

Bangladesh, where much of the violence converges on national ideological issues. Still, few other existing works have provided a singular, compelling theory accounting for this very wide range of political violence, marking this book's clear contribution to the vast literature on conflict, violence, and warfare.

*Patchwork States* provides a three-country comparative case study but does so through subnational comparisons within each country. This gives the argument both breadth and depth, which is no small feat. Its analytical focus on the district level is a refreshing departure from other works that address topics related to violence and development at the national or provincial levels. The book also pays significant attention to the mechanisms through which governance arrangements led to distinct forms of both state capacity and state–society relations, which gives the argument a granularity that is not always expected of far-ranging theories spanning many decades and many thousands of miles. Distilling his ambitious theory into testable implications, Naseemullah meticulously uses contemporary quantitative data to provide evidence to back up his qualitative case studies. In his final chapter, Naseemullah also extends his argument beyond the three countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, examining what the book's insights tell us about the rest of South Asia, as well as countries farther afield. This discussion reflects on how various postcolonial countries inherited distinct governance structures that, in turn, affected national trajectories.

In sum, the book is a masterful historical account of variation in political violence in South Asia. It is especially relevant to contemporary debates on political order and disorder in South Asia, a region of the world that has seen increasing manifestations of violence across various cleavages. By skillfully using conceptual typologies backed by convincing empirical evidence, *Patchwork States* introduces necessary complexity without ever getting lost in the details. It is a must-read for those interested in colonial legacies and historical state formation, political violence, and South Asia.

### **Prosecutors, Voters and the Criminalization of Corruption in Latin America: The Case of Lava Jato.**

By Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos, Paula Muñoz Chirinos, Nara Pavão, and Viviana Baraybar Hidalgo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 324p. \$125.00 cloth.

doi:10.1017/S1537592724000379

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Successful prosecution of political corruption in Latin America is very rare. Democracies in this region are often marked by a weak rule of law that tends to shield the powerful. Nevertheless, in certain Latin American

countries, prosecutors have managed to craft anticorruption investigations that shook political systems. What conditions enabled prosecutors to deliver investigations that imprisoned powerful defendants? What consequences does the criminalization of political corruption have on voters?

The book *Prosecutors, Voters, and the Criminalization of Corruption in Latin America* by Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos, Paula Muñoz Chirinos, Nara Pavão, and Viviana Baraybar Hidalgo tackles those issues by comparing the results of Operation *Lava Jato* across different judicial systems in Latin America. This book makes a significant contribution to the field of judicial politics in several ways. First, it delves into the analysis of one of the least explored justice-sector institutions: the prosecution services. Second, it addresses the underresearched topic of how justice-sector institutions perform in the criminalization of political corruption. Finally, it examines the intriguing consequences that the judicialization of corruption has on public opinion and the political landscape.

Lava Jato is a widely known political corruption scandal that originated in Brazil in 2014, but its influence later extended to other Latin American countries. In Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru, the investigations stemming from this scandal led to the downfall of presidents and officials, limited the political rights of some politicians, and held both government and opposition party members accountable as they faced legal consequences. Prosecutions in those countries turned into what were called “anticorruption crusades.” However, as the book shows, similar results were not achieved in Mexico and Argentina; more intriguingly, even in cases where initial success was witnessed as in Brazil and Peru, the investigations eventually stalled.

The book emphasizes the pivotal role of justice-sector institutional changes in enabling prosecutors to investigate and bring politically influential defendants to justice. Specifically, reforms that granted autonomy to prosecution services, the implