

## Latin American Politics and Society

Taking a fresh thematic approach to politics and society in Latin America, this introductory textbook analyzes the region's past and present in an accessible and engaging style well-suited to undergraduate students. The book provides historical insights into modern states and critical issues they are facing, with insightful analyses that are supported by empirical data, maps, and timelines. Drawing upon cutting-edge research, the text considers critical topics relevant to all countries within the region such as the expansion of democracy and citizenship rights and responses to human rights abuses, corruption, and violence. Each richly illustrated chapter contains a compelling and cohesive narrative, followed by thought-provoking questions and further reading suggestions, making this text a vital resource for anyone encountering the complexities of Latin American politics for the first time in their studies.

**Gerardo L. Munck** grew up in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Southern California. His books include *Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies* (with David Collier; Rowman & Littlefield, 2022); *A Middle-Quality Institutional Trap: Democracy and State Capacity in Latin America* (with Sebastián Mazzuca; Cambridge, 2020); and *Measuring Democracy: A Bridge Between Scholarship and Politics* (Johns Hopkins, 2009). He worked on *Democracy in Latin America* (2004), a United Nations Development Programme report. His awards include the Frank Cass Prize for Best Overall Article in *Democratization* in 2016, and the Award for Conceptual Innovation in Democratic Studies in 2003.

**Juan Pablo Luna** grew up in Montevideo, Uruguay, and is Professor of Political Science at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and Associate Researcher with the Millennium Institute for Foundational Research on Data. His books include *Latin American Party Systems* (with Kitschelt, Hawkins, Rosas, and Zechmeister; Cambridge, 2010); *Segmented Representation, Political Party Strategies in Unequal Democracies* (Oxford, 2014); *The Resilience of the Latin American Right* (with Rovira-Kaltwasser; Johns Hopkins, 2014); *En vez del optimismo. Crisis de representación política en el Chile actual* (Catalonia, 2017); and *Political Parties and Diminished Subtypes* (with Rosenblatt, Piñeiro, and Vommaro; Cambridge, 2021).

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# Latin American Politics and Society

## A Comparative and Historical Analysis

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*Gerardo dedicates this book to Claudia, who supported me throughout the writing process, but was very happy to see me finish this book*

*Juan Pablo dedicates this book to Karina, Joaquina, and Santiago*

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His book *Authoritarianism and Democratization: Soldiers and Workers in Argentina, 1976–83* was selected by *Choice Magazine* as one of the “Outstanding Academic Titles for 1999.” His article “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices” (*Comparative Political Studies*, 2002) received the 2003 Award for Conceptual Innovation in Democratic Studies, of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) Committee on Concepts and Methods (C&M) and the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Mexico. His article “What Is Democracy? A Reconceptualization of the Quality of Democracy,” *Democratization* (2016) received the Frank Cass Prize for Best Overall Article in *Democratization* in 2016.

He has worked in the field of democracy promotion over the past twenty years. He worked on *Democracy in Latin America* (2004), a report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and has been active in various initiatives to promote and monitor democracy. He was a member of the International Expert Panel of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), and a member of the Expert Advisory Board for the development of International IDEA's Global Democracy Index. He has consulted for the UNDP, the Organization of American States (OAS), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Dr. Juan Pablo Luna is Professor of Political Science at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Professor Luna grew up in Montevideo, Uruguay. At age 10 he witnessed the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy, a watershed event that prematurely shaped

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his interest in understanding political processes. After completing a BA in Uruguay, he pursued an MA and PhD in Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After finishing his PhD, he relocated to Chile. He teaches at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He has held visiting professor positions at Princeton University, Brown University, Harvard University, Sciences Po (Latin American Campus), the University of Texas at Austin, and Columbia University. He taught Latin American Politics to undergraduate and MA students at Princeton (2008), Sciences Po (2014), and Columbia (2018).

Dr. Luna's research focuses on political parties and representation, state institutions, organized crime, and the political economy of Latin America. His books include *Latin American Party Systems* (with Herbert Kitschelt, Kirk Hawkins, Guillermo Rosas, and Elizabeth Zechmeister; Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Segmented Representation, Political Party Strategies in Unequal Democracies* (2014); *The Resilience of the Latin American Right* (with Cristóbal Rovira-Kaltwasser; 2014); *En vez del optimismo. Crisis de representación política en el Chile actual* (2017); *La Chusma Inconsciente* (2021); and *Political Parties and Diminished Subtypes* (with Fernando Rosenblatt, Rafael Piñeiro, and Gabriel Vommaro; Cambridge University Press, 2022). He is currently working on a manuscript on the impact of state capacity, violence, and corruption on current challenges for democratic citizenship in Latin America.

