero 2000). The granting of social plans gave the dialogue between the government and the organizations of the unemployed –a dialogue which was started under Duhalde and intensified under Kirchner– the necessary material backing. Through consultation councils (*consejos consultivos*) involving those *piqueteros* groups ready to co-operate with the state, the major national organizations of the unemployed became institutionally involved in implementing the new social policies.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the *Plan Jefes y Jefas* – besides generally contributing to conflict alleviation– included informal measures of selectively moderating and alleviating conflict: The revived party-political patronage networks as well as the quasi-corporatist relations with unemployed organizations contributed to institutionally incorporating and materially responding to important parts of the popular sectors –if to a rather limited extent and in informal ways.

With a view to the broader society, the gradual re-stabilization of the economy in the second half of 2002 proved important. Specific measures of conflict alleviation–e.g., the freezing of the privatized public services’ tariffs– added to this (Wolff 2005: 70-1), as did the general change in economic policies from the currency board-based monetarist to a neo-developmental framework (Godio 2004). Yet in sum, the extent to which the socio-economic sources of the mass protests had been resolved in the relevant time-frame (until end-2003) can be regarded as limited at best. Poverty and indigence rates began a marginal decline in the second half of 2003 and even in 2004 (44.3%/17.0%) remained well above the pre-crisis level of October 2001 (35.9%/11.6%), a level that –following four years of stagnation– was already extremely high by Argentine historical standards. Urban unemployment dropped largely due to the statistical effect attached to the *Plan Jefes y Jefas*; including the recipients of the *Plan*, the unemployment rate in 2004 (19.1%) did not fall below the October 2001 level (18.3%). Continuously growing social expenditures reached the size before the crisis only in 2005, and real wages then remained still some 10% below the pre-devaluation level. In the absence of any measures of systematic redistribution–as could have been, e.g., a reform of the extremely re-

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<sup>19</sup> At the same time, however, the *Plan Jefes y Jefas* contributed massively to strengthening the whole spectrum of unemployed organizations, e.g. by in parts letting *piqueteros* autonomously execute the social plans and the community work attached to it.

gressive tax system— and with a persistently large informal sector, social inequalities consolidated despite economic recuperation.<sup>20</sup>

### *Conflict Moderation*

With a view to conflict moderation, the picture is decidedly ambivalent. On the one hand, there is a remarkable political continuity that contrasts with the call for “They all must go” (*Que se vayan todos*) which characterized the protests in December 2001 and beyond. In fact, President De la Rúa and his entire government was driven from power, but Interim President Duhalde was no political outsider at all, but one of the leading figures of the Peronist party (*Partido Justicialista*, PJ), and his government was based on an alliance with no one else than the former governing parties (*Unión Cívica Radical*—UCR, *Frente por un País Solidario*—Frepasso). President Kirchner represented at least a formerly marginal circle within the Peronist party, but he as well had been a provincial governor for years (if in remote Santa Cruz). Not by accident, Kirchner had been the presidential candidate promoted by Duhalde and —as a sign of continuity— he retained Duhalde’s economy minister Roberto Lavagna. Thus, the massive ‘crisis of representation’ that became obvious in December 2001 was resolved with a limited change of personnel within the traditional political elite.

On the other hand, measures that correspond to the notion of conflict moderation abound in the handling of the Argentine crisis, even if they only partially comply with formal-democratic procedures. First, there is the ‘popular impeachment’ against an elected, but widely disregarded president itself: an exercise in vertical accountability, informally enforced via mass protests. The possibility to prematurely end the mandate of De la Rúa by demonstrating massive repudiation was crucial for containing the spiral of political repression and social unrest, that cost some 30 lives anyway, and for pushing a clear-cut break with past economic policies. When Duhalde, again, was confronted with massive protests —in June 2002, after security forces had killed two protesting *piqueteros*—, he chose the standard measure of moderating conflict in a democratic setting: He announced his intention to bring forward the presidential elections to April 2003. These elections proved an exercise in the formal-democratic taming of social protest. First, they re-oriented the socio-political debate towards the political institutions and compelled the diverse groups and sectors that (had) challenged the ‘traditional’ political elite to somehow position themselves with a view to the ballot. In the end, what had appeared as a broad protest alliance split into various components, in part supporting a whole range of candidates, in part calling for the cast of void ballots. Second, the fragmented political spectrum that competed in these elections finally —and in contrast to the parliamentary elections in October 2001 that had registered a record in blank and void ballots— represented vot-

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Wolff (2007b: 173; V, Tab. 2) for data and sources.

ers with a substantial choice. In particular, Argentines got the chance to reject the ‘economic model’ of the 1990s that had led to the crisis by voting. Had former President Carlos Menem not capitulated before the run-off poll, Kirchner would have won with some 70-80% as forecasted by unambiguous polls (Wolff 2005: 71-2). And the new president did follow up on this mandate by taking up a number of demands articulated by the protests of 2001/2002: Kirchner intensified Duhalde’s turning away from neo-liberal economic policies, stood strong against external claims by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or private foreign creditors, explicitly renounced the political repression of social protest, restructured the politicized Supreme Court and tackled the problem of impunity regarding the massive human rights violations under military rule (cf. Natanson 2004).

