

DEMOCRACY REDUX:
How Real Is Democracy in Latin America?

Janet Kelly

Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración

- POLITICS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: COMPARING EXPERIENCES WITH DEMOCRACY.* Second edition. Edited by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995. Pp. 592. \$23.50 paper.)
- DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA: PATTERNS AND CYCLES.* Edited by Roderic Ai Camp. (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1996. Pp. 294. \$40.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)
- THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY, 1870–1990.* Edited by George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman. (New York: New York University Press, 1995. Pp. 391. \$40.00 cloth.)
- DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE THIRD WORLD: MYTHS, HOPES, AND REALITIES.* Edited by Kenneth E. Bauzon. (Washington, D.C.: Crane Russak, 1992. Pp. 344. \$54.50 cloth, \$24.50 paper.)
- STATE, CAPITALISM, AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA.* By Atilio A. Borón. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995. Pp. 262. \$49.95 cloth.)
- LOS LIMITES DE LA CONSOLIDACION DEMOCRATICA EN AMERICA LATINA.* Edited by Manuel Alcántara and Ismael Crespo. (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1995. Pp. 306.)
- THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Joseph S. Tulchin, with Bernice Romero. Woodrow Wilson Center Current Studies on Latin America. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995. Pp. 177. \$11.95 paper.)
- BUSINESS AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Ernest Bartell and Leigh A. Payne. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. Pp. 292. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- DEMOCRATIZING MEXICO: PUBLIC OPINION AND ELECTORAL CHOICES.* By Jorge I. Domínguez and James A. McCann. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. 269. \$45.00.)
- FRAGILE DEMOCRACIES: THE LEGACIES OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE.* By Gretchen Casper. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. Pp. 235. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA: THE ROLE OF THE JUDICIARY. Edited by Erwin P. Stotzky. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993. Pp. 401. \$59.95 cloth.)

In Latin America today, as in many countries around the world, conversation often turns to exchanges about all the defects that normal citizens see about them. Politicians are corrupt and fall ever lower in public esteem. Police brutality in many countries deters citizens even from asking a uniformed officer for directions. Business people often feel forced to break the law just to survive, while it is common to find political parties that choose their candidates according to the decisions of leaders who feel no compulsion to consult with members. Voters increasingly stay home on election day and express cynicism and indifference toward the system when pollsters ask their opinions. Inevitably, someone says that democracy is a farce—this is not real democracy.

Yet such is democracy in much of Latin America today. Observers may lament this sad state of affairs and conclude that we were naive to think that anything better was possible. Yet not so many years ago, many scholars believed it unlikely that such conversations would take place at all in the 1990s because authoritarian governments would always step in whenever the going got rough. James Malloy predicted in 1977, "For the foreseeable future at least, 'modernizing authoritarian' regimes will remain a part of political life in Latin America." This classic article, "Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America: The Model Pattern," has now been reproduced in *Democracy in Latin America: Patterns and Cycles*, Roderic Ai Camp's compilation of key articles on the development of democracy in recent years. Practically all the books under review here struggle with these intertwined themes: the imperfections of democratic systems in Latin America and the danger that these problems might produce reversals in the future. The contributors, however, celebrate the gains made in the last decade. Most of their introductions begin by recognizing this fact, often citing not only the return to democracy in most of Latin America but the disintegration of the Soviet Union and parallel processes of transition and consolidation.

The Dominant View

The analysts who hover above the rest of the literature on democracy today are Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, whose original four-volume work, *Democracy in Developing Countries* (1989), covered twenty-six countries and included a volume dedicated to

Latin America.¹ This useful compendium found its way into libraries and universities all over the world and is cited constantly. The four volumes obviously exceeded the book budgets for courses in general comparative politics that aspired to cover the world (thus escaping accusations of ethnocentrism and other sins). Consequently, the book market sought an equally useful collection that would achieve this catholic aim with lower ecological and financial costs and would take into consideration the significant changes of the last eight years or so. The result is *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, now reduced to a single volume covering ten countries that include Chile, Brazil, and Mexico from the first edition but exclude the seven other countries ably analyzed in the earlier volume on Latin America. Beyond Latin America, the other countries covered are Turkey, India, Thailand, South Korea, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa. The group is an interesting one, although Eastern Europe cries out for inclusion. My discussion will be limited to the Latin American cases.

I cite Diamond, Linz, and Lipset as representing the dominant view of democracy (at least in the Western Hemisphere) because their approach adopting Robert Dahl's concept of polyarchy and thus his definition of democracy seems to have won out over the competition.² As will be shown, the competition has not disappeared but is being co-opted because no other definition provides such a solid common ground for discussion with such parsimony. Democracy, then, is defined essentially as a system in which three conditions obtain: competitive elections, broad participation, and civil and political liberties. Diamond, Linz, and Lipset recognize that democracy exists in different degrees and at varying levels of legitimacy. They insist nonetheless on their minimalist definition because the inclusion of other criteria would decrease the analytical utility of the term *democracy*. How would analysts determine the relation between democracy and equality, for instance, if democracy were equality? No one has effectively gainsaid this argument, and most have simply adopted it. This growing consensus represents a major breakthrough for political science and simplifies discussions.

If scholars take it for granted that we value democracy for its own sake, we need to know how it affects and is affected by other aspects of society. Most of the introductory chapter of *Politics in Developing Countries* is dedicated to discussing the possible relationships between democracy and other variables and values. The first chapter touches on the problem of economic and social performance (meaning growth and equal-

1. *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, vol. 4, edited by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1989). The essay is reprinted from *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*, edited by James Malloy (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).

2. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971).

ity) and its relation to the legitimacy of the regime. Other topics include leadership, political culture, social class, participation, civil society, the media, functions of the state, political institutions, ethnic and cultural divisions, political decentralization, and military and international factors. All these thorny topics, needless to say, are introduced rather than treated definitively.

It is significant that the editors of *Politics in Developing Countries* are convinced enough of their lines of argument to leave their introductory chapter essentially the same as it was in the 1989 edition. Apparently, the march of history as revealed in the updating of facts did not require the updating of theory. Thus an introduction almost identical to the 1989 volume on Latin America serves just as well for this current volume on the whole world. Yet the editors have made some changes that reveal greater security in their original views. A comparison of the two editions is useful for detecting what these analysts feel they have learned since the 1980s. What are the differences?

In the new edition, Diamond, Linz, and Lipset introduce the phenomenon of economic reform programs. In the past, many argued that only authoritarian governments would have the power to impose changes that alter the relative wealth of different groups. Diamond, Linz, and Lipset conclude that democracies can indeed bring about such changes, although not every historical moment is equally propitious. They display greater faith in the idea that political culture is "plastic and malleable over time," observing that this fact may be the most important lesson of the case studies (they were somewhat less sure about this point in 1989). The editors are also more willing to state outright that government ownership and control of the economy are pernicious to economic and political development, and they adopt the now popular language of "incentives" and "rent seeking" to express these ideas. In an era of electoral tinkering, Diamond, Linz, and Lipset discuss the topic of electoral systems and the ideal number of parties for satisfying the conflicting objectives of government stability and coherence versus responsibility and representativeness. They add references to the importance of judicial systems for democracy, a point too long forgotten by political scientists. And following rather than leading events in the real world, they now give greater shrift to decentralization. With the spread of democracy to formerly communist countries, Diamond, Linz, and Lipset emphasize more strongly today that democracy is contagious but do not speculate much on the viral forces that might come from future authoritarian backsliding, military confrontations, or the further expansion of the drug wars. The trio are surer about U.S. commitment to democracy, a trend noted by many since the Jimmy Carter administration, although sometimes in order to stress that this trend is not necessarily a correlate of noninterventionism.

