

# DEMOCRATIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA

*Gary Hoskin*

*State University of New York at Buffalo*

*THE RIGHT AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Douglas Chalmers, Maria do Carmo Campello de Souza, and Atilio A. Borón. (New York: Praeger, 1992. Pp. 336. \$49.95 cloth.)

*LEGISLATURES AND THE NEW DEMOCRACIES IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by David Close. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995. Pp. 178. \$40.00 cloth.)

*A NEW MOMENT IN THE AMERICAS.* Edited by Robert S. Leiken. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994. Pp. 130. \$19.95 paper.)

*THE FAILURE OF PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACY.* Edited by Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. Pp. 454. \$65.00 cloth, paper in 2 vols., \$13.95, \$16.95.)

*LATIN AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES: A POLITICAL ECONOMY.* By Edward A. Lynch. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993. Pp. 204. \$45.00 cloth.)

*BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS: PARTY SYSTEMS IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995. Pp. 600. \$65.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

*PARTIDOS Y CLASE POLITICA EN AMERICA LATINA EN LOS 90.* Edited by Carina Perelli, Sonia Picado S., and Daniel Zovatto. (San José, Costa Rica: Instituto Inter-Americano de Derechos Humanos and Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral, 1995. Pp. 684.)

*NEW PATHS TO DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Charles A. Reilly. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995, Pp. 317. \$29.95 paper.)

The literature on Latin American politics has tended to reflect the problematic issues of those societies, as well as a herd instinct on the part of academics seeking to comprehend the dynamics of political behavior embedded in those rapidly changing societies. Thus in the period following World War II, quasi-paradigms emerged that focused on development, center-periphery relations, bureaucratic authoritarianism, transitions from authoritarian regimes, and more recently on democratic consolidation. Leaving aside for the moment research on democratic consolidation that

is still unfolding, each of these Kuhnsian puzzles has generated extensive scholarship, characterized by a burst of initial enthusiasm, elaboration and refinement of models and research techniques, and ultimately their exhaustion or absorption into a new body of scholarship. This dialectic has resulted from changing problematics, theoretical and empirical inadequacies of the quasi-paradigms, and perhaps the parochialism of researchers vis-à-vis the discipline of political science.<sup>1</sup> Albert Hirschman's insight offered over thirty years ago may well apply also: motivations tend to outpace understanding.<sup>2</sup>

Two interlocking themes have permeated each of these quasi-paradigms of development and regime type. Spearheaded by ideas espoused by Raúl Prebisch and his ECLA associates, a consensus emerged among policy makers and academics alike regarding the appropriateness of the state-centered model of economic development, which generated impressive economic gains during the glorious thirty years of Latin American development in the 1950s through the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> But the debt crisis of the 1980s exposed the economic and political weaknesses of the state-centered model, prompting scholars to proclaim its exhaustion.<sup>4</sup> Buttressed by the leverage arising from the debt crisis, center countries and the international agencies encouraged Latin American policy makers (many of whom were becoming increasingly skeptical of the state-centered model) to turn toward the market rather than the state as the principal motor of economic development. Thus emerged what John Williamson has labeled "the Washington consensus," which proclaimed the virtues of the market and the downsizing of the state.<sup>5</sup> The "consensus" is a fragile one, however, as reflected in the varying degrees to which Latin American governments have espoused the market, ranging from close embraces in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela (under Carlos Andrés Pérez) to the considerably more skeptical policies pursued in Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay. Scholars too are becoming increasingly dubious about the capacity of economic policies cast according to the

1. For a critique of the Latin American literature that emphasizes its parochialism, see John Martz, "Political Science and Latin American Studies: Patterns and Asymmetries of Research and Publication," *LARR* 25, no. 1 (1990):67–86. Also consult Karen Remmer's penetrating insights into the theoretical weaknesses of the democratization literature in "New Wine or Old Bottlenecks? The Study of Latin American Democracy," *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 4 (July 1991):479–95.

2. Albert Hirschman, *Journeys toward Progress* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1965), 309–13.

3. Albert Hirschman, "The Political Economy of Latin American Development: Seven Exercises in Retrospection," *LARR* 22, no. 3 (1987):7–36.

4. Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Beyond Transitions to Democracy in Latin America," paper presented to the Latin American Studies Association, 4–6 Apr. 1991, Washington, D.C., p. 9.

5. John Williamson, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," in *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?*, edited by Williamson (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1990), 5–38.

Washington consensus to resolve fundamental societal problems, particularly poverty and inequities in the distribution of wealth. Such inadequacies may actually contribute to problems of governability that promote electoral volatility and perhaps a return of authoritarian governments. In short, although the state-centered model has been discredited, a growing number of scholars are arguing that staunch reliance on market forces may well foment neither development nor democratic consolidation.

Latin American countries led what Samuel Huntington has identified as “the third wave of democracy” in the 1980s,<sup>6</sup> with elected civilian regimes emerging throughout the hemisphere (except in Cuba). Scholars turned their attention from the transition from bureaucratic authoritarianism to democratic consolidation, shifting their focus from structural variables to strictly political ones such as constitutional engineering, democratic leadership, elections, political parties, executive-legislative relations, the role of civil society, and the rule of law. In short, these dimensions of democratic government surged to the foreground of scholarly inquiry, and political institutions were no longer considered to be epiphenomena. At long last, the perennial problems associated with the structure of authority in Latin America were being resolved as democracy seemed to be taking root. Burgeoning euphoria over the prospects for democratic consolidation was shared by academics, elites, and citizens alike. These expectations stemmed from an array of factors: disillusionment with military regimes, coupled with the military’s reluctance to reassume the governing role; the surpassing of the threshold of economic development that facilitates democratic government;<sup>7</sup> a growing consensus among elites that democracy would promote their interests better than authoritarian governments would; activation of civil society, which was demanding a larger role in political life; disintegration of the Soviet and Eastern European Communist governments; an inflow of private capital after the debt crisis eased, at least until the Mexican peso collapsed; and support for democratic government emanating from the United States and other center countries. The capacity of these “fragile democracies” to withstand the political tensions associated with the lost decade of development only reinforced the belief that Latin American democracies were here to stay.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the optimism about the prospects for democratic consolidation that permeated the 1980s is giving way to growing pessimism about the

6. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

7. Mitchell A. Seligson, “Democracy in Latin America: The Current Cycle,” in *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America*, edited by James M. Malloy and Mitchell A. Seligson (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 3–12.

8. Karen Remmer, “The Political Impact of Economic Crisis in Latin America in the 1980s,” *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 3 (Sept. 1991):777–800.

robustness of Latin American democracies in the 1990s. Scholars are discovering that the democratic process involves more than holding free and open elections.<sup>9</sup>

Survey data suggest that Latin Americans prefer democratic government over authoritarian forms. But the evidence also reveals massive disillusionment with the performance of democratic regimes throughout the hemisphere, leading to a high degree of electoral volatility arising from a loss of faith in the ability of the political class to resolve society's basic problems. The demise of authoritarian governments and the election of democratic leaders turned out to be not a process of redemocratization—not a return to the elitist, limited democracies of the past—but rather forms of participatory democracy more attuned to the demands of increasingly active civil societies. Guillermo O'Donnell captured this dynamic in his observation that Latin American democracies have entered the second stage of democratic development, after the initial elections following the military regimes.<sup>10</sup>

Participatory democracy is becoming enshrined constitutionally in several Latin American countries, offering citizens opportunities to influence government through plebiscites, referenda, recalls, legislative initiatives, and direct elections of governors and mayors. Moreover, constitutional engineering has sought to promote democratic legitimacy by assaulting centralization of power in the national government through administrative, fiscal, and political devolution of power to regional and local governments. Yet up to this point, the anticipated effects of these reforms do not appear to have been instrumental in throttling intense criticism of either incumbent governments or the political class. Concentration of power in the presidency continues unabated; most political parties and legislatures are marginalized from policy making; clientelism and patronage retain their dynamism; and the rule of law is failing to encompass majorities. In short, institutionalization of delegative democracy may well become more likely than polyarchy in many Latin American countries.<sup>11</sup>