These formal-democratic processes of conflict moderation notwithstanding, the political opening up to the protesting sectors of society and the responses to (some of) their claims to large parts followed informal mechanisms. The strengthening of clientelist networks fed by new social programs has already been mentioned as has the quasi-corporatist forms of incorporating parts of the unemployed movement (cf. Wolff 2007a: 21-7). Duhalde and Kirchner regularly received representatives of the most important protest groups: the different organizations of the *piqueteros*, the labor confederations and human rights groups like the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. But this inclusion through dialogue and negotiations remained largely informal in nature. E.g., more important than the formalized (classically corporatist) incorporation of the unemployed organizations via the consultation councils mentioned above was the deliberate granting of particular government posts to the leaders of *piquetero* groups (informally) allied to the Kirchner government (Wolff 2007b: 186). Correspondingly, the diverse spectrum of social and political organizations supporting Kirchner is not organized through institutionalized structures of intermediation –e.g., through the Peronist party–, but via a web of largely informal and often personalist alliances held together by the common orientation towards the president.

Even this informally broadened scope of conflict moderation, however, leaves a significant gap when it comes to explaining successful stabilization and pacification. First, as said above, conflict de-escalation clearly predated the opening up to the protest groups that really took place only when Kirchner took office. Secondly, the remarkable extent of stabilization and pacification substantially exceeded the limited amount of measures of political inclusion and institutional reform. With the exception of Kirchner’s comprehensive actions regarding past human rights violations under military rule (a topic, however, of no major importance for the social protests in 2001/2002), the tackling of the often-mentioned ‘deficiencies’ characterizing Argentina’s democratic institutions remained largely symbolic. His style of governing followed authoritarian and populist patterns: Oriented at bypassing institutionalized structures of participation and control, he averted cabinet meetings and governed to an important extent via

executive decrees and (legislatively authorized) ‘superpowers’. Consequently, the regained legitimacy of the political system in the eyes of the population is largely a result of Kirchner’s personal reputation, and at best partially follows from an increased confidence in the democratic institutions as such. This is clearly demonstrated by the continuously low confidence rates the political parties, parliament and the judiciary receive in public opinion polls (cf. *Latinobarómetro* 2005: 9).

### *Political/Intentional Repression*

Open political repression bears no significant role in the re-stabilization process to be explained. On the contrary, when violent or violence-based strategies of repression were chosen they only provoked an escalation of protests.<sup>21</sup> In general, the judicial prosecution of protesters served mainly to mobilize new protests demanding the release of these ‘political prisoners’. This perfectly mirrors the liberal model of the democratic civil peace: The democratic state proved unable to repress protests in a way determined enough to be effective.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the strategy applied by Kirchner to largely tolerate the protests staged by the unemployed movement proved far more effective in weakening the *piqueteros*: The continued road blockades against a government that –in the eye of the majority– proved decidedly open to societal claims led to growing criticism from within the employed and middle sectors leveled against the *piqueteros*; this, in turn, enabled the government to rhetorically de-legitimize those ‘radical’ sectors among the unemployed that were unwilling to enter a co-operative relation with ‘the state’ (cf. Svampa and Pereyra 2004: 211-2).

### *Societal/Structurational Repression*

Given the analysis above, one cannot in fact explain re-stabilization without taking into account the systematic limits posed on the mobilization, organization and collective action of the relevant social groups. Besides the few days of outright ‘social explosion’ in December 2001, the protests remained fragmented. The common horizon was the global rejection of the *status quo*; some programmatic platform under which relevant parts of protesting society

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<sup>21</sup> This was demonstrated most notably during the ‘social explosion’ in December 2001: The state of siege declared by De la Rúa only provoked a new, massive *cacerolazo*. In the same manner, the killing of two *piqueteros* in June 2002 led to a new wave of joint protests by unemployed organizations and urban middle classes.