The authors of the individual chapters on Latin American countries

likewise make few changes, updating the facts with additional sections at the end of their texts but maintaining their original historical overviews and contemporary analyses. Arturo Valenzuela expunges his characterization of the Chilean party system as polarized between Right and Left and gives new importance to the idea that institutional forms respected during the authoritarian period were significant in facilitating the return to democracy. It is likely that as emotion wanes, scholars returning to study authoritarian periods will find the roots of some aspects of democratic functioning. Bolívar Lamounier adds a section on Fernando Collor de Mello's era in his chapter on Brazil and revises his level of optimism upward in his conclusions. Daniel Levy, now joined by coauthor Kathleen Bruhn, also registers higher hopes for Mexican democratization, as evidenced in greater electoral competition and societal concern for opening. An ideological shift is also apparent. Levy earlier characterized intellectuals as favoring democracy to achieve "better socioeconomic distribution, and eventually socialism," but the reference to socialism has now been dropped. This chapter still insists that Mexico has a civilian government without democracy because it has not passed the ultimate test of alternability. But one might question this interpretation using Diamond, Linz, and Lipset's criteria because the greater competitiveness of elections suggests at least that everyone can be in the game. Even the Chiapas revolt signals fissures in the rigid system.

Other Wide-Ranging Books

Roderic Camp has produced a reader of important articles and essays published between 1977 and 1992 on Latin American politics, including such authors as Terry Lynn Karl, James Malloy, Daniel Levine, Ben Ross Schneider, Peter Smith, and Karen Remmer. *Democracy in Latin America: Patterns and Cycles* thus displays an advantage over original edited works that inevitably include authors of diverse talents (or at least different dispositions to write their best, perhaps due to unexpected deadlines or waning enthusiasm given the long gestation periods that these projects inevitably entail). Camp's volume is more consciously comparative than many in that its essays deal with problems in the regional context (except for the two country studies of Brazil and Mexico in the last section). They work within the current consensus regarding the minimum conditions for democracy, tempered by the recognition of the cultural components that must underpin democracy if it is to flourish and approximate the Dahlian ideal, or what is often called "real democracy." The contributors are also concerned with the relation between democratic and economic structures.

Democracy in Latin America covers definitional problems, political culture and structures, actors in political change (the military, the Catholic Church, nongovernmental organizations), and elections. In the case stud-

ies, Ben Ross Schneider analyzes Collor de Mello's first year in Brazil, demonstrating how political analysis can detect early the erosion of political support (his piece was originally published in 1991). Peter Smith dissects the politics of free trade in Mexico. Camp attempts to provide a varied menu of topics that might be covered in a course on comparative Latin American politics, introducing some that might not get much attention in a general text. These subjects include the complex and often conflictual links between religious movements and political organizations in a region where the Catholic Church is often cited as the most respected institution (Daniel Levine); electoral campaigns that increasingly resemble U.S. television events (Alan Angell, María D'Alva Kinzo, and Diego Urbaneja); and the newly popular issue of nongovernmental organizations (Leilah Landim). The Camp volume also includes James Malloy's now classic treatment of authoritarianism cited at the start of this review. The book ends with Karen Remmer's important article, first published in *World Politics* (April 1990), challenging the now all but discarded thesis that authoritarian governments generate superior economic performance when compared with democracies. *Democracy in Latin America* can be recommended as a good selection on developing key issues by first-rate authors.

The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870–1990, edited by George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman, provides historians' views of many of the same questions that political scientists are trying to understand today regarding the consolidation of democracy. It covers democratic development in major areas and countries: Europe, Japan, the United States, and Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico in Latin America. As history, the volume cannot be faulted for being less than up to date or failing to take into account the last tactical move of President Carlos Menem or the most recent scandal in Bogotá. The contributors draw their collective inspiration from Barrington Moore,³ concentrating on relations among major social classes in determining the nature of the state, fused with techniques of social history for going below the Moorean macro level and including multiple-level studies that examine state-society relations. This approach avoids the accusation that they treat democracy too formally or restrict it to a set of procedural norms. Democracy (and here they would seem to be saying "real democracy") requires a "host of cultural practices—habits of mind, rituals of participation, forms of dialogue between ruler and ruled—that make large numbers of people across generations believe in the meaningfulness of basic democratic principles" (p. 6). The various essays do not elaborate a single theory of democratic evolution but rather pursue important strands of social existence and weave some interesting fabric for reflection. Four general areas are covered: urbanization, industrializa-

3. Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1966).

tion, and nation building from the 1870s to the Great Depression (including an essay by Daniel James on Argentina); single-party dominance (including Diane Davis's contribution on Mexico); democratic movements (including Andrews's contribution on race in Brazil); and the welfare state (including Barbara Weinstein's analysis of the limits of democratization in Brazil set by industry-state relations from 1930 to 1964).