9. Robert Dahl utilized the concept of polyarchy rather than democracy, recognizing that no government ever becomes fully democratic. Thus polyarchies are those governments that approach democratic norms and practices. For an elaboration of the model, see Dahl's *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971). This model concentrated almost exclusively on political variables at the expense of economic and social factors. But in responding to criticism, Dahl reformulated his thinking in *A Preface to Economic Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity, 1985) and in *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), extending his scope well beyond political variables. Latin Americanists turned to the concept of polyarchy to analyze Latin American democracies, initially focusing on its political dimensions but later modifying them and extending the scope to economic and social factors. See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Illusions about Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (Apr. 1966):34–51.

10. For a discussion of what Guillermo O'Donnell labels as "the second democratic transition," see "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1994):56–69.

11. *Ibid.*

Disenchantment with the performance of democratic regimes (by no means limited to Latin America) is related intimately to the economy, particularly to the relatively low rates of economic growth, the high incidence of poverty, and pervasive socioeconomic inequities. Skepticism is mounting regarding politicians' capacity to generate economic policies capable of sustaining the legitimacy of democratic governments. It is true that the region's "fragile democracies" survived the economic traumas of the lost decade of development.<sup>12</sup> But doubts are rising about the prospects for more equitable growth rates in the 1990s under the Washington consensus model, which has unleashed market forces and constrained the state's ability to promote social justice. In sum, the search for an appropriate development model continues.

The literature on democratization has proliferated during the last decade to the point that scholars have identified empirical patterns most capable of sustaining polyarchy (governments that approach democratic practices and norms). Adam Przeworski and his associates have asked, "If a country, any randomly selected country, is to have a democratic regime *next* year, what conditions should be present in that country and around the world *this* year? The answer is: democracy, affluence, growth with moderate inflation, declining inequality, a favorable international climate, and parliamentary institutions" (emphases in original).<sup>13</sup> While isolating variables that sustain democratic regimes is a significant initial step in analyzing democratization, the most difficult questions remain unresolved: how to design political structures and implement policies directed toward achieving the foregoing conditions that seem to be conducive to democratic government. Scholarly consensus is clearly lacking as to how best to promote democratic consolidation with respect to institutional engineering and economic policy making. A host of questions arise. Is parliamentary government viable in Latin America? If not, what are the optimal solutions for achieving effective and legitimate presidential regimes? What is an appropriate role for the state in economic development? How can democratic regimes reduce poverty and social inequality? What economic and political policies emanating from center countries reinforce democracy in the periphery?

Although the eight books included in this review essay encompass every conceivable aspect of democratization in Latin America, some glaring lacuna exist in systematic analyses of civil-military relations, the rule of law, and political economy, three subjects that are more fully developed in other works. With this point in mind, my review will focus primarily on three dimensions of democratization: political parties, institutional

12. Remmer, "Political Impact of Economic Crisis."

13. Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (Jan. 1996):39–55.

engineering, and civil society. Recognizing that most of the books under review here do not fit neatly into these categories, I shall analyze the books edited by Mainwaring and Scully, by Perelli, Picado, and Zovatto, and by Close as well as Lynch's monograph in the section on political parties. The works edited by Linz and Valenzuela will be discussed in the section on new institutionalism, and those edited by Leiken, by Reilly, and by Chalmers, Souza, and Borón in the section on civil society.

Before initiating a critique of the books, some generalizations about them are in order. First, with the exception of Lynch's monograph, all are edited volumes resulting from conferences. As a result, one seldom finds a close fit between the conceptual frameworks and the subsequent essays. Second, most of the case studies were executed by scholars specializing in individual countries, and thus the overviews are frequently less satisfactory scholarship than the specific essays. Third, the methodology of most of the studies is analytical and historical, raising questions about the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, few of these studies make a strong theoretical contribution or are based on systematic empirical analysis. Despite these caveats, the totality of this research offers an overview of democratization in Latin America that may facilitate understanding of the process and how to enhance it.