Dr. Luna has consulted for the UNDP, the OAS, the USAID, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), and International IDEA, on issues related to democratic representation, political parties, and campaign financing and regulation. Between 2011 and 2017, he was the leader of the Millennium Nucleus for the Study of Stateness and Democracy in Latin America. In 2018, he helped design the Millennium Institute for Foundational Research on Data (2018–2028), which promotes interdisciplinary work on demographic change, production patterns, state capacity, and political conflicts in contemporary Latin America. More recently, Dr. Luna participated in a new Millennium Institute project titled VIODEMOS (2021–2031), which seeks to analyze the interaction between violent social processes and democracy in the region. He joined both Millennium Institutes as Associate Researcher and board member.

## Preface

This book is about politics in Latin America. We discuss the region's past but, most of all, problems in contemporary Latin America. We are concerned with progress, defined as gains in the ability of all people in a society to develop to their full potential and live a good life. We believe that part of human development occurs through politics. More specifically, we think that the conquest and expansion of democracy and citizenship rights are key aspects of human progress.

Further, to understand how people in Latin America are doing and whether all and not just a few are treated fairly and are living well, we address a range of political, legal, and socioeconomic issues. We discuss old issues, such as the right to free and fair elections and the rule of law, and new ones, such as transitional justice, gender quotas, and neoextractivism. We also consider the role of many actors, including politicians, judges, members of the security forces, criminal organizations, external actors such as the United States, business elites, social movements, activists, and common citizens. We show how seemingly separate issues (e.g., democratic elections and economic inequality) are associated, and are better understood when viewed as intertwined issues that must be confronted by societies that embark on the quest for democracy and citizenship rights.

This book is intended as an introduction to politics in Latin America for those who are encountering the region for the first time. We do not assume background knowledge. Moreover, although we draw on a vast academic literature and present a large amount of data, we are interested in conveying ideas about substantive, tangible matters (e.g., why is it hard to reduce corruption in Latin America?). Ultimately, this book seeks to connect the reader to this region in an accessible manner, so that they can recognize its achievements and grasp its problems, and better relate to the hopes and disappointments of Latin Americans.

We also believe that this book can serve as a reintroduction to Latin America for those who have a prior exposure to the region. Latin America is like a good book that can be read more than once. It is also a changing region. And we trust that the ideas we present in the pages that follow will engage even those who consider that they already “know” the region. Indeed, this book adopts a fresh perspective on the region, which invites seasoned observers of the region to “see” it in a new way, to rediscover it.

In the remainder of this preface we explain the book's subject matter, organization, and approach to learning. We also provide a summary of each chapter that specifies the topics covered and briefly anticipates the arguments we make.

## Subject Matter, Organization, and Pedagogy

We start with a discussion of what is covered in this book, how the presentation of each subject matter is organized, and what we have done to help readers learn about Latin America.

### Overall Content and Structure

The introductory chapter presents the two perspectives adopted in this book – a historical and a contemporary one – and briefly discusses the topics covered in the book and previews the book's key arguments.

Part I (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4) offers a series of historical overviews of Latin American politics and society. These overviews offer background information that is important to an understanding of contemporary politics, the focus of the rest of the book. We discuss the formation of states and state capacity; nation-building projects and the place of races and ethnicities in these projects; political regimes and democracy; and economic and social policies and outcomes.

Parts II, III, and IV focus on contemporary Latin America – roughly from the 1990s onward – and address three kinds of problems faced in the region.

Part II (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) focuses on problems *of* democracy, that is, problems linked to the attainment, maintenance, and improvement of democratic rights. The opening chapter of this part offers an overview of democracy in contemporary Latin America. The other chapters discuss the political inclusion of women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and ordinary citizens; and the role of political parties in fostering political representation.

Part III (Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11) is concerned with civil rights that are considered a problem *for* democracy, that is, civil rights that citizens expect or hope that democracies will protect but have not yet done so. The opening chapter of this part provides a broad introduction to civil rights in contemporary Latin America. The remaining chapters in this part address transitional justice, high-level corruption, and violence.