<sup>22</sup> To be sure, as the breakdown of the democratic regime is always an (at least, theoretical) option, this inability can be explained only by tracing to what extent and why the relevant political actors were not willing to switch to a strategy of violence-based, authoritarian repression. Here, one has to point, particularly, to the domestic consensus around formal democracy built in the aftermath of the last military dictatorship (Peruzzotti 2004: 88). Other than in the Ecuadorian case (see below), the plausible argument that the contemporary international context in the Western Hemisphere puts prohibitive costs on an explicitly authoritarian departure from democracy, thus did not come to bear.

could have united was missing. The heterogeneous protest ‘alliance’ built of ‘old’ and ‘new’ poor, un-, under-, and informally employed, sub-urban squatter settlement residents, organized employees and endangered or aggrieved urban middle sectors quickly came apart. The “repertoires of contention” (Tarrow 1998: 20) mirror the socio-economic and cognitive-ideological setting typical of neo-liberally restructured societies: Largely unorganized, spontaneous and directly crisis-driven protest events (*saqueos, cacerolazos*) on the one hand, road blockades demanding concrete material assistance by collective actors primarily based in particular local settings (*piqueteros*) on the other, instead of general strikes, long-term processes of national-level organization and party- and/or ideology-based mass mobilization.

The experience of the neighborhood assemblies (*asambleas*) demonstrates that the urban (middle) sectors lacked the intra-organizational and cognitive-ideological conditions for durable organization and collective action. Following the massive pot-banging protests in December 2001, autonomous local *asambleas* formed throughout the country –and, especially, in Buenos Aires– in order to take up the socio-political dynamic of the *cacerolazos*. Yet, the attempts to turn the *asambleas* movement into a macro-politically relevant player on the national scene failed due to the internal (socio-economic and cognitive-ideological) heterogeneity. Most *asambleas* either disintegrated or became small, locally oriented co-ordination bodies concerned with concrete problems relevant for the respective neighborhood (cf. Rossi 2005). This contrasts with the remarkable success in organizing the unemployed. It can be shown, however, that it is precisely the specific features of the *piquetero* movement that enabled the mobilization of the unemployed in spite of severe obstacles that undermined their potential as macro-political change actors: Their orientation at (and, indeed, dependence on) struggling for state assistance, the necessity to focus attention on the concrete needs of their particular local constituencies, and the increasing difficulty to present ‘the government’ as the common ‘enemy’ uniting the movement –all this contributed to the internal fragmentation of the movement and facilitated external strategies of *divide et impera* as employed by the Kirchner government (cf. Wolff 2007a). The specific “characteristics of collective mobilization when survival is at stake” (Merklen 2004: 50) pushed the *piqueteros* to adopt an increasingly local, inwards-directed and/or pragmatic, co-operative orientation, i.e. to factually de-politicize as seen from the perspective of national politics. In general, the common status as ‘unemployed workers’ did not represent a viable social cleavage on which to build a distinct political project. This followed not only from somewhat accidental ideological and strategic differences, but as well from the inner heterogeneity of the constituency for “as much as the casualization of labor multiplied the gaps between individuals, the experience of unemployment aggregated in one and the same group social categories and trajectories that are most different in terms of knowledge and skills, professional status and life style” (Svampa and Pereyra 2004: 27).

#### 4.4 Socio-Political Re-Stabilization and Conflict Regulation in Ecuador<sup>23</sup>

The pattern of socio-political de- and re-stabilization in Ecuador is not that clear-cut as in the Argentine case. On the one hand, the wave of protest escalation that paralleled the economic crisis and culminated in the rebellion-turned-coup against President Mahuad was preceded as well as followed by other periods of political instability that led to the fall of President Abdalá Bucaram (1997) and Lucio Gutiérrez (2005), respectively. On the other, the political instability emerging at the end of the 1990s is embedded in a longer-term phenomenon: the political rise of the country's indigenous movement that took off with a first massive uprising in 1990. The following section deliberately focuses on the challenge to Ecuadorian democracy as posed by the indigenous movement (cf. Wolff 2004); it is largely this specific challenge that shaped the period of de- and re-stabilization this paper is concerned with. This said, I will not discuss the more general question as to how the democratic civil peace in Ecuador is reproduced in and through almost permanent political turbulences (cf. Wolff 2007b: 215-24).

Founded in 1986, CONAIE –a nation-wide confederation comprising the most important indigenous organizations of the country– entered the national scene with the 1990 *levantamiento*. CONAIE quickly became the single most important social movement in Ecuador as well as the strongest indigenous movement in Latin America. Since the mid-1990s, CONAIE –through the mainly indigenous political party Pachakutik– moved into Congress, political institutions at the subnational level, the Constituent Assembly in 1997 and in 2003 –in coalition with Lucio Gutiérrez– the indigenous movement finally participated in the national government. This political rise of the indigenous movement was accompanied by regular major protests (*levantamientos*) led by CONAIE that demonstrated its singular capacity for mass mobilization and forced the respective government to give in to the indigenous claims. Yet, as mentioned above (4.2), when Gutiérrez broke with his indigenous allies, CONAIE proved unable to stage any relevant resistance to the government. The following case study thus deals with a question that is crucial for understanding the inner working of the democratic civil peace: How come that a newly empowered social group –here: the indigenous population that had been discriminated and marginalized for centuries– whose contentious collective action openly challenges the political system and its entrenched elites becomes ‘tamed’ in a way that is compatible with the reproduction of democracy and domestic peace? The ‘indigenous challenge’ has been analyzed in other studies.<sup>24</sup> Here, the subsequent ‘taming’ is of note. In what follows, I will argue that this ‘taming’ can be attributed to three mutually entangled processes: the political *integration* in the sense of an enhanced participation, representation and responsiveness of/to the indigenous movement; the *co-optation* of indigenous leaders, groups and (grass-roots) organizations by state institutions and political parties; and the internal *weaken-*