#### *Latin American Political Parties*

The study of Latin American parties was seriously neglected until the transitions to democratic governments in the 1980s for several reasons: the indeterminacy of the electoral process, marginalization of political parties from policy making, the growing omnipotence of the state, and structural characteristics of parties (personalism, clientelism, weak organizational bases, relative autonomy and lack of accountability to civil society or large segments of it). But with the spread of democratic regimes throughout the hemisphere, scholars have shown renewed interest in stasiology (the study of political parties), in large part because modern democracy is hardly conceivable without political parties. Parties are pivotal structures that recruit and elect political leaders, link the citizenry to their government, articulate and structure ideological and policy packages, and govern societies according to those principles and policies.

Yet paradoxically, restoration of democratic regimes in the hemisphere and the propelling of parties to the foreground has not produced much optimism about their role in democratic consolidation. Rather, the behavior of political parties has led scholars and citizens alike to view them increasingly as obstacles to effective democratic government. Parties are under attack on various grounds: they are incapable of electing presidents in some countries and therefore relinquish that office to "outsiders"; clientelism and patronage remain at the core of party behavior;

and campaign platforms are ignored (prime examples are Carlos Menem in Argentina and Alberto Fujimori in Peru). The fact is that most Latin American parties are organizationally weak, shallowly rooted in civil society, ideologically bankrupt, nonaccountable to their electorates, and increasingly less relevant than technocrats in the formation of economic policy.<sup>14</sup>

Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully's edited volume, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, was designed to fill a void in the literature on parties and party systems in Latin America. An outgrowth of a conference held at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame in 1990, the volume consists of a conceptual framework for comparing Latin American party systems, twelve country studies, and a conclusion. The theoretical chapter makes a major contribution to the study of Latin American party systems and represents the most solid scholarship in the collection. Mainwaring and Scully display a firm grasp of the literature on parties in designing a framework for comparing party systems and isolating key dimensions of party behavior that will facilitate sound comparative analysis. Five analytical themes were identified to orient the case-study research: the genesis of party systems, the relative strengths of parties as actors in the larger political system, relations between major parties and the state, the importance of electoral rules and procedures for shaping party competition, and the degree of party institutionalization (pp. vii–viii).

Mainwaring and Scully's main theoretical contribution is in their typology of Latin American party systems, anchored primarily in the concept of institutionalization rather than in the more conventional matrices of interparty competition. They operationalize the institutionalization of party systems by analyzing four factors: electoral volatility (low volatility equals high institutionalization); parties' penetration of society, as measured by the difference between the presidential and legislative vote (lower differences equal high institutionalization); citizens' and organized interests' perception of parties and the electoral process as legitimate; and parties' organizational development (pp. 6–17). Recognizing the absence of systematic data (except on electoral volatility), Mainwaring and Scully nonetheless offer a typology of party-system institutionalization that corresponds well to empirical realities. They categorize as "institutionalized systems" Venezuela, Costa Rica, Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, and Argentina (a marginal case). They bracket Mexico and Paraguay as "hegemonic systems in transition" and Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador as "inchoate systems" (p. 17). The basic hypothesis underlying this typol-

14. For an excellent analysis of the role of technocrats in the policy process in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, see Catherine M. Conaghan and James M. Malloy, *Unsettling Statecraft: Democracy and Neoliberalism in the Central Andes* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994).

ogy is that institutionalized party systems are more likely to contribute to democratic consolidation than either hegemonic or inchoate systems.

The categorization of party systems precedes a brief analysis of traditional measures of interparty competition—the number of relevant parties and the extent of ideological polarization—but it is not apparent in this study how these factors relate to party-system institutionalization or democratic consolidation, beyond the conventional deductions that a large number of relevant parties and a high degree of ideological polarization undermine democratic stability. In reality, the dynamics of interparty competition may not be limited to the number of relevant parties or a single Left-Right dimension. The principal drawback of the typology is its static nature, offering few guidelines in understanding how party systems change, either by becoming more institutionalized or retrogressing into inchoateness.

The case studies in *Building Democratic Institutions* tend not to conform closely to the conceptual framework, thereby detracting from the goal of building systematic comparative knowledge about Latin American parties. But the individual contributions nonetheless offer in varying degrees good overviews of party behavior in the twelve countries selected. The contributions by Miriam Kornblith and Daniel Levine on Venezuela and by Ann Craig and Wayne Cornelius on Mexico excel in analyzing the political reform process in those countries as it relates to party development. Ronald Archer's analysis of Colombian parties captures well the clientelist basis of Colombian politics, despite elevating the explanatory power of clientelism to unwarranted heights. James McGuire's contribution emphasizes changing cleavage bases among Argentine parties as they become increasingly more polyclass and less polarized. Eduardo Gamarra and James Malloy's essay underscores the impact of executive-legislative stalemates and pacts on the party system and governability in Bolivia. Mainwaring, Scully, and Luis González draw heavily on party literature to analyze Brazilian, Chilean, and Uruguayan parties respectively, but their contributions offer little beyond their excellent published studies. Neither Deborah Yashar's chapter on Costa Rica nor Catherine Conaghan's chapter on Ecuador adheres closely to the book's conceptual framework, although both develop their own thematic analyses that capture well the dynamics of party politics. The conclusion by Mainwaring and Scully provides an excellent overview of environmental factors that have impinged on the development of party systems in Latin America.

In contrast to *Building Democratic Institutions*, *Partidos y clase política en América Latina en los 90* does not purport to develop a rigorous theoretical framework for analyzing contemporary democratic regimes in Latin America. Edited by Carina Perelli, Sonia Picado, and Daniel Zovatto, this massive volume of ten sections and twenty-eight chapters provides

extremely enlightening insights into the performance of contemporary Latin American democracies. As an outgrowth of a conference cosponsored by the Instituto Inter-Americano de Derechos Humanos (IIDH) and the Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral (CAPEL) held in San José, Costa Rica, in 1993, the contents focus on political parties, tendencies toward authoritarianism, governability, political engineering, informality and the new caudillos, electoral organizations, socioeconomic contexts of party action, the media and politics, and testimonies from three Latin American democrats. The contributors are concerned that the democratic-authoritarian pendulum is threatening to swing back in the authoritarian direction again. They suggest that without international pressure, authoritarian regimes would already have returned to more than one Latin American country (p. xv). The essays cover a plethora of topics: "the new institutional order" that is emerging from the redefinition of the state, neoliberal economic policies, postmodernist tendencies emanating from civil societies, displacement of political machines by *técnicos* in defining the framework for political action, the emergence of "outsiders" in politics, increasing utilization of anti-politics to make politics, and the failure of political parties to meet the challenges of the new politics.

*Partidos y clase política en América Latina en los 90* offers a superb understanding of the obstacles to democratic consolidation in Latin America, especially the challenges confronting political parties. To take one example, Juan Rial's essay masterfully analyzes contemporary party politics in South America. He argues that political parties have failed to adapt to increasingly fragmented societies that reveal changing class structures, political illiteracy and citizen withdrawal, modern sectors preoccupied with individualism and material values, and postmodern groups concerned with quality of life. Similarly, parties have not developed institutionalized linkages with interest groups, and their pragmatic ideologies offer the electorate little choice. Redefinition of the Right, the Center, and the Left has injected additional complexity into politics. Governing is often overshadowed by constant electoral activity, in which public opinion polls generate a new Bonapartism sustained by *técnicos* and intellectuals and based on academic, political, and business foundations. Political parties are undermined further by declining resources for clientelist practices and anti-corruption campaigns, which do not necessarily arise from moral considerations but as a part of the *juego político*. The net result tends to be democracies with weak parties and institutions that are vulnerable to a new authoritarian wave or civilian Bonapartism.