Part IV (Chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15) turns to social rights that are considered a problem *for* democracy and thus extends the discussion beyond the familiar realm of political and civil rights to the less habitual and potentially polemic but critical realm of social rights. Once more, the part starts with an introductory chapter that offers a sweeping view of social rights in contemporary Latin America. The other chapters of this part focus on sustainable development and neoextractivism, social inclusion and social policies, and policies oriented to the reduction of economic inequality.

We treat the roles of women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and ordinary people as cross-cutting themes. For example, we address the political inclusion of women – an area where women have made important gains – and then follow up on this discussion by exploring whether these political gains have translated into improvements in civil and social rights. We also consider the political role of indigenous peoples, and then consider the extent to which they attained civil and social rights. Data are not always available to address the

connections between the rights attained by different categories of citizens across the political, civil, and social spheres of citizenship. However, we focus on categories of citizens that have been disadvantaged historically throughout the book.

A concluding chapter, Chapter 16, offers a brief recapitulation of the book's main points. An Appendix and a Glossary provide additional resources. The Appendix presents a timeline that summarizes and consolidates some of the key points made in the historical overviews in Part I. The Glossary lists terms and concepts used in the book that are given a distinctive meaning in the social sciences.

### **Chapter Structure in Part I**

The chapters in Part I are internally organized in a similar manner. We first clarify the core concepts used in the chapter. Subsequently, we offer a periodization of developments from the nineteenth century or earlier until the early twenty-first century. To help the reader navigate these historical chapters, early in each chapter a table is presented with a summary of the dates and key characteristics of each period.

Additionally, in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we show that after modern states were formed in Latin America, the region's history can be understood in terms of three common periods: 1880 to 1930, 1930 to 1980, and 1980 to the 2010s. This periodization is partly artificial; many countries deviate from this pattern. This periodization does not work precisely for all issues. However, this feature of Latin American history helps readers more easily connect the analysis of issues – the nation-building project, the political regime and democracy, and the model of economic development – within each of the three common historical periods.

All chapters end with a summary of the main points made in each chapter.

### **Chapter Structure in Parts II, III, and IV**

The chapters in Parts II, III, and IV also rely on a common internal organization. We initially introduce the questions the chapter will address. We then divide our discussion in three parts.

First, we discuss and define key concepts. Where relevant, we note that some concepts (e.g., social rights) are the subject of debate and present alternative ways of understanding a concept.

Second, we describe the successes and failures of Latin American countries in tackling challenges and attaining certain outcomes (e.g., justice for the victims of human rights violations). Here we draw on various sources of information, introduce much new information gathered especially for this text, and identify broad patterns and tendencies within the region.

Third, we explain the record of Latin American countries and present different arguments about why countries have been successful or not in developing democracy and citizenship rights. We draw on an extensive literature about the topics we discuss in order to convey the most up-to-date explanations in the scholarship on Latin America. We also present ideas that draw on our own research on democracy and citizenship rights. Further, we consider

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many of the same factors (e.g., the state, social movements) across chapters, and thus make the discussion a cumulative one that highlights certain recurring themes.

As in Part I, all chapters end with a summary of the main points made in the chapter.

### Data and Cases

A few words are in order regarding the empirical information we have used throughout the book. We present and analyze two kinds of information: cross-national data, frequently on all nineteen countries in the region; and case studies.

Cross-national data (some quantitative, some qualitative) on various aspects of politics are increasingly available. And we use these data especially to identify broad patterns in the region and to compare Latin America to other regions. Cross-national data are a valuable resource in the study of politics, and we show how these data can be fruitfully used.

We also rely extensively on short case studies of specific countries. In selecting cases, we have sought a balanced coverage of the region. We include Brazil and Mexico, the two biggest countries in the region; and we discuss cases from Latin America's three main subregions: the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay), the Andean Region (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela), and Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama). Latin American countries from the Caribbean (Cuba and the Dominican Republic) are also addressed, although in less detail.

We use our discussions of cases for two main purposes. At times, we use them for descriptive purposes, to vividly illustrate achievements and problems. At other times, we use them as part of our exploration of why some outcomes occur. Case studies are particularly useful to understand how processes unfold, who does what, and why things happen. Comparing several cases is also a useful method to learn about politics. Thus, we show how we can learn about politics not only by studying cases but also by comparing cases.