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<sup>23</sup> This section draws on the empirical analysis in Wolff (2007a: 21-7).

*ing* –division and demobilization– of the indigenous movement. Integration mirrors successful conflict mitigation, co-optation combines the selective informal mitigation of conflict with non-violent modes of political repression, and the internal weakening points to societal/structural conflict repression which facilitates clientelist co-optation and political strategies of *divide et impera*.

### *Conflict Moderation*

The notion of a successful political integration of the indigenous movements corresponds perfectly to the liberal concept of the democratic civil peace: The empowerment of the factually marginalized indigenous population induced a self-adjustment of the democratic regime that –by opening up to the new political force– transformed a contentious challenger into an institutionalized player. The successful ‘self-integration’ of the indigenous movement into the democratic institutions via Pachakutik points, on the one hand, to the proper strength of the indigenous movement, but, on the other, was enabled by the general openness of the fragmented Ecuadorian polity (León 2004: 124) and by specific political reforms (decentralization, liberalization of party and electoral laws) during the 1990s (cf. Van Cott 2005: 99-139). *Liberal-democratic* modes of integration were accompanied by formally institutionalized, but *corporatist-collective* mechanisms of participation and representation: State institutions were set up which were specifically concerned with bilingual education (DINEIB), ‘indigenous health’ (DNSPI) and local development in indigenous communities (CODENPE); in these bodies indigenous organizations –and, especially, CONAIE– gained decisive administrative competences. In addition, following *informal* mechanisms, CONAIE became the recognized entity representing the interests and values of the indigenous population, e.g. in *ad hoc* negotiations with state representatives following indigenous protests.

Although these processes neatly follow the notion of democratic conflict moderation, the corresponding effect –moderation– is, at best, weak. The data on socio-political conflicts shows a rise in indigenous protests since the mid-1990s that paralleled successful political integration; only in 2001 –a year without any progress in terms of integration– the number of protests started falling (see Table 4). This counterintuitive effect can be attributed to two reasons. First, political integration further strengthened the indigenous movement: In line with social movement research (3.1), growing political opportunities and access to state resources (to be used as selective incentives) supported the indigenous organizations’ capacities to mobilize its constituency and to enforce advanced political concessions. Second, input-oriented mechanisms of conflict moderation systematically need output-oriented mechanisms of conflict alleviation in order to be effective. As long as the incorporation of the indigenous movement does

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. León (1994), Pallares (2002), Van Cott (2005), Yashar (2005) and Zamosc (2004).

not ‘pay off’, the formal-democratic participation will only add to –but not replace– the protest-oriented repertoire of contention.

### *Conflict Alleviation*

Besides political *de facto* exclusion and social/racist discrimination, socio-economic grievances lay at the heart of motivated indigenous mobilization (cf. Pallares 2002). Yet, as a recent World Bank report concludes with a view to Latin America in general and Ecuador in particular, the growing political influence of indigenous organization has, up to now, hardly translated into socio-economic progress: Between 1994 and 2003, indigenous poverty rates in Ecuador show no sign of reduction (Hall and Patrinos 2005: 3-4). The *Bono Solidario* (later *Bono de Desarrollo Humano*) –a monthly cash transfer to poor households of up to 15 US dollars introduced in September 1998– served as the most important social emergency program during the economic crisis, but its poverty-reducing effect was limited (cf. Parandekar *et al.* 2002).<sup>25</sup> In general, concrete material concessions granted by the government in the wake of indigenous protests largely remained empty promises or brought only piecemeal improvements in certain areas of communities without broader and/or sustainable consequences (cf. Wolff 2007b: 260-2). An evaluation of PRODEPINE –a World Bank-supported program that financed an important part of the local development projects administered by CODENPE– found that it contributed to building participatory structures, but had no effect on the living conditions of the indigenous communities supported (IFAD 2004: xxii). And the analysis of Víctor Bretón (2001) suggests that the local presence of development NGOs and projects in the Ecuadorian Andes induced the growth of indigenous organizations, but did not contribute to significant socio-economic progress in terms of poverty reduction.

### *Political/Intentional Repression*

As in the Argentine case, ‘classical’ measures of political repression do not help to explain stabilization and pacification. Regarding the ‘taming’ of the indigenous movement, attempts to coercively control indigenous protests –e.g. during the *levantamiento* in 2001– only strengthened both the internal mobilization capacities of and the external support for the indigenous movement (cf. Barrera 2001).

### *Societal/Structurational Repression*

The external co-optation and the internal weakening of the indigenous movement mentioned at the outset of this section are closely intertwined processes. On the one hand, successful po-

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<sup>25</sup> Indeed poverty data shows that the indigenous people in Ecuador “were less affected by the crisis as it unfolded, but they also recovered more slowly from the losses incurred, and in fact, so slowly that the net impact of the crisis was actually worse for indigenous people” (Hall/Patrinos 2004: 3).

litical integration from the very beginning led to tensions within the indigenous movements that fueled conflicts in and between the different organizations and supported a (frustrated) de-politicization on the part of the indigenous base; on the other hand, the opening up of the polity was continuously accompanied by attempts to co-opt specific leaders and segments of the indigenous movement in order to further these processes of division and demobilization. The former is the expression of societal/structural repression; the latter mirrors informal/clientelist strategies of conflict regulation that combine conflict alleviating, moderating and repressing elements. During the presidency of Lucio Gutiérrez (2003-2005) both processes intensified: Pachakutik's failed participation in the government increased the internal dynamics of weakening and division while the president fostered these dynamics more directly (and with more resources) than his predecessors through strategies of *divide et impera*.<sup>26</sup> The Gutiérrez government revealed the structural fragmentation of the indigenous movement. The common identity –as *indígenas*– that enabled the constitution of CONAIE was, from the very beginning, qualified by different sorts of divisions: along regional (mainly between Andean highland and Amazonian lowland), ethnic (between 13 'nationalities' dominated by the Quichua which are further divided into 13 different peoples), and religious lines (between catholics and protestants). As the leadership of CONAIE and Pachakutik was dominated by the Andean/Quichua/catholic wing of the indigenous movement, Gutiérrez essentially broke with this particular group while he worked hard to close (clientelist) ties with the Amazonian branch of CONAIE and competing indigenous organizations outside CONAIE (like the Federation of Evangelical Indigenous–FEINE). He included leaders of 'co-operative' organizations in government posts and channeled state resources through these organizations. In addition, by directly delivering state assistance to selected local municipalities, he established clientelist networks to directly "dispute the indigenous movement's fundamental center: the communities" (Dávalos 2005: 62).

In addition to the mentioned fragmentation, this strategy was made possible by features of indigenous mobilization that, in the first place, had driven contentious collective action, but now turned into inhibiting factors: the importance of mobilizing against specific politicians and policies that the indigenous communities perceive as directly threatening their vital interests; and the need to achieve –by acting collectively– immediate 'pay-offs' that serve the concrete needs of the indigenous communities. A target of common rejection and the expectation of concrete benefits were necessary both to overcome the internal fragmentation of the indigenous movement *and* to mobilize the constituency, i.e. the indigenous communities that –with good reasons– are mainly concerned with how to improve living conditions in their respective local settings. By abstaining from measures that would have offended the indigenous

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<sup>26</sup> On the following cf. Wolff (2007a: 21-7) and –for an in-depth analysis– Wolff (2007b: 269-79).

base (like cutting the subventions on cooking gas) while selectively supporting precisely those organizations that were willing to pragmatically co-operate with the government, Gutiérrez prevented any major indigenous mobilization against his government. Those parts of the indigenous movement –the national and especially Andean leadership of CONAIE– that were eager to challenge Gutiérrez were just not capable either of convincing competing factions of the indigenous movement within and outside CONAIE or of mobilizing their own constituency. Consequently, calls for a renewed indigenous uprising failed (Zamosc 2004: 150).

On the cognitive-ideological level, the crisis of the indigenous movement reveals contradictions inherent in CONAIE's 'political project' –contradictions, however, that were crucial for the successful political rise of the indigenous movement during the 1990s. By promoting an explicitly ethnic agenda focused on indigenous rights and needs, CONAIE/Pachakutik were able to appeal to the indigenous identity; yet, CONAIE's 'political project', at the time, responded to a broader, socially defined (or class-based) agenda directed against social exclusion (León 1994: 61). The latter was important for extending the support for CONAIE/Pachakutik to progressive mestizo/urban sectors. Yet, it included a project of fundamental social change that was necessarily confrontational and long-term in nature while the indigenous agenda called for concrete claim-making on, and pragmatic negotiations with, 'the state'. Confronted with a government whose political agenda was openly in opposition to a broader project of social change, but which was willing to address particular (indigenous) needs, this tension came to a head. This interpretation is supported by the way CONAIE and Pachakutik reacted to their crisis during the Gutiérrez government: The dominant reading was that the indigenous movement had to return to its indigenous agenda, a deliberate decision to risk losing non-indigenous allies and support in order to somehow re-unite the indigenous movement. (Wolff 2007a: 26). This, however, has greatly reduced the public resonance of the indigenous movement and thus its capacity of act as a powerful change agent.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that an idealistic understanding of the democratic civil peace that attributes successful stabilization and pacification to formal-democratic mechanisms of conflict mitigation alone is insufficient when it comes to explaining the persistence of democratic regimes in the contemporary world. When looking at democracies that survive in face of a rather limited success in the formal-democratic mitigation of conflict –as, e.g., in South America– it is, first, necessary to take into account informal mechanisms of mitigating socio-political conflict: clientelist practices, populist appeals and political *ad hoc* adjustments to contentious action (to the point of prematurely terminating presidencies as responses to social uprisings –the informal practice of popular impeachment). As the analysis of societal/structural conflict repression has demonstrated, second, a broad range of socio-