The Social Construction of Democracy is loosely comparative but lets the reader ponder the similarities and differences between, say, the hegemony long enjoyed by the Liberal Democrats in Japan and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional in Mexico. This volume is fine material for stimulating discussion of cross-regional and even cross-period patterns, permitting scholars to escape the possible "area-centrism" of a purely Latin Americanist perspective as well as "presentism," the tendency to think that what happens today is so important as to wipe out the relevance of years of cultural accretion.

Charles Tilly contributes the last essay with the characteristically enticing title "Democracy Is a Lake" (I will not reveal its meaning so as to leave some mystery for readers). The piece refers principally to *Capitalist Development and Democracy* by Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens, authors not included in the compilation.⁴ Tilly proposes his own definition of democracy, which adds the idea of "relatively equal citizenship" to the participatory part of the conventional definition (p. 370). He avoids positing the unattainable concept of social equality but insists on some mention of equality to ensure "real democracy." Diamond, Linz, and Lipset might have assumed that "wide participation" presupposes "relatively equal citizenship," but definition users will be the final arbiters. The conventional view will never satisfy those who consider themselves nonconventional. Tilly goes on to expound on the origins of democracy, a result of the inevitable demands by the proletarians that capitalism cannot help but generate. This analysis might hold true for the grand sociologist of the long cycle but less so for this political scientist, who often finds to her dismay that proletarianized societies (perhaps like Singapore, Cuba, and Mexico) may be quite undemocratic in our poor and perhaps intellectually uninteresting short run.

Kenneth Bauzon's edited volume, *Development and Democratization in the Third World: Myths, Hopes, and Realities*, offers further proof that not everyone accepts the Diamond, Linz, and Lipset approach to democratization. The Bauzon collection does not focus on Latin America. But many of its contributors live or have worked in Central America, and many themes arising from their experience are relevant to the region. The book serves as counterpoint to much current thinking on development, in which mar-

4. Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago, Ill.: Chicago University Press, 1992).

kets are believed to raise prospects for growth, and it resuscitates the commonplaces of the 1960s and 1970s regarding the defects of capitalism. Bauzon et al. insist on wider definitions of democracy that include “the empowerment of people in the pursuit of their own economic and social well-being” (p. 16). Bauzon criticizes the conventional literature for promoting democracy in a form similar to the “white man’s burden” approach of colonial days and for accepting capitalism implicitly and failing to see its defects. He also accuses the conventional analysts of being ahistorical, although one finds little in the way of history in this book and lots of it in the more conventional literature.

Development and Democratization in the Third World evinces much enthusiasm on the part of contributors, many of whom are activists rather than scholars. They communicate their conviction that they know the developing world at first hand and that perhaps the rest of us are unaware of the environmental depredation, callousness of the multinationals, biases of the media, and general lack of “spirituality” in development programs. David Korten’s essay on “people-centered development” provides a good overview of the bottom-up approach to development. He argues that it is necessary for any real social transformation, which may inevitably lie beyond the power of huge bureaucracies like the World Bank to affect. The contributors tend to support the idea of “sustainable development,” which was originally promoted by another large bureaucracy (the United Nations) and has also taken hold in the World Bank and other development agencies. While these arguments are familiar to the postwar baby boomers, this book is useful for those who would hear, or have their students hear, the direct voices of engaged practitioners, theologians of liberation, human rights defenders, and academics attuned to concerns about the quality of democracy and not its mere formal existence. These contributors to *Development and Democratization in the Third World* believe in the role of nongovernment organizations, as do conventional political scientists and sociologists who posit them as crucial for the development of “real democracy.” Indeed, their criticisms of capitalism and its ways are characteristic of many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Latin America and elsewhere.

