

Revolution and Reaction

Why did so many Latin American leftists believe they could replicate the Cuban Revolution in their own countries, and why did so many rightists fear the spread of communism? Cognitive-psychological insights about people's distorted inferences and skewed interest calculations explain why the left held exaggerated hopes and why the right experienced excessive dread. The resulting polarization provoked a powerful backlash in which the right uniformly defeated the left. To forestall the feared spread of revolution, the military in many countries imposed authoritarian regimes and brutally suppressed left-wingers. Overly worried about the advance of Cuban-inspired radicalism as well, the United States condoned and supported the installation of dictatorship, but Latin American elites took the main initiative in these regressive regime changes. With a large number of primary and secondary sources, this book documents how misperceptions on both sides of the ideological divide thus played a crucial role in the frequent destruction of democracy.

Kurt Weyland utilizes a distinctive theoretical approach that draws on cognitive-psychological insights to elucidate crucial political phenomena. He is the author of four books and approximately fifty journal articles and book chapters. His previous book, *Making Waves* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), won the book award from APSA's Comparative Democratization section.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-48355-1 — Revolution and Reaction
Kurt Weyland
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Revolution and Reaction

The Diffusion of Authoritarianism in Latin America

KURT WEYLAND

University of Texas, Austin



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-48355-1 — Revolution and Reaction
Kurt Weyland
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108483551
DOI: 10.1017/9781108692823

© Kurt Weyland 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-48355-1 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-72883-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>List of Graphs</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
PART I: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS	
1 Introduction	3
2 The Difficulty of Accounting for Reverse Waves	26
3 A Theory of Reactionary Waves	43
PART II: REVOLUTION AND THE REACTIONARY BACKLASH IN LATIN AMERICA	
4 Diffusion Effects of the Cuban Revolution	75
5 Waves of Radicalization and Reaction	111
6 The Imposition of Institutional Authoritarianism	131
7 Horizontal Diffusion and Vertical Promotion in the Autocratic Wave	174
PART III: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES AND THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS	
8 Reactionary Waves across History	213
9 Conclusion: Theoretical Reflections	243
<i>Bibliography</i>	265
<i>Index</i>	302

Tables

1.1 Military Dictatorships in South America, 1960–1980

page 5

Graphs

3.1	Backlash: Revolution and Its Demonstration and Deterrent Effects	<i>page 52</i>
3.2	The First Stage of Backlash: Isomorphic Emulation Efforts and the Repressive Response	61
3.3	The Second Stage of Backlash: Radicalization and the Imposition of Reactionary Autocracy	63

Acknowledgments

One book leads to the next! After I finished *Making Waves: Democratic Contention in Europe and Latin America since the Revolutions of 1848* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), I noticed that like most scholars who examine the diffusion of political regime change, I had investigated attempts to spread “good things,” namely political liberalism and democracy. Obviously, it is more pleasant to analyze progressive changes and their proliferation. We all root for the social and political forces that try hard to effect improvements.

But because I am German, I am painfully aware of the fact that during certain time periods, it were the nasty, violent, and (self-)destructive innovations that held a great deal of ideational appeal and that spread. The prime example is, of course, fascism during the interwar years. What the monumental catastrophe caused by Italian and especially German fascism makes many observers forget is that Mussolini and even Hitler for years drew a great deal of admiration and emulation. As many liberal democracies crumbled, fascism seemed to be the wave of the future.

While an analysis of the autocratic riptide of the interwar years will have to wait for my next book, this was not the only reverse wave of democratic breakdown that the modern world has seen. Political liberalism came under renewed assault in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, when right-wing military regimes spread. The present book focuses on this proliferation of autocracy, which preceded the “third wave” of democratization in the region that my 2014 study sought to elucidate. Why did so many countries, including the longstanding democracies of Chile and Uruguay, fall to conservative dictatorships? Why did nations that had significant experiences with liberalism come to suffer under regimes that were unprecedented in their repressiveness and cruelty?

In light of scholars’ understandable preference for explaining progressive changes, these questions about the causes of consequential political reversals hold considerable intellectual interest. Why does history sometimes move in the

Acknowledgments

ix

wrong direction? Investigating these dark issues is not a very uplifting task, however. The fears and resentments of reactionaries do not make for pleasant reading. One marvels at the exaggerated threats they perceived and cringes at the drastic countermeasures they regarded as necessary. What a chilling experience, for instance, to peruse the reasoning of Argentina's former dictator Jorge Videla in explaining why the military junta came up with the idea of simply "disappearing" opponents (which meant killing them in a clandestine fashion and disposing of the corpses secretly; see Reato 2012: 52–3, 58–61, 92–3, 149–52). Yet, to help prevent recurrences, understanding the causes underlying the waves of political regression that brought such atrocities is important.

When researching and writing a wide-ranging study, one incurs innumerable intellectual and personal debts; after all, a book is the individual product of collective efforts. I thank the librarians and archivists at the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile in Santiago, at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in Lima, and at the Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (CPDOC) of the Fundação Getúlio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro. Special thanks go to Francisco Bulnes of the Centro de Investigación y Documentación, Universidad Finis Terrae in Santiago de Chile, who gave me access to a wealth of oral history transcripts. I am also grateful to the librarians in the Rare Books and Manuscript Division of the Benson Latin American Collection of the University of Texas at Austin.

I am thankful to Daniela Hernández and Fernando Rosenblatt for excellent research assistance. Conference presentations at annual meetings of the American Political Science Association and at international congresses of the Latin American Studies Association, and workshops at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (Hamburg), Harvard University, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (Göttingen), Oxford University, Princeton University, Sciences Po (Paris), Universidad Diego Portales (Santiago de Chile), Universidade de São Paulo – Leste, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin proved highly stimulating and productive.

For excellent comments on draft chapters and thorough discussions about topics related to this study, I thank Zoltan Barany, Mark Beissinger, the late Ana María Bejarano, Daniel Brinks, Jonathan Brown, Jason Brownlee, Celso Castro, Ruth Collier, Eduardo Dargent, Carlos de la Torre, Henry Dietz, Zachary Elkins, John Gerring, Johannes Gerschewski, Fabrizio Gilardi, Kenneth Greene, Seva Gunitsky, Frances Hagopian, Bert Hoffmann, Rose McDermott, Scott Mainwaring, Marcos Novaro, David Pion-Berlin, Kenneth Roberts, Fernando Rosenblatt, Andrew Stein, and Laurence Whitehead. Wendy Hunter, Fabrice Lehoucq, and Raúl Madrid have been particularly patient in listening to my ideas, insightful in making suggestions, and helpful in offering advice. Moreover, I am full of gratitude to the three anonymous reviewers enlisted by Cambridge University Press for their wealth of incisive comments

and useful suggestions. And I thank Robert Dreesen and Cambridge for shepherding this project through the review and production process so smoothly and expeditiously. Moreover, I am grateful to Matthew La Fontaine for his careful copy-editing.

Chapter 8 draws on two of my published articles, namely “Fascism’s Missionary Ideology and the Autocratic Wave of the Interwar Years” (*Democratization*, December 2017) and “Crafting Counterrevolution: How Reactionaries Learned to Combat Change in 1848” (*American Political Science Review*, May 2016). I thank these journals and their publishers for their permission to use this material.

With their wild games and insane jokes in Austin and with their serious questions, for instance during our trip to Chile in mid-2017, during which we visited several sites associated with the atrocities of the dictatorship, my sons Andreas and Nikolas provided a wonderful family atmosphere for this study. This book is dedicated to Wendy Hunter: *¡Muchas gracias por acompañarme en toda esta aventura!*