economic, politico-institutional and cognitive-ideological factors may reduce the capacities and incentives on the part of (potentially) contentious persons and groups to organize, mobilize and act politically. While this certainly points to deficits regarding the quality of the democracy in question, such structures of *de facto* exclusion may well represent important mechanisms of stabilization and pacification: These constraints limit not only the institutionalized participation and representation of those societal interests and values affected, but, at the same time, also their collective extra- and anti-institutional manifestation.

The proposed conceptual frameworks –that distinguishes conflict mitigation (moderation/alleviation) and (political/societal) conflict repression– offers a heuristic tool to systematically analyze such complex patterns of stabilization and pacification. The case studies on Argentina and Ecuador have shown that such a combination of a liberal and a politico-economic perspective on democracy is indeed promising. An important consequence is that we have to give up the notion of a unilinear relationship between the quality of democracy and the solidity of the domestic peace. There can be a stable democratic civil peace where the democratic minimum is guaranteed, the quality of democracy –as measured, e.g., by the extent of effective conflict mitigation– is low, but where disadvantaged social groups are factually inhibited from rebelling against the status quo by conditions of societal/structural conflict repression. To the extent that (limited) conflict mitigation and (compensatory) societal/structural repression are in balance, neither a contentious challenge ‘from below’ nor the violence-based political repression ‘from above’ needs to put the domestic peace at risk. The result is a democratic civil peace of low intensity and, yet, possibly remarkable solidity. The rise of the indigenous movement in Ecuador –and, even more explicit, in Bolivia– demonstrates the counterintuitive consequence this conception of a democratic civil peace has: If factually marginalized social groups acquire the capacity to overcome the obstacles inhibiting their mobilization, organization and collective action –and, thus, reduce the extent of societal/structural conflict repression–, this risks the viability of the democratic *status quo ante*. Precisely *because* such processes of mobilizing the marginalized are important steps towards substantial democratization, they lead to expectedly turbulent processes in search of a new balance between the mitigation and the repression of socio-political conflict. In the (normatively) preferable case, the pressure ‘from below’, in the end, raises the quality of democracy to a new level of conflict mitigation without provoking the ‘losers’ in this redistributive process to chose non-democratic and/or violent *exit* options, but this is only one possible outcome. Like democracy, the democratic civil peace is “above all a matter of power” (Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992: 5).

Following the broad, ‘de-idealized’ perspective on the democratic civil peace, formal-democratic procedures have to be seen as only one (if important) mode of regulating conflict that is complemented by and embedded in other, informal and formal, mechanisms of stabili-

zation and pacification that are mutually interrelated and interact with each other. The “polyarchal component” (Dahl and Lindblom 1953: 276) is but one, albeit certainly central, dimension of the political process and, hence, of the dynamics sustaining the domestic peace in democratic regimes.