Another dissenter is Atilio Borón, an Argentine sociologist who makes a brave attempt to make the best case for Marxism in the contemporary world. *State, Capitalism, and Democracy in Latin America* must be read sequentially, given the author’s admission that it was written over a number of years (quite a number, by my estimate). Although Borón never abandons his basic Marxist stance, it becomes more tentative over the course of the book. He demonstrates the virtue of grace, however: his essays are elegant and intriguing. Borón’s approach is textual in the sense that he comments on other analysts in a philosophical vein. He takes on U.S. economist Milton Friedman, ruminates on French writer Alexis de

Tocqueville, expounds on British social scientist Ralph Miliband, and takes the long view of things. By the end of the book, Borón finds himself admitting the daunting problems faced by the Left, whose principles are as valid as ever but are now subject to challenge in a world where the Russian Revolution has failed and the capitalist state has gone far toward achieving the aims of socialism.

Borón shares the classic anti-conventionalist view that the procedural democracy expounded by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead is a poor thing indeed if it fails to include the requisite of social equality.⁵ It perpetuates the Schumpeterian legacy of minimalism. If capitalism has shown that it can meet some of these goals in developed countries, it has not done so in unequal Latin America. What is more, the gains achieved are under attack from the neoliberal hordes. The Left still has plenty of work to do: "If the grave harms that the neoliberal experiments have inflicted on our societies are to be redressed, the Left has to become a valid, credible and attractive political alternative for the popular masses" (p. 243). Critics like Borón never concede that those who advance a minimalist definition of democracy do not necessarily favor minimalism in its development, nor do they ignore the importance of social development for consolidating it. Juan Gabriel Valdés jumps into this debate in the Tulchin volume to be reviewed here.

Manuel Alcántara and Ismael Crespo's edited volume, *Los límites de la consolidación democrática en América Latina*, is a welcome voice out of Spain. Its lovely cover contrasts with the utilitarian designs currently resting beside it on my desk. One finds among its editors and authors concern over the same issues treated in the U.S. volumes and approaches within the conventional framework. In general, the discussions are theoretical, albeit with some surprises. One is Jonathan Hartlyn's contribution on the 1994 elections in the Dominican Republic, which provides useful background to the events of 1996. One might have expected a different sort of tilt on Latin America from a seminar held at the University of Salamanca, but only Antonia Martínez explicitly refers to the Portuguese, Greek, and Spanish experiences of two decades ago as a common set of cases to be compared. This volume adds to the somewhat limited stock of Spanish-language sources on democratic consolidation and reflects the current tendency in Spain to reestablish links with Latin America.

Political Economy

Both the Tulchin and the Bartell-Payne collections deal mainly with the subset of questions about the relationship between democracy and

5. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

economy. Philippe Schmitter provides a provocative start for *The Consolidation of Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Joseph Tulchin with the assistance of Bernice Romero. Schmitter proffers ten general propositions or reflections on democracy. Although they appear as simple statements with only light elaboration, they make useful debating points and question simplistic linear thinking. These statements echo many conventional propositions, but with a sharper focus. Many would be useful for the kind of exam that posits some declaration and then instructs students to discuss it. For example, the first proposition reads "Democracy is not inevitable and it is revocable. Democracy is not necessary: it does not fulfill a functional requisite for capitalism, nor does it respond to some ethical imperative of social evolution" (p. 15). Reflection number four is also worth expanding: "The type of democracy will depend significantly (but not exclusively) on the mode of transition from autocracy" (p. 18). Both propositions force readers to think historically.