### Learning Aids

Finally, we have included some special pedagogical features to draw out and apply the book's themes.

We provide short asides that supplement the text and that are placed in boxes. We use four kinds of boxes, each with a distinctive label:

- **Debates:** These boxes underscore important conceptual, theoretical, or political debates (e.g., whether members of the judiciary should be concerned about the political consequences of their judicial decisions).
- **Thinking Comparatively:** These boxes make comparisons within Latin America as well as between Latin America and other regions of the world. At times, we make a comparison between Latin America and the United States.

- **Connections:** These boxes make connections among issues, such as the various dimensions of citizenship (e.g., whether democracy can be used to expand social rights).
- **A Closer Look:** These boxes provide a deeper exploration of specific issues introduced in the chapters.

At the end of each chapter, we also include special features to help both instructors and students broaden their understanding of the chapter's subject matter. First, we present several questions to spark a discussion about the chapter's content. Next, we provide a collection of resources that delve more fully into the topics of the chapter; these include articles and books, websites, and documentaries. Most of these resources are references to English-language materials; however, we also include several resources in Spanish and a few in Portuguese.

## Summary of the Chapters

As an overview of the book, we provide, below, a summary of each chapter.

### Introduction

A brief introduction distinguishes the historical and contemporary perspectives adopted in the book. It discusses the topics covered in the book's historical overview and anticipates the key arguments made about the historical development of Latin America. It justifies the focus on democracy in the analysis of contemporary Latin America, and introduces the overarching argument used to explain the apparently paradoxical state of politics and society in contemporary Latin America.

### Part I: A Historical Overview

Part I offers a broad historical overview of Latin America that is essential to an understanding of contemporary Latin American politics. Each chapter focuses on one key issue and provides a sweeping discussion that reaches back to the nineteenth century, and earlier in the case of the first two chapters, and traces developments through the early twenty-first century.

Chapter 1 focuses on the state as a distinct form of political organization, the formation of modern states, and the capacity of these states. We start by considering the states created by indigenous peoples and the states subsequently imposed by the Spanish and Portuguese colonial rulers. We next show how modern states were formed in Latin America after independence from Spain and Portugal. We argue, following recent research, that Latin America pursued a trade-led model of state formation and that the resulting states were

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weak, patrimonial states – that is, states that were treated by rulers, partially at least, as their private property and that did not enforce the rule of law. Moreover, we argue that state weakness has been a persistent problem in Latin America, as we show in the cases of Mexico and Uruguay, and that contemporary states are unable to impose their rule in a uniform manner throughout the territory they claim to control. We show that Latin America has modern states, but also that these states are weak.

Chapter 2 discusses how the sense of nationhood has changed over time since the formation of modern states in Latin America, and how the construction of nations has been closely linked to racial and ethnic identities. We show that nations were not built from scratch, and that nation builders were conditioned by legacies from colonial times. We also demonstrate that nation building is an ongoing, never-finished project. Indeed, we identify three distinct periods in the process of nation building. In a first period, an elite vision of the nation, which took white, civilized Europe as a model, prevailed. In a second period, a national-popular vision of the nation took center stage, and *el pueblo* (the people) was considered the true essence of the nation. Finally, in a third, ongoing period, nationhood has been understood in multicultural terms and, for the first time in the history of Latin America, the distinctiveness of indigenous peoples and of Afro-descendants has been recognized and treated as legitimate. We argue that, over time, the sense of nationhood has become more inclusive of different races and ethnicities.

Chapter 3 focuses on the record of democracy of Latin American countries. Once more, we identify three periods. In a first period, one of oligarchic dominance, most countries had a variety of types of authoritarianism and only a few countries had experience with partial democracy. In a second period, that of mass politics and regime instability, the entry of the masses and women into politics created pressure for democratic change, and the region started to gain considerable experience with partial and fuller democracy. However, tensions due to the transition from elite to mass politics and then the Cuban Revolution led to political polarization, high levels of violence, and rule by right-wing dictatorships. Waves of democratization were followed by waves of de-democratization. Finally, in a third, ongoing period, Latin America entered a democratic age. Nearly every country in the region has had a democratic regime. Democracies have become more inclusive, as restrictions on the right to vote, which excluded women and the poor, were no longer imposed. And democracies have endured. Thus, we show that the history of democracy in Latin America is one of considerable progress.

