
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Paradigm and paradox, two words of Greek origin, have much to do with the content of this journal. The term *paradigm* is far more fashionable than the term *paradox*, yet the latter may be an underestimated factor in shaping Latin American studies. This reflection was stimulated by the recent visit to the *LARR* offices of a distinguished Latin American social scientist. The lively discussions produced by this visit were characterized by a mutual recognition of the differences in our respective intellectual traditions, or paradigms, and also of the convergences of shared thematic concerns stimulated by the paradoxes of recent events in the Americas.

Paradigms are of obvious theoretical importance to the disciplines represented by *LARR*. Scholars work within intellectual traditions and build upon work previously published. Yet scholars are also participants in the historic events that shape the societies to which they belong, and their work directly or indirectly responds to these events. The term *paradox* captures the often confusing turns of the recent history of the Americas and has more to do with intellectual preoccupations than might be apparent at first glance.

One such paradox has to do with the discontinuities between U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere and the course of Latin American politics. Not long ago, U.S. foreign policy attempted to champion the cause of human rights during a period when Latin America was dominated by regimes utilizing the most repressive measures in modern Latin American history. More recently a different U.S. administration has placed increasing emphasis on military responses to hemispheric unrest at the very time that democratic regimes are coming to power in Latin America.

A second paradox is represented by the state of the inter-American economic system. No other region in the world has matched the sustained economic growth of Latin America over the last three decades, and yet in no other region has dissatisfaction with patterns of growth been more vocally expressed. The role of U.S. direct private investment in Latin America, the focus of attention a decade ago, has been replaced as a subject of concern by the impact of Latin American borrowing from U.S., European, and multilateral financial institutions. Now that Latin American growth has paused, it is not entirely clear whether the Latin American economies or the U.S. banks are most at risk. In retrospect it seems clear that the dynamism of Latin American economies was far greater than many were willing to concede, and in prospect economic bargaining power for Latin America vis-à-vis the United States will be far greater than in the past.

Intellectual currents are another subject of paradox. For decades Latin American social thought was dominated by a series of imported models such as French positivism, Krausian post-Hegelianism, North American social science empiricism, and French neo-Marxist structuralism. In the 1960s and 1970s, Latin American scholars moved well beyond these limiting paradigms, generating the dependency and bureaucratic-authoritarian models that had major international influence. The theoretical concerns that are currently shaping the agenda for Latin American studies in particular and for studies of comparative international development in general, such as the role of the state, the impact of regime type, and the influence of popular culture, also are Latin American exports rather than products of the developed nations. A similar reversal has taken place in literature, where Latin American fiction has assumed such an importance that it is shaping literary trends in the industrial countries.

The high social cost of authoritarian rule in Latin America during the past decade has also had a paradoxical impact on relations between U.S. and Latin American intellectuals. The consequences of authoritarianism have produced a reevaluation among Latin Americans of the merits of liberal democracy as a political system. This change has entailed increasing recognition of the pluralism of U.S. politics and a greater understanding of the role of U.S. intellectuals as fellow critics, inquirers, and purveyors of new ideas. Despite the legacy of past differences between the Latin American and U.S. scholarly communities and the hard-line policies emanating from Washington, intellectual exchanges between the Americas have never been greater.

The *Latin American Research Review* plays a modest, but perhaps not insignificant, role in these developments. Its pages are enriched by the sharing of different traditions and perspectives, which in turn are tested by the course of history. *LARR* remains an academic journal, but

its contribution to scholarly dialogue between the Americas makes it a participant in the paradoxes of inter-American events as well as a forum for reflection upon the paradigms through which such events are understood.

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