Edward Lynch's *Latin America's Christian Democratic Parties: A Political Economy* does not suffer from the unevenness of the edited volumes. It argues straightforwardly that Christian Democratic parties have not prospered when they have abandoned their commitment to Catholic social thought and become just another elite political party competing for

votes. According to Lynch, Catholic social thought emphasizes social units, autonomy, the family, private ownership, and formidable skepticism about the state, whether capitalist or socialist. Lynch argues that the Christian Democratic governments of Eduardo Frei in Chile, Rafael Caldera in Venezuela, and Napoleón Duarte in El Salvador embraced the state-centered model, as shown by their economic policies on nationalization, land reform, and commercial capitalism, a stance that contradicted their ideological doctrines and led to electoral defeat for their parties. In contrast, Patricio Aylwin in Chile won because he did not jettison Christian Democratic principles, and Mario Vargas Llosa would have been elected president of Peru had he remained a “true believer” (pp. 166–78). This argument is not very convincing on several accounts: it borders on neoscholasticism and may well oversimplify Catholic social thought, which is based on very general principles; it displays little knowledge of the literature on political parties; and it fails to capture the political context in which Christian Democratic parties operate.

Democratic consolidation in Latin America is contingent not only on the institutionalization of political parties but on legislatures as well. Prospects in this regard are not encouraging, as reflected in David Close’s edited volume, *Legislatures and the New Democracies in Latin America*. It provides an overview of the legislatures in Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, along with an introduction and a conclusion. Legislatures and the political class that dominates them enjoy little popular support because of their representational distortions and limited role in decision making. Power has gravitated toward the presidency because of decree powers and mounting problems in governability but also because legislators behave rationally in not exercising policy-making functions, preferring to maximize their career aspirations—often through clientelism and patronage.<sup>15</sup> Latin American legislatures are not impotent bodies constitutionally, but they frequently fail to exercise their powers (p. 106). Research on democratization should focus more on studying why legislatures fail to fulfill their constitutional mandates rather than on the power imbalance between executive and legislative branches.

Yet legislatures sometimes play an assertive role in the political system by thwarting reform efforts or mediating political crises. Marvin Weinstein asserts in his contribution that the Uruguayan “legislature functions as a significant protector of the rule of law and civil liberties, even if it is not the efficient progenitor of change” (p. 137). But more often than not, bustling legislative activity reflects partisan jockeying for electoral purposes rather than genuine governing. And problems of govern-

15. Matthew Soberg Shugart, “Economic Adjustment and Political Institutions: Foreign versus Domestic Constituents in Colombia,” manuscript, 1992.

ability and legitimacy may linger even where legislatures assume a central role in politics, as has occurred in Nicaragua. David Close comments, "On balance, Nicaragua's National Assembly was, by mid-1993, doing less to consolidate democracy in the country than to undermine it" (p. 65). These essays offer fruitful insights into Latin American legislatures, but more exhaustive and empirically based research into legislative mechanics, structure, and behavior will be needed before scholars can assess their role in democratization.

### *The New Institutionalism*

Considering Latin America's checkered past in supporting democratic regimes and increasing skepticism about the prospects for democratic consolidation, it is not surprising that scholars and politicians alike have turned to political engineering as a means of strengthening the region's democratic institutions. One of the "hottest" components of this effort is the debate over presidential versus parliamentary government, the subject of Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela's massive edited volume, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*. In the introduction, Linz develops a masterful theoretical justification for the superiority of parliamentary over presidential government. He argues that parliamentary rule eliminates the problem of dual legitimacy, promotes effective government by curtailing stalemates between the executive and legislative branches, facilitates changes in governmental leadership (unlike fixed presidential terms), curbs partisan conflict rooted in the "winner-take-all" scheme of presidential systems, promotes the development of cohesive, disciplined parties, and enhances accountability (presidents frequently cannot stand for reelection and thereby escape full accountability). Linz addresses criticisms made of an earlier version of this argument, but not in an entirely convincing manner.

Despite the theoretical appeal of Linz's argument and empirical research showing that parliamentary regimes are more likely to survive than presidential ones, it is by no means evident that parliamentary government is the answer to governability problems in Latin America. In a perceptive contribution, Giovanni Sartori asks, "Does it follow that if presidentialism is to be dismissed, the 'good alternative' is parliamentarism? No—it does not follow" (p. 107). He argues cogently that context is extremely important in assessing the appropriateness of each form of government. From my perspective, Sartori cuts to the core in asserting that "parliamentary democracy cannot perform (in any of its varieties) unless it is served by *parliamentary fit* parties, that is to say, parties that have been socialized . . . into being relatively cohesive or disciplined, into behaving, in opposition, as responsible opposition, and into playing, to some extent, a rule-guided fair game. . . . The bulk of Latin America does

not have, and is still far from acquiring, parliamentary fit parties" (pp. 112–13, emphasis in original). He also argues that party solidification and discipline have never been a "feedback" of parliamentary government (p. 113).

Likewise, it is not apparent that presidential governments cannot rule effectively. The United States is the paradigmatic case, but in this debate, the United States often is dismissed as an exception. Matthew Shugart and John Carey have argued elsewhere that presidential governments in Latin America have performed reasonably well in those instances where legislatures exercise some control over the executive.<sup>16</sup> Countries having the most powerful legislatures generally have been most successful in governing, as in Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In light of the criticism of both pure parliamentary and pure presidential regimes, some of the contributors to *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* argue for mixed parliamentary-presidential systems. The case studies stress the concentration of power in the presidency and the consequence for building democratic institutions. Valenzuela makes the strongest argument for parliamentary government in the Chilean case.

In sum, despite the theoretical appeal of parliamentary government and the well-documented difficulties associated with presidential regimes, it is becoming apparent that this form of political engineering is not meeting with a positive reception in Latin America, as shown by the failed plebiscite on parliamentary government in Brazil and by forceful scholarly critiques in the Linz and Valenzuela volume and parts of *Partidos y clase política*. While it may be too early to assess the long-term impact, the plethora of constitutional and political reforms enacted in Latin America to bolster democratic effectiveness and legitimacy have not yet generated the anticipated positive effects.

### *Civil Society*

*The Right and Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Douglas Chalmers, Maria do Carmo Campello de Souza, and Atilio Borón, analyzes another key dimension of democratization: the commitment of the Right to democratic institutions. The book's basic argument is that unless the interests of the bourgeoisie are protected from middle-class and populist politics (often not the case in the past), the prospects for building democratic institutions remain circumscribed. The volume focuses on three dimensions of the problem: new actors and changing identities on the Right; the possibility of new organizational and institutional links between the Right and the state; and the Right's views concerning the appropriate relationship between state and society (pp. 5–9). Although

16. Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

public support of the Right has been growing over the past decade and the Right has extended contingent support for democratic regimes, the contributors underscore the uncertainties surrounding the Right's democratic conversion.

The individual contributions in this book are well crafted and offer keen insights into the behavior of the "New Right." In addition to the general essays, the contributions focus on the New Right in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Peru. Edward Gibson's promising essay on conservative electoral movements, a basic road map for the comparative study of the electoral Right, emphasizes core constituencies rather than ideology as the distinguishing feature of conservative parties. He underscores the weakness of the Right in expressing its interests through the political party system, along with the business community's aloofness as an ally in the political struggles of the electoral Right. A basic assumption of Gibson's is that conservative parties are a necessary condition for political stability in capitalist democracies (p. 21). But as Borón notes in a brilliant essay, "The historical record proves that mass conservative parties are neither necessary nor sufficient for the establishment of bourgeois hegemony" (p. 91). Souza's excellent analysis is not very sanguine about institutionalization of the Right in Brazil. In her view, the conversion of the Right "was not the result of a well-defined course of long-term action against the theoretical and political foundations of the statist model, but an improvised reaction after this model's collapse" (p. 101). As a result, Brazil's New Right is one of the least institutionalized in all of South America in terms of political parties (p. 115).

Democratic theorists have long underscored the role played by a vibrant civil society in legitimate and effective democratic government, in large part because a strong civil society serves as a countervailing force to state power. Thus it is not surprising that the democratization literature reflects the rediscovery of civil society in Latin America, generally stressing the proliferation of associational groups that are supportive of democracy. Charles Reilly's edited volume, *New Paths to Democratic Development in Latin America: The Rise of NGO-Municipal Collaboration*, focuses on an important subset of associational groups arising from the creation of new political spaces associated with the fiscal constraints on governments that have curtailed their ability to deliver services. As Reilly points out in the introduction, "The volume presents the views of seventeen authors who have been studying and comparing relations between non-governmental development organizations and local governments in six democratizing Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru" (p. 4).