Chapter 4 rounds out the historical overview by addressing how Latin American countries have sought to generate socioeconomic welfare by making choices about the model of economic development – the country's strategy to promote economic growth and the material well-being of the populations as a whole. Again, we identify three periods during which Latin America adopted distinct models of economic development and we assess the performance of each model. The region's first model, the market-oriented agro-export model, led to moderate but unequal progress – a mixture of moderate economic growth, a slight improvement in absolute levels of welfare, and an increase in economic inequality. The region's second model, the statist import-substitution industrialization model, produced



strong progress – good economic growth, a big improvement in absolute levels of welfare, and a decrease in economic inequality. Finally, the region's third model, the market-oriented neoliberal model still used in the region, has yielded slow progress – languid economic growth, a slight improvement in absolute levels of welfare, and a small reduction in economic inequality. We show that the question of what the best development model for Latin America is remains open.

## Part II: Problems of Democracy in a Democratic Age

Part II starts the discussion of contemporary politics, the period that begins in the 1990s. This period can be characterized as a democratic age. Yet this part shows that Latin America still faces many problems of democracy, that is, problems concerning whether a country is democratic and how democratic democracies are.

Chapter 5 uses the concept of quality of democracy and shows that the most common problem of democracy is that democracies are low-quality or medium-quality ones. That is, we stress that even though Latin America has achieved and stabilized democracy, a notable success, it has not democratized fully. We also note that democracy has broken down in some countries (e.g., Nicaragua, Venezuela). We argue that multiple factors account for the state of democracy in contemporary Latin America. Ideological differences over neoliberal economic policies have fueled some problems of democracy, as we show in some detail in the cases of Honduras and Venezuela. Changes in various aspects of the international context have helped to stabilize democracies. Additionally, the region's problems of democracy are also explained by some enduring features of Latin American politics: the exploitation of advantages that accrue to incumbency in political office, the influence of economic power, and the weakness of the state.

Chapter 6 turns to the issue of the political inclusion of disadvantaged groups: women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and ordinary people. We highlight many impressive accomplishments – most notably, the important steps taken to increase the number of women in political office by instituting gender quotas, a mechanism that obliges political parties to field a certain percentage of female candidates. The introduction of various other institutional innovations has also fostered political inclusion. However, we show that indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants have gained less access to political office than women, and that few steps have been taken to redress this problem. We discuss this problem in Brazil, among other places. Moreover, we point out that institutions offering, in principle, an avenue for citizen input into government beyond voting for representatives are frequently hijacked by governments. We highlight both the promise and the limits of various initiatives to make democracy more inclusive. We argue that, even though Latin American democracies have become more inclusive, democracy still works better for some groups than for others.

Chapter 7 addresses the role of political parties as agents of representation that channel citizen interests and values into the policy-making process. We use Peru as a case study to

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illustrate the flaws of democracy without representative parties. We show that many Latin American democracies have experienced persistent crises of representation because citizens see many party leaders as cut off from common citizens and do not trust their parties. And we offer an explanation for the state of parties in the region. We argue that crises of representation persist when neoliberalism is treated as inevitable and that, as we show in the case in El Salvador, the link between citizens and politicians is strengthened when parties express conflicts over neoliberalism. However, we also show, through an analysis of various parties in Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay, that parties become agents of representation only when other demanding conditions are met. Also needed are skillful political leaders, committed activists, vigorous social movements, and resources – conditions that are rarely met. Another key hindrance to party building is a lack of state capacity; a weak state limits the possibility that elected officials can deliver public goods and engender popular support. Although democracy has become the norm in Latin America, few democracies have parties that act as agents of representation, and this lack of a deep, substantive sense of representation is a key problem of democracy.

### Part III: Civil Rights as a Problem *for* Democracy

Part III discusses civil rights as a problem *for* democracy – that is, deficiencies regarding various civil rights that democracy is expected to solve.