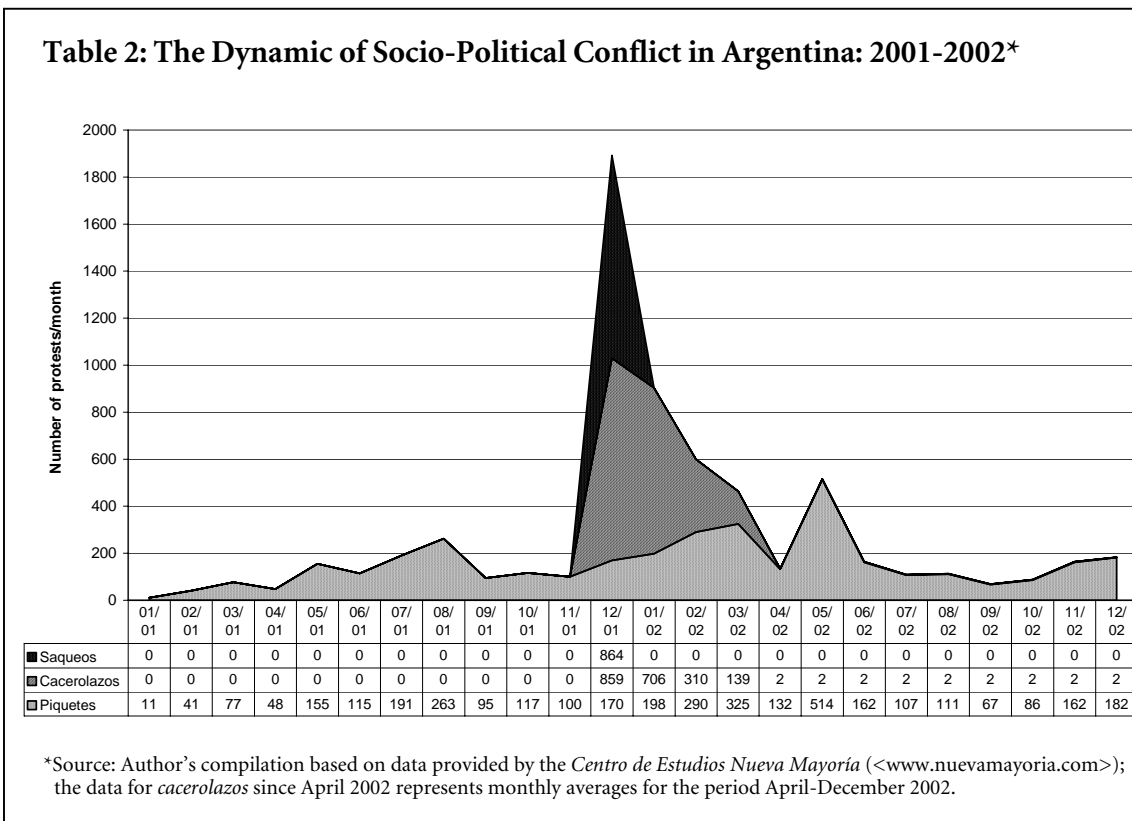
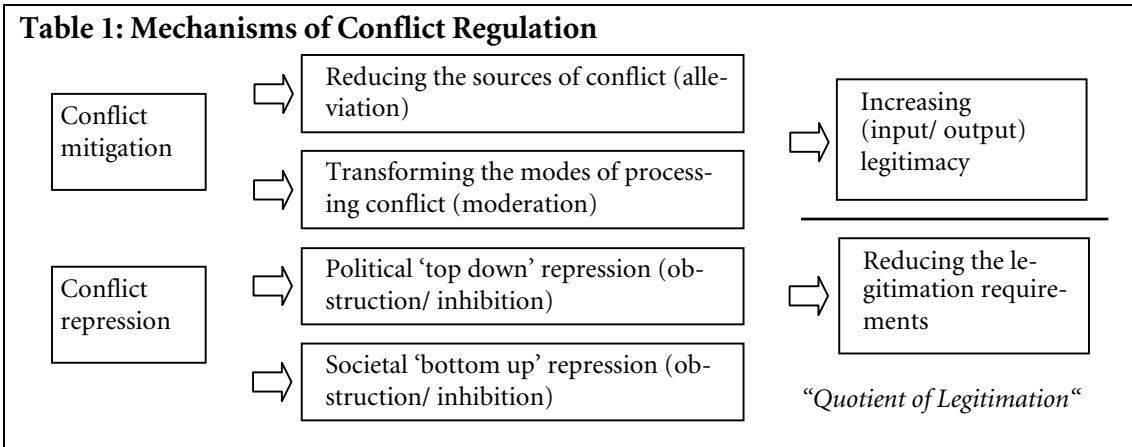
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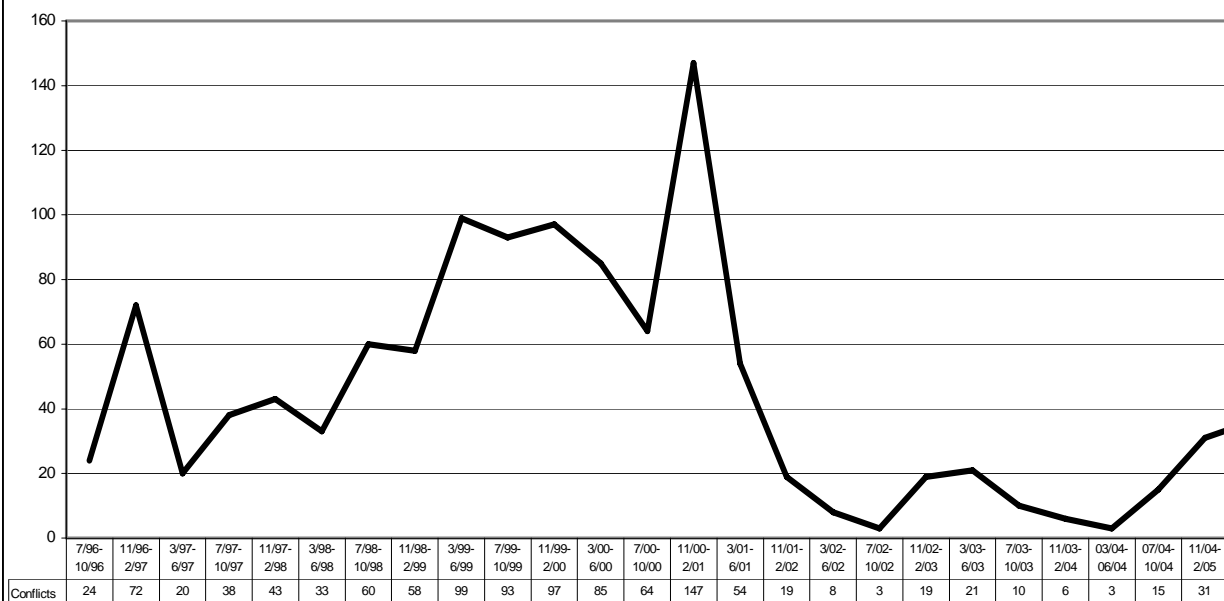
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Appendix: Tables 1-4

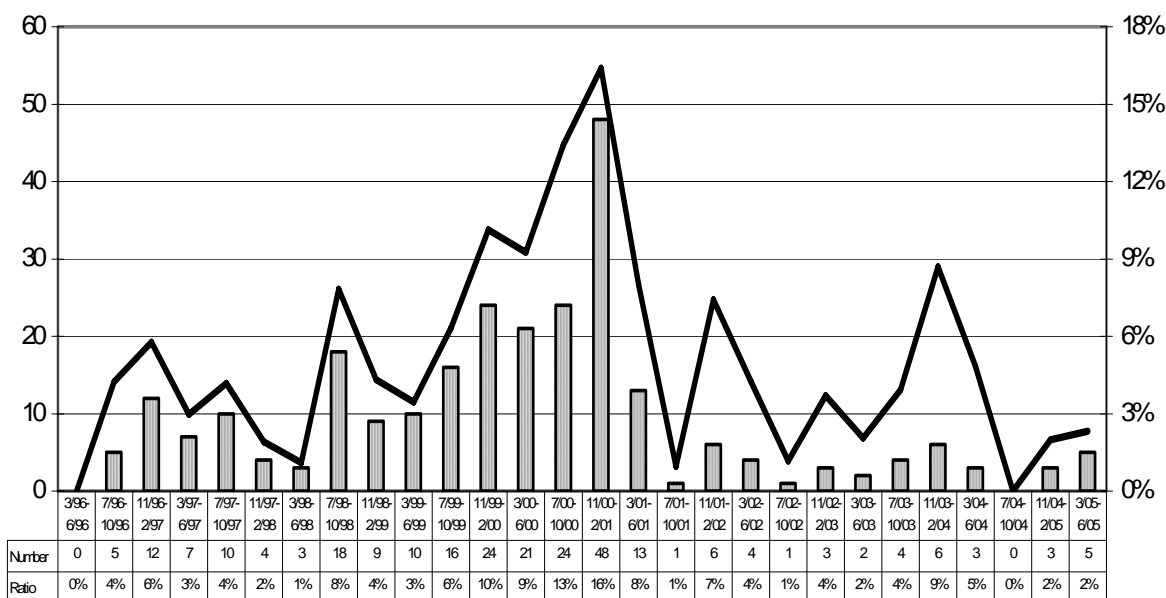


**Table 3: Socio-Political Conflict in Ecuador: Protests against “State Policy” 1996-2005\***



\*Source: Author’s compilation based on the data on „socio-political conflict“ provided by the *Centro Andino de Acción Popular* (published in *Ecuador Debate*, various issues, <[www.dlh.lahora.com.ec/paginas/debate](http://www.dlh.lahora.com.ec/paginas/debate)>). Data includes all conflicts coded as “Object of conflict: Rejection of State Policy” (“Rechazo Política Estatal”).

**Table 4: Socio-Political Conflict in Ecuador: Indigenous Protests 1996-2005\***



\*Source: Author’s compilation based on the data on „socio-political conflict“ provided by the *Centro Andino de Acción Popular* (published in *Ecuador Debate*, various issues, <[www.dlh.lahora.com.ec/paginas/debate](http://www.dlh.lahora.com.ec/paginas/debate)>). Data includes all conflicts coded as “Subject of conflict: Indígenas”; the ratio refers to the proportion in the total number of conflicts.