*New Paths to Democratic Development in Latin America* focuses on the organizations themselves but also on the complex ties they form with local and state governments in order to deliver constituency services.

Reilly presents a two-dimensional model illustrating the convergence of state and civil society as a setting for social policy: his horizontal axis ranks the six countries according to the number and salience of NGOs and social movements, while the vertical axis identifies the level of governmental involvement in decision making. Chile and Brazil rank high in the strength of their civil societies, Argentina and Mexico low, and Colombia and Peru in the middle. Equally significant, the author argues (on an admittedly impressionistic basis), is the sense that civil societies are becoming stronger and local decision-making more important in each country, with a question mark about the role of local government in Argentina (p. 12).

These essays demonstrate convincingly that nongovernment organizations (NGOs), community associations, and social movements are increasing in number and salience in the six countries. But just as Latin American democratic regimes are struggling to become more institutionalized, community groups likewise are grappling with new ways to relate to the state and to markets. Opposition to the state is no longer a defining characteristic of such groups as it was during authoritarian periods. The viability of community groups depends heavily on sustaining citizen participation, which may prove difficult. In their study of poor neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, Marcelo Cavarozzi and Vicente Palermo argue, "Around 1986, there was a turnaround in the trends toward greater participation and involvement in urban associative life as neighborhood associations encountered major difficulties in maintaining participation . . ." (pp. 35–36).<sup>17</sup> Community associations are often vulnerable to partisan penetration, clientelism, and corporate structures that undercut their autonomy.

*A New Moment in the Americas*, edited by Robert Leiken, is the thinnest book in this collection in both size and scholarship. The volume resulted from an *encuentro* of academic, intellectual, and cultural figures from throughout the Western Hemisphere that preceded the 1994 Summit of the Americas. Its essays explore the changing realities of political life in Latin America and the United States, with its greatest contribution on cultural and ideological transformations associated with "a New World Culture." This new culture is anchored in the communications revolution, the mestizo or "gumbo" character of the hemisphere, the turn toward democracy, and increased cultural and educational contacts and cooperation. While the collection excels in identifying features of the new moment, it is less than satisfactory in relating those factors to the prospects for enduring democracies in the hemisphere. *A New Moment in the*

17. I would argue that similar difficulties in sustaining citizen participation have occurred in Colombia and Venezuela, despite political reforms that have facilitated citizen involvement in political life.

*Americas* is particularly myopic in analyzing the enduring legacies embedded in the asymmetrical relations of power between Latin American countries and the United States. The Helms-Burton Act, drug certification policies, and trade relations all raise yellow flags about U.S. commitment to promoting democratic government in the hemisphere.

### *Conclusion*

The foregoing eight studies reveal the complexities and mounting uncertainties surrounding democratization in Latin America. Except for the electoral process that seems to have become institutionalized, the perennial gap between the formal rules and actual behavior of democratic regimes persists. What does this divergence signify in terms of democratic consolidation? We cannot answer this question with any degree of precision, largely because of the absence of conceptual tools required for specifying when a democracy becomes consolidated. This major obstacle leads me to conclude that democratic consolidation may well represent another quasi-paradigm that is approaching exhaustion as scholars recognize its theoretical and empirical inadequacies. Philippe Schmitter's suggestion that we disaggregate polyarchies into various "partial regimes" represents an appealing alternative at this juncture,<sup>18</sup> drawing on the "islands of theory" that have emerged in the social sciences for studying various dimensions of polyarchies. If more systematic and theoretically oriented research on political parties and elections, legislatures, executives, bureaucracies, judiciaries, and policy-making become a part of the literature, the concept of democratic consolidation might become more useful. But in any case, scholars will not abandon their efforts to unravel the dynamics of Latin American democracies as they relate to polyarchy and the associated "particularisms" in Latin America.<sup>19</sup>

18. Philippe Schmitter, "The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups," *American Behavioral Scientist* 35 (Mar.–June 1992):422–49.

19. O'Donnell, "Illusions about Consolidation," 43–46.