The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America

Advances and Setbacks

The late twentieth century witnessed the birth of an impressive number of new democracies in Latin America. This wave of democratization since 1978 has been by far the broadest and most durable in the history of Latin America, but many of the resulting democratic regimes also suffer from profound deficiencies. What caused democratic regimes to emerge and survive? What are their main achievements and shortcomings? This volume offers an ambitious and comprehensive overview of the unprecedented advances as well as the setbacks in the post-1978 wave of democratization. It seeks to explain the sea change from a region dominated by authoritarian regimes to one in which openly authoritarian regimes are the rare exception, and it analyzes why some countries have achieved striking gains in democratization while others have experienced erosions. The book presents general theoretical arguments about what causes and sustains democracy and analyses of nine theoretically compelling country cases.

Frances Hagopian is the Michael P. Grace II Associate Professor of Latin American Studies in the Department of Political Science and former Director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She is the author of Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil (Cambridge University Press, 1996), which was named a Choice Outstanding Book in Comparative Politics, and several articles on democratization that have appeared in World Politics, Comparative Political Studies, and several other publications. Her current research focuses on economic liberalization and political representation in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico. Hagopian previously taught at Harvard, Tufts, and MIT.

Scott P. Mainwaring is Eugene Conley Professor of Political Science and Director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Among his books are Democratic Accountability in Latin America (2003), Christian Democracy in Latin America (2003), Rethinking Party Systems in the Third Wave of Democratization: The Case of Brazil (1999), Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America (Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America (1995). He received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship in 2000 for work on a project on authoritarianism and democracy in Latin America from 1945 to 2000.
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Edited by

FRANCES HAGOPIAN
University of Notre Dame

SCOTT P. MAINWARING
University of Notre Dame
For our children,
Michael Messina and
Benjamin Mainwaring and Grace Mainwaring
With our love
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List of Contributors

Ana María Bejarano is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University. She previously was professor of Political Science at the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, where she also served as Director of the Center for Social and Legal Research (CIJUS). She co-edited Elecciones y Democracia en Colombia, 1997–1998 (Bogotá, 1998). Recent publications include articles in Constellations and the Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies. She is finishing a book on the historical origins and divergent trajectories of democracy in Colombia and Venezuela. Her current research deals with regime change, institution building, and constitution making in the Andes.

Michael Coppedge is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and a Fellow of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He previously taught at Yale, Princeton, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, and the Universities of Belgrano and Salamanca. He has published Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela, as well as book chapters and articles in journals including Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, and Journal of Democracy. Coppedge has received World Society Foundation, Fulbright-Hays, and Tinker grants. His current research focuses on approaches to democratization, democratic diffusion, and the causes and consequences of party-system characteristics in Latin America.

Frances Hagopian is the Michael P. Grace II Associate Professor of Latin American Studies in the Department of Political Science and former Director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She is the author of Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil (Cambridge University Press, 1996), which was named a Choice Outstanding Book in Comparative Politics, and articles on democratization that have appeared in World Politics, Comparative Political Studies, and several other publications.
current research focuses on economic liberalization and political representation in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico. Hagopian previously taught at Harvard, Tufts, and MIT, and she has held fellowships from the Center for Latin American Studies and The Howard Heinz Endowment of the University of Pittsburgh, the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the U.S. Department of Education (Fulbright-Hays program). She is a former member of the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association.

Steven Levitsky is John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Social Sciences at Harvard University. He specializes in comparative and Latin American politics. His areas of research include political parties and party change, informal institutions, and political regimes and regime change. He is author of Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective (Cambridge University Press, 2003). He has published articles on Argentine politics in Comparative Politics, World Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Latin American Research Review, Journal of Latin American Studies, and Journal of Democracy. He is currently writing a book on the emergence and dynamics of hybrid political regimes in the post–Cold War era.

Beatriz Magaloni is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Stanford University. She is currently finishing a book on the politics of party hegemony and its demise. Her research interests also include the politics of clientelism and vote buying, the rule of law and the courts, democratization and market-oriented reforms in Latin America, and voting behavior. She has been a Visiting Fellow in the Political Science Department at Harvard University and a Visiting Professor at the Political Science Department at UCLA. Before arriving at Stanford, Magaloni was the Director of Political Science at ITAM (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México) from 1997 to 1999. Some of her articles have appeared in the Journal of Theoretical Politics and Política y Gobierno. She also has published various chapters in edited volumes on Mexican and Latin American politics.

Scott Mainwaring is Eugene Conley Professor of Political Science and Director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. His books include Democratic Accountability in Latin America (Oxford University Press, coedited, 2003), Christian Democracy in Latin America (Stanford University Press, coedited, 2003), Rethinking Party Systems in the Third Wave of Democratization: The Case of Brazil (Stanford University Press, 1999), Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America (Cambridge University Press, coedited, 1997), and Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America (Stanford University Press, coedited, 1995). He received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship in 2000 for work on a project on authoritarianism and democracy in Latin America from 1945 to 2000.
René Antonio Mayorga is a Senior Researcher at the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (CEBEM). He is also Professor of Political Science at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Ecuador, and in the Joint Master’s Program of CEBEM, FLACSO, and the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. He has been a visiting professor at the universities of Salamanca, Berlin, and Notre Dame, among others. His books include De la Anomía Política al Orden Democrático? (La Paz, CEBEM, 1991), Antipolítica y Neopopulismo (La Paz, CEBEM, 1995), and La cuestión militar en cuestión: Democracia y Fuerzas Armadas (La Paz, CEBEM, 1994). He is editor of Democracia y Gobernabilidad en América Latina (Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 1992). He also contributed to Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law in New Democracies (Notre Dame, 1997) and to Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds? (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Aníbal Pérez-Liñán is Assistant Professor of Political Science and a member of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His research focuses on democratic institutions and governability. He has published articles in Electoral Studies, Latin American Research Review, and Legislative Studies Quarterly, among other journals. He is currently completing a book on presidential impeachment in Latin America.

Eduardo Pizarro is Professor at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá and served as Director of its Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales (IEPRI). He was a Visiting Fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies in 2000–01. He has published several scholarly analyses of the conflict in Colombia, including Una Democracia Asediada: Balance y perspectivas del conflicto armado en Colombia (Editorial Norma, 2004), and he is a weekly contributor to the national newspaper El Tiempo.

Mitchell A. Seligson is Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and Director of the Latin American Public Opinion Project. He previously held the Daniel H. Wallace Chair of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh, where he also served as Director of the Center for Latin American Studies. His current work involves survey research projects in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Seligson has held grants and fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation, Fulbright, USAID, and others; he has published more than eighty articles and more than a dozen books and monographs. His recent published books include Elections and Democracy in Central America, Revisited (University of North Carolina Press) and Development and Underdevelopment: The Political Economy of Global Inequality (Lynne Rienner).

Martín Tanaka holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Mexico City. Currently he is Senior
List of Contributors


Kurt Weyland is Professor of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of Democracy without Equity: Failures of Reform in Brazil (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); The Politics of Market Reform in Fragile Democracies: Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela (Princeton University Press, 2002); and numerous refereed journal articles on democratization, market reform, social policy, and populist politics in Latin America. His current book project focuses on the diffusion of innovations in Latin American social sector reform; an edited volume on this topic, Learning from Foreign Models in Latin American Policy Reform, was published by Woodrow Wilson Center Press in 2004.

Elisabeth Jean Wood teaches comparative politics at Yale University. Her research interests include social movements, democratization, political violence, civil wars, and development in Latin America and in Africa. She is the author of Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
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This volume is of course a product of the editors and authors. It is also a Kellogg Institute product. Since its inception in 1982, the Kellogg Institute has attempted to promote outstanding research on some of the most important normative issues that confront humanity, including democracy. Our scholarly interests and perspectives have been shaped by the rich intellectual debate at the Kellogg Institute on this theme. Seven of the authors in this volume are former Visiting Fellows of the Institute, three contributors are current Kellogg Faculty Fellows, and one is a former graduate student of the University of Notre Dame. Six of seven discussants who enriched our conference have been either Visiting or Faculty Fellows. We especially thank our colleague, Guillermo O’Donnell, who since the 1970s has set the agenda on debates about democratization.

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