Chapter 8 provides an introduction to civil rights in contemporary Latin America. It proposes a working definition of civil rights that encompasses four classes of rights: equality rights (e.g., equality before the law); liberty rights (e.g., the right to a free press); security rights (e.g., the right to life); and due process rights (e.g., the right to a fair trial). Relying on data about these four classes of rights, the chapter characterizes the state of civil rights in Latin America as mixed. Significant gains have been made in several areas: the politically powerful have had to answer for past abuses of human rights; some former presidents have gone to jail on corruption charges; and the rights of various categories of citizens, such as women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and LGBTQ+ people, have been legally recognized. However, civil rights are an acute problem for democracy. Many democracies are corrupt, discriminatory, semi-free, violent, and unjust. To explain this state of affairs, we draw on a combination of factors. Democracy has served as a stepping stone for some improvement of civil rights, especially when an active civil society has pressed for certain rights. But the impact of democracy is muted because Latin American democracies are not high-quality democracies. Moreover, the judiciary has not been a consistent promoter of civil rights, and the state has also not been capable enough or state agents have not been committed enough to enforce the law uniformly throughout the full territory of a country.

Chapter 9 focuses on transitional justice, the challenge of tackling past human rights violations. We show that the record of each country varies considerably, but that, in the aggregate, the record of contemporary Latin America is largely a success story. The frequency

with which past human rights violations have been addressed, and the steps taken through truth commissions and trials, puts Latin America at the center of the global transitional justice movement. We also demonstrate, through a comparative analysis of six countries (Brazil and Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala, Chile and Argentina), that several factors determine the response to past human rights violations. Democracies that are strong and channel citizen preferences succeed in confronting the challenge of transitional justice. Additionally, a positive record of transitional justice is associated with strong civil society organizations, generational change and new legal thinking about human rights law in the judiciary, and progressive developments in international law.

Chapter 10 addresses high-level corruption and the judicial response to those who are known to engage, or are widely suspected of engaging, in acts of corruption. We show that corruption is a persistent problem and that no sustained gains to counter it have been made. We also show that the judicial response is, at best, mixed. There is a widespread and well-founded perception that countries fall short of protecting due process rights by justly punishing those who engage in acts of high-level corruption. High-level corruption is systemic, involving a network of powerful politicians, top-level public administrators, and high-level members of the judiciary. We explore the causes of this poor record through an analysis of three cases (Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala) and we draw several conclusions. The weakness of democracy prevents it from reining in corruption. The public administration, with its propensity to link employment more to political loyalty than to adherence to the law, has largely been a hindrance in the fight against corruption. The judiciary has been part of the solution to the problem of corruption when it has been independent and competent; however, the judiciary is frequently corrupt or politicized and thus part of the problem. Finally, civil society organizations have played a consistently positive role, putting pressure on politicians and the judiciary to fight against corruption.

Chapter 11 focuses on the new violence that has erupted in many Latin American countries in the early twenty-first century and on threats to the right to life. Using various forms of data, we show that Latin America is the most violent region in the world, that the main victims of violence are young males living in cities, and that a variety of actors are perpetrators of violence: drug cartels, gangs, common criminals, militias, and state agents. We point out that violence in Latin America is a systemic problem that has deep roots in society and in the state. Here we explore the sources of violence and the state's failure to protect the right to life by looking closely at cases in which drug cartels and street gangs are active – Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). And we explain the incidence of violence as follows. International factors, such as the global drug trade and US policy toward Latin America, have played a largely negative role. So too have state actors in the security sector – that is, the police and the military. The state has failed to guarantee citizen security, in part because it is absent and thus fails to protect citizens, and in part because it colludes with criminal groups. Additionally, needed reforms of the state's security forces are not enacted because the democratically elected politicians who have to propose such reforms are threatened or bought off by actors that benefit from violence. Thus, we

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conclude our discussion of the state of civil rights in Latin America by stressing that problems *of* democracy – the poor quality of democracy – and problems *for* democracy – the failure of democracies to guarantee civil rights – are tightly interconnected.

### Part IV: Social Rights as a Problem *for* Democracy

Part IV discusses social rights as a problem *for* democracy – that is, the existence of deficiencies regarding various social rights that democracy could reasonably be hoped to address and ameliorate.

Chapter 12 provides an introduction to social rights in contemporary Latin America. It proposes a working definition of social rights that encompasses five classes of rights: the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to a family life, the right to health, the right to education and participation in cultural life, and the right to decent work and social security. It uses data on these five classes of rights to show that social rights are a problem for democracy. Social progress across several types of social rights has been widespread and many democracies are partly inclusive. However, most Latin American democracies are unequal democracies. To explain this mixed state of affairs, we consider the impact of several factors. A history of democracy, especially when left-center parties are strong, is associated with relatively easy aspects of redistribution. Social mobilization has also been pivotal in pushing for social rights. Yet, problems of democracy, such as the weakness of political parties, attenuate democracy's redistributive potential. Additionally, weak state capacity has been an obstacle to the implementation of redistributive policies.