Three other contributions deal with issues such as corruption (Edelberto Torres Rivas), deception of voters' expectations by populist campaigners who quickly turn into liberal presidents (Susan Stokes), and the development of civil society (Elizabeth Jelin). The three essays by Moisés Naím, Osvaldo Sunkel, and Juan Gabriel Valdés form an interesting package for discussing liberal economic reform and the strains it may impose on democracy. Naím's first experience as Minister of Development in Venezuela was to confront the Caracas riots in 1989 over the economic earthquakes wracking Venezuela. He consequently insists on the need to reconcile the social, economic, and political tensions arising from the increased importance of the marketplace (p. 103). Latin American countries suffer from acute deficits in their societies, institutions, democracies, and economies. The future will not ensure that all countries in the region will advance together in lockstep; rather, it will separate out those countries that learn to survive in the international economy from those that lag. The gaps will be hard to close if they do not learn, and the process is fraught with peril. Sunkel has come to share the view that structural reforms are necessary, arguing that the perils cited by Naím will be best avoided via broad social agreements, more gradual and moderate implementation, and international and regional collaboration. Valdés attacks head-on those who would dismiss the so-called neoliberal and market-oriented reformers as enemies of justice, or "real democracy" as I have characterized it. He distinguishes "anti-state radicalism" as the true culprit, a stance restricted to a limited fringe on the Right who would reduce the state's roles to police officer, judge, and diplomat.⁶ Those who oppose reform (the

6. The "dichotomy" between neoliberals and anti-state radicals should be viewed instead as a continuum with many distinctions. An important network of nongovernmental organizations that is loosely connected to free-market organizations in developed countries attracts garden-variety market reformers as well as more radical members. The subtle variations can

groups today that are often called “*los dinosaurios*” in Latin America) try to lump the anti-state radicals together with the liberal reformers, fomenting popular confusion and needless rejection of necessary changes.

Tulchin ends *The Consolidation of Democracy in Latin America* by reflecting on Latin America’s international relations, particularly with the United States. He perceives the end of the cold war and the new economic orientation of the United States toward the region as permitting greater autonomy for Latin American countries and perhaps a tendency to strengthen their own regional ties.

Ernest Bartell and Leigh Payne have edited a collection based on a Notre Dame University 1991 workshop on business elites and democracy in Latin America. The contributors to *Business and Democracy in Latin America* look systematically at the same issues in Chile (Bartell), Bolivia (Catharine Conaghan), Peru (Francisco Durand), Mexico (Blanca Heredia), and Brazil (Payne). They address the subject of business associations and their relationships with authoritarian and democratic regimes, with each essay offering an interesting story as well as good analysis. It is a relief to find real people doing real things—instead of abstract “actors” defending their abstract “interests.” Scholarly treatments of democracy can verge on the bloodless.

These contributors explore the thesis that business is not a mere dependent actor (if it ever was) that thrives only with government support. They question the view that business is naturally more attracted to authoritarian regimes in expecting that such governments will control labor and ensure stability. In fact, these analysts find that business organizations are important and often influential in promoting democratic transitions, and they discover that business was generally deceived by authoritarian governments that did not provide the security or environment that business needed. When this outcome became apparent, business sectors began to support democracy. In Mexico, however, the regime did not lose the support of large economic groups because it did not confront the crisis of resources that led to the breakdown of regimes elsewhere. I might add that this phenomenon can work just as well in favor of democracy, as it does in Venezuela.

Although it would have been heartening to discover that business has come to value democracy for its own sake, these contributors’ stories

be perceived in a book that recently came out all over Latin America, provocatively titled *Manual del perfecto idiota latinoamericano*, by Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, Carlos Alberto Montaner, and Alvaro Vargas Llosa, with a prologue by Mario Vargas Llosa (Barcelona: Plaza and Janes, 1996). This work by journalists attempts to denigrate the traditional Left, which is characterized as idiotic in today’s world. Each coauthor took responsibility for several portions, but it is not revealed who wrote which parts. Reading from chapter to chapter, an attentive reader will detect significant differences that, if debated in detail, might separate these author-friends on significant social issues.

show that business support for democracy in the current cycle has been utilitarian. But is it unjustified that citizens (businesspersons or not) should ask that democracy be suitable for economic prosperity? They demand performance, and this fact gives weight to the view that democracy must contribute to economic growth if it is to last. As long as memories of authoritarian incompetence survive, business interests will give democracy a chance to prove its superiority.

