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052182737X - Free Market Democracy and the Chilean and Mexican Countryside

Marcus J. Kurtz

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## Free Market Democracy and the Chilean and Mexican Countryside

This book examines the relationship between free markets and democracy. It demonstrates how the implementation of even very painful free market economic reforms in Chile and Mexico have helped to consolidate democratic politics without engendering a backlash against either reform or democratization. This national-level compatibility between free markets and democracy, however, is founded on their rural incompatibility. In the countryside, free market reforms socially isolate peasants to such a degree that they become unable to organize independently and thus are vulnerable to the pressures of local economic elites. This helps to create an electoral coalition behind free market reforms that is critically based in some of the market's biggest victims: the peasantry. The book concludes that the contemporary prevalence of comparatively stable free market democracy in Latin America hinges critically on its defects in the countryside; conservative, free market elites may consent to open politics only if they have a rural electoral redoubt.

Marcus J. Kurtz is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Ohio State University after having taught at both the University of Miami and the University of Michigan. He has published articles in the areas of political science, sociology, and Latin American studies in such journals as *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Politics & Society*, *Theory and Society*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and *The Journal of Latin American Studies*. He is also on the editorial board of *Latin American Politics and Society* and is a member of the American Political Science Association, the Latin American Studies Association, and the Midwest Political Science Association.

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2004

Printed in the United States of America

*Typeface* Sabon 10/13.5 pt.    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [TB]

*A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Kurtz, Marcus J.

Free market democracy and the Chilean and Mexican countryside / Marcus J. Kurtz.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-82737-X

1. Democracy – Chile. 2. Democracy – Mexico. 3. Free enterprise – Chile.

4. Free enterprise – Mexico. 5. Rural population – Chile. 6. Rural population –

Mexico. 7. Political participation – Chile. 8. Political participation – Mexico.

I. Title.

JL2681.K87 2004

320.972–dc22

2003065316

ISBN 0 521 82737 X hardback

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## Acknowledgments

I must begin these acknowledgments with the start of this project. It was in Ruth Berins Collier's graduate course on Latin American politics that I first became acquainted with the at-times utopian and at-times tragic reality that has been post-war Chilean politics. Little did I know that the interest sparked at that moment would evolve into an obsession that consumed nearly a decade of my life. It is for this spark – and many other things – that I owe Ruth an enormous debt of gratitude. Once launched, this project took many turns, and it was David Collier who persistently and insistently kept my work from straying down dead ends and false paths, and at least on one occasion, kept me from dropping out of the discipline of political science. David and Ruth were the co-chairs of the dissertation in which the central ideas for this book were conceived, and without their support, insight, and guidance it is obvious to me that neither would have been completed, much less have merited reading. I know that it is customary to thank one's advisors, but I want to make clear I mean far more than that: David and Ruth are ongoing sources of advice, inspiration, and most importantly constructive criticism. It has been a rare privilege to have worked so closely with both of them over the years, and I am grateful that they have tolerated my anxieties and bouts of ill-humor with their customary aplomb.

No book is written in isolation, and mine is certainly no exception. At different points over the years an enormous number of scholars, friends, and listeners unable to escape the room have cheerfully read, heard, and/or commented on different aspects of this work.

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*Acknowledgments*

Particular thanks go to Felipe Agüero, Andrew Barnes, Juliet Gainsborough, Larry King, Tom Koelble, Steve Levitsky, James Mahoney, Carol Medlin, Eric Oliver, Pierre Ostiguy, Rudy Sil, Jeff Sluyter, Bill Smith, Rich Snyder, Dave Stuligross, Arun Swamy, Elaine Thomas, and Michael Watts. Two reviewers for Cambridge University Press provided very helpful comments and criticisms. Many of my colleagues at Ohio State have been important sources of advice and encouragement, including Tim Frye, Anthony Mughan, Kira Sanbonmatsu, Allan Silverman, Alex Thompson, Alan Wiseman, and Kuba Zielinski. Special thanks also go to Peter Houtzager, who forced much greater precision in my thinking over the course of our multiyear collaboration. Ken Greene has been a steadfast colleague, engaging critic, and friend. Similarly, I must thank Aaron Schneider for being willing to discuss the manuscript only during marathon training runs; both the book and my health are better for it.

The initial work on this project was made possible by the National Science Foundation, and was facilitated by my affiliation with the Grupo de Investigaciones Agrarias (GIA) in Santiago, Chile. I sincerely thank Estanislao Gacitúa and the other researchers at GIA for providing tremendous assistance as well as making me feel at home during a difficult time. My heartfelt thanks also go to Chileans and Mexicans too numerous to mention – from peasants to bureaucrats – that made my research possible, and saved me from (some of) my gringo naïveté. Additional research was supported by the University of Miami through both the Jame MacLamore Summer grant and several research support awards.

Preliminary versions of some of the ideas in this book appeared in “Free Markets and Democratic Consolidation in Chile: The National Politics of Rural Transformation” *Politics & Society* vol. 27: 2 (June 1999), as well as in “The Institutional Roots of Popular Mobilization: State Transformation and Rural Politics in Brazil and Chile” (with Peter Houtzager) *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 42: 2 (April 2000).

Several colleagues and friends here deserve very special mention. Elizabeth Armstrong many years ago convinced me that my future lay in the social sciences. Teresa Wright reminded me that there is more to life than the social sciences, and talked me through more tough times than I can count. Ken Shadlen has by this time read and commented

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on the entire manuscript many times over, and I can only hope that I have been half as helpful to him over the years as he has been to me. I have been lucky to have had such a friend, critic, and colleague, literally since we met on our first day in graduate school in the Fall of 1988. Andrew Schrank probably more than anyone has helped to shape my intellectual development. We have been close friends since our undergraduate days at the University of Michigan, and I am hard-pressed to think of anything I have written that has not benefited from his advice. My debt to him for his intellectual support, solidarity, and friendship is beyond repayment.

Sarah Brooks has managed the unenviable task of being simultaneously my partner and my colleague. I doubt very much that I could have accomplished what I have without her, and I know that I am a far better and happier person for having the opportunity to share my life with her. I only hope that the burden has not been too great, and that I can repay the favor. Finally, I must thank my parents Margot and J Kurtz. Despite the fact that the academy is the family business, they never wanted me to go to graduate school. Of course, like so many rebellious children, I ignored their advice. But their love, constant support, and the examples they set carried me through the periods of both light and dark. I will be lucky indeed to accomplish a fraction of what they have as people, parents, and scholars. It is to them that this book is dedicated.

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