Chapter 13 focuses on sustainable development and, more specifically, the impact of neoextractivism, an economic strategy that emphasizes the exploitation of primary products, on the quality of life of the communities where this economic activity is based. We argue that neoextractivism is not just an economic policy; it is also a matter of social and environmental rights. We show that although neoextractivism has led to short-term economic growth, it has also created massive and unprecedented environmental damage that has been especially detrimental to indigenous peoples and the rural poor. As a central part of the chapter, we explore protests against neoextractivism through case studies of three countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru) and show that only in Bolivia have affected communities had some success in ameliorating the negative consequences of neoextractivism. We also explain the impact of protests as follows. Democratic institutions and decentralization create incentives for greater accountability at the local level. Moreover, in some cases, the mobilizational strength and political coordination of local communities leads to collective action. Nonetheless, several factors blunt the impact of protests. Leaders on the left and the right of the political spectrum have been committed to neoextractivism and, even though leftist leaders have supported prior consultation – a process whereby affected indigenous communities weigh in on extractive projects – they have essentially co-opted this mechanism of popular participation. In most cases, poor communities of ethnic minorities are unable to organize and mobilize successfully against neoextractivism. Further, the state commonly operates in favor of business interests.

Chapter 14 focuses on the role of social policy and, more specifically, on conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs, a Latin American invention. We show that CCTs have been a striking success story. In particular, they have become somewhat of a basic income support that has reduced poverty and helped historically disadvantaged groups, such as single mothers and indigenous groups. The adoption and implementation of CCTs is a real Latin American success story. To make sense of this achievement, we explore the causes of CCTs through case studies of Mexico and Brazil and briefer discussions of other countries. And we explain the emergence of CCT programs as a result of a confluence of factors. Increased electoral competition helped to channel popular demands for better social rights. Political ideology facilitated the international diffusion of CCTs and determined the degree of universalism of social policies. Additionally, CCTs were effective because they were designed and implemented in a way that circumvented public administrators traditionally prone to patrimonial and clientelistic practices.

Chapter 15 addresses economic inequality, an inescapable issue in a discussion of Latin America. We illustrate the significance of inequality with brief discussions of Brazil and Chile. We show that wealth and income are unequally distributed and that certain categories of citizens (rural dwellers, indigenous people, informal workers) are among the poorest Latin Americans. We stress that it is paradoxical that several decades after Latin America achieved democracy – a political system based on the idea that citizens are political equals – social inequality remains deep and pervasive. Subsequently, to account for this paradox, we emphasize the difficulties faced by democratic governments in reducing economic inequality through redistributive policies that affect the interests of powerful actors. Elites can restrict redistribution through their structural power (e.g., their control of the production and distribution of economic goods), their instrumental power (e.g., their influence on electoral campaigns and legislation), and their control of the media. Politicians and state agents are also responsible for blocking change. Finally, we note that persistent economic inequality has negative consequences on democracy and show how recent political developments in Chile – for decades seen as the poster child of political and economic success in the region – are a warning sign against complacency with economic inequality.

## Conclusion

In the final Chapter 16, we highlight the overarching arguments of the book:

- A century and a half into the political life of Latin America's modern states, the question of how to develop state capacity and how to manage the economy for the benefit of citizens has not been resolved.
- The record of democracy and citizenship rights in contemporary Latin America is a mixed one, with some significant achievements but also many serious problems. Latin America has made progress on easy problems, but failed to resolve difficult ones.
- Contemporary Latin American democracies have shown their promise but also their serious limitations. At times, democracy has served as a stepping stone to improve the

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inclusiveness of democracy and to advance civil and social rights. These gains have shown the power of democracy to improve people's lives. And they have helped to legitimize and to strengthen democracy. Yet, more often, a different dynamic has unfolded. Problems *of* democracy have prevented the elimination of problems *for* democracy, and problems *for* democracy block the possibility of reducing problems *of* democracy.

- The conquest of democracy in Latin America in the late twentieth century, a signal achievement for the region, was not the endpoint of the region's history. Rather, the achievement of democracy in the late twentieth century is better understood as opening a new horizon in a never-ending quest for democracy and citizenship rights.

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