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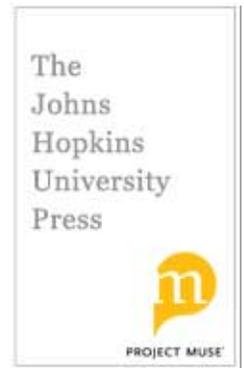
Latin Democracy, Comprehensively

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and to caricature the views of anticommunist leaders such as Ronald Reagan.

Despite these flaws, this book stands as a refreshing effort to come to terms with the inescapably moral character of political life. It is also an important contribution to the academic study of statesmanship. It succeeds in its stated goal of helping to recover a truly capacious sense of political reality, and successfully demonstrates that moral capital is a fact with which any science of politics must come to terms if it is to do justice to the true efficacy of moral prestige and personal character in human affairs.

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LATIN DEMOCRACY, COMPREHENSIVELY

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***Democracies in Development: Politics and Reform in Latin America.* By J. Mark Payne, Daniel Zovatto G., Fernando Carrillo Flórez, and Andrés Allamand Zavala. Inter-American Development Bank, 2002. 348 pp.**

In 1977, the study of how Latin American democratic institutions worked and affected public policy and political stability was a rather esoteric exercise. Among the 20 “core” Latin American countries (meaning ones that were once Iberian colonies), only Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela were democracies.

By 2002, all Latin American countries except Cuba and Haiti were democracies. While the extent of democratization varies considerably across these countries, in every one of them democratic institutions exercise a profound influence. Over the past two decades, even the most ardent skeptics of Latin American democratic institutions have come to realize that these institutions can neither be ignored nor dismissed as irrelevant.

Once we accept that democratic institutions are fundamental to the functioning of politics and society in Latin America, it becomes clear that we must have answers to questions such as: What are the most important institutions? How does the design of these institutions vary? What are the political and social consequences of using different institutions and institutional configurations?

Answers to these questions are contained in a voluminous academic literature whose general tendency is to concentrate on a subset of these issues (for example, executive-legislative relations, electoral rules, incentives for legislator behavior). The first valuable contribution of *Democracies in Development* is its impressive review of the extant scholarly literature on democratic institutions in Latin America, thereby providing the reader with a solid understanding of scholarly conventional wisdom on the design and consequences of the key democratic institutions in the region.

To understand political institutions adequately, we also need information on every country. For each of the 18 Latin American democracies the book contains a detailed description of the most relevant constitutional and statutory provisions as well as national election results for the period from 1978 to 2000.

Three groups of scholars will benefit most from the book. One group consists of scholars whose intellectual focus is on Latin America, but whose principal interests lie outside the area of democratic institutions. All members of this group will profit from the review of the existing literature, while those engaged in empirical analysis will especially enjoy the detailed description of the constitutional and electoral design in each country.

Political institutionalists whose area of study is outside Latin America will find that the book offers a convenient way to learn about how the region's democratic institutions function. Political institutionalists whose principal area of study is Latin America will also greatly appreciate the encyclopedic coverage of electoral laws and constitutional provisions.

Policy makers can gain an overview of the different institutional arrangements employed in the region, which in turn will permit a better understanding of the varying incentives under which politicians operate in different countries as well as the distinct constraints (for example, in implementing public policy) that politicians (for example, presidents) in different countries face. The book will help policy makers, especially those in multilateral organizations, interact in a more effective and positive way with Latin American elected officials.

The book is an outstanding resource for students. It is, for example, ideal for undergraduate and graduate courses on Latin American politics and on comparative democracies. I can think of no better book with which to introduce the general study of political institutions in Latin America.

Given space limitations, I cannot adequately describe the immense contributions of the book. I thus limit myself to detailing its core contents (11 chapters and three appendices) and highlighting some of its most prominent conclusions.

Chapter 1 makes the convincing argument that politics and political institutions have important consequences for development. My only quibble is with the use of Freedom House scores of political rights and

civil liberties to measure the evolution of democracy in the region. In my work with Scott Gates, Håvard Hegre, and Håvard Strand, we conclude that while appropriate for cross-sectional analysis, Freedom House scores generally should not be used in any longitudinal analysis due to the lack of temporal reliability in measurement and methodology.

Chapter 2 utilizes data from the annual Latinobarómetro public opinion surveys conducted between 1996–97 and 2001 in 17 of the 18 democracies to analyze such crucial factors as popular support for democracy, popular satisfaction with democracy, and public confidence in democratic institutions. One of the more noteworthy findings is that, while most Latin Americans continue to believe democracy is superior to all other forms of government, the aggregate percentage that holds this opinion dropped from 63 percent in 1997 to 48 percent in 2001.

Chapter 3 explores trends in electoral participation between 1978 and 2000. It covers topics such as registration, turnout, and institutional and political factors influencing turnout. Voter turnout on average declined in Latin America during this period, with only a handful of countries maintaining or increasing their turnout levels.

Chapter 4 examines the effect of presidential-election systems on governability. It highlights the rules governing the election of presidents, as well as the effect of these rules on party systems and governance. The authors echo prior critiques of the growing use of the majority runoff formula to elect presidents, which certainly does not aid governability, and most likely undermines it.

Chapter 5 follows with an overview of the relationship between legislative election systems and governability. It examines the effect of electoral rules on party systems as well as the impact of different electoral rules on legislator behavior, with a particular focus on the distinct “interests” that a legislator must take into consideration when crafting their representation strategy. The chapter also nicely analyzes recent legal reforms regarding legislative elections. One component of legislative electoral rules that was unfortunately missing from this volume was the adoption in 11 of these 18 countries during the 1990s of national legislation requiring political parties to field a minimum percentage of female congressional candidates.

Chapter 6 explores the topic of party systems. Included are analyses of party system institutionalization, fragmentation, and polarization. The work on institutionalization and polarization is especially effective. Drawing on the theoretical model created by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, the authors employ previously unavailable measures drawn from the Latinobarómetro to provide an innovative analysis of party-system institutionalization and polarization.

Chapter 7 covers the internal democratic processes and financing of political parties. It details the methods used by parties to choose their candidates for public office and discusses a variety of factors related to

campaign finance. This chapter is one of the more legalistic in the volume, reflecting the comparatively underdeveloped nature of the study of Latin American political parties and election campaigns (and hence the relative dearth of work upon which the authors could draw). This highlights the need for more detailed country- and party-level work on the internal functioning of political parties and campaigns in Latin America.

Chapter 8 provides an overview of the constitutional and partisan powers that affect executive-legislative relations. It highlights the considerable variance in constitutional and partisan powers possessed by Latin American presidents, and examines what these differences mean for public policy and governability. For example, it is much easier for some presidents to implement an unpopular stabilization plan than it is for others.

Chapter 9 is devoted to matters of accountability. It examines the role of "horizontal" accountability institutions such as the comptroller's office, attorney general's office, and human rights ombudsman in the controlling of actions by other government institutions.

Chapter 10 analyzes the use of direct democracy at the national level. With the partial exception of Uruguay, direct democracy is relatively uncommon in Latin America.

Chapter 11 summarizes the main trends in democratic reform in the region. Appendix 1 provides an overview of electoral rules and major constitutional provisions for every country. Appendix 2 presents data on electoral turnout in aggregate and by country. Appendix 3 (an enclosed CD-ROM) contains detailed national-level vote and seat results for all presidential and congressional elections held in each of the 18 countries between 1978 and 2000.

The book is remarkably comprehensive. The only significant area in the study of democratic institutions that the book fails to adequately cover is political decentralization or federalism, particularly relations between national and subnational governments. In many countries, subnational governments are vital to the functioning of the national political system and the implementation of policy. Argentina and Brazil are exemplary in this respect, but subnational governments (whether state or municipal) also are increasingly important in other countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, and Mexico.

Democracies in Development is a tremendous resource for scholars, policy makers, students, and the general public. It will help all of these individuals better understand the design and policy consequences of Latin America's political institutions. It is a book that anyone concerned with Latin America or political institutions will want to consult.

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