Political Culture and Institutions

The four remaining books under review study basic aspects of democracy: the facilitating factors, as Diamond, Linz, and Lipset would call them. In *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices*, Jorge Domínguez and James McCann have produced a well-focused study of political culture in Mexico that shines in its methodological precision and will give students a clear model of how to use survey material. Its indexes include the text of the survey questions asked, information about political circumstances on the dates of surveys, data on how Mexicans themselves view surveys, and even a discussion of the problem of untruthful responses. Beyond these virtues, *Democratizing Mexico* updates general knowledge about Mexican citizens, actors of first importance on the democratic stage in Latin America today. As noted, Mexico is not classified as a “democracy” by many scholars and is therefore under intense scrutiny. Moreover, this collection allows tracking political attitudes in Mexico back to the surveys analyzed in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba’s *Civic Culture*, a milestone for benchmarking political culture.⁷ Apart from the contributors’ treatment of longer-term changes (or lack of change in some cases), they analyze Mexican elections in 1988, 1991, and 1994. This approach provides a good basis for detecting the erosion of the PRI monopoly on politics and also supporting the conclusion that Mexico’s democracy is moving steadily forward, perhaps even at an evolutionary rate that will ensure a soft landing. This interpretation is not a guarantee but a good possibility.

Gretchen Casper’s book on the Philippines, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule*, seems almost to belong in this collection because of the parallel transition to democracy that occurred in a country with cultural origins similar to those of Latin America. Her argument develops one of the themes touched on here: the relationship between events and processes that occur under authoritarian rule and the characteristics of the post-authoritarian regime. I have stressed that scholars should treat political evolution as a continuum and not forget the vital links between

7. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

the not-so-distant past and the present. Democracy might have “birth defects,” as Schmitter calls them, or might even find strengths from some authoritarian processes, as distasteful as it may sound. Casper shows how the political involvement of both the military and the church under Ferdinand Marcos left these institutions with birthmarks (if not defects) that would imply very different behavior under democracy than they displayed in the pre-authoritarian period. Both institutions became involved in politics, an interest they did not lose after the return to democracy.

Finally, Irwin Stotzky has edited *Transition to Democracy in Latin America: The Role of the Judiciary*, one of the few works to address legal systems in Latin America beyond the more superficial observations of non-experts. Unfortunately for those seeking a truly comparative analysis, the book is heavily oriented toward Argentina, being the result of the editor’s stay in that country. It also contains a chapter on Chile. This focus results in concentration on human rights abuses, particularly those perpetrated in Argentina under the generals. The book features contributions by many distinguished lawyers and scholars as well as interesting pieces comparing civil-law and common-law procedures and their relation to justice. A good example is the informative contribution of George Beekman. But the book is partisan, even if well intentioned. Former President Raúl Alfonsín is one of the contributors (along with Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide). Editor Stotzky and the late Carlos Santiago Niño denounce President Carlos Menem’s packing of the Argentine Supreme Court and other actions that helped protect against prosecution those in the military who might be charged with human rights violations. They also accuse Menem of politicizing the judicial system under the cover of judicial reform. These topics are certainly important objects of inquiry, but the defense is never given the floor. Even so, *Transition to Democracy in Latin America* begins a process that is crucial to consolidating democracy in Latin America, one that has been unjustly ignored by those most interested in its survival. Legal systems are increasingly recognized as central to the development of competitive politics and competitive capitalism as well, given that the market is a locus of contracts and nothing more. How are contracts to be made if there is no one to uphold them?⁸ The levelness and stability of the playing field depends on the rule of law.

A few parting thoughts. Democracy has not only spurred in Latin America, it is thriving and increasingly real. The fact that these authors speak to its frailties, defects, and failures with suggestions for improving it is heartening. As everywhere else, democracy in Latin America will never be ideal. In most countries, new debates are dominating public dis-

8. This last issue is taken up in *Seguridad jurídica y competitividad*, edited by María Eugenia Boza and Rogelio Pérez Perdomo (Caracas: Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración and Venezuela Competitiva, 1996).

cussion. These arguments are not about whether democracy is a good thing or not but about the negotiable issues of this or that electoral system or the best way to set up social support systems or reform decaying hospital systems. As Don Quixote said to Sancho Panza, that the dogs are barking is a sign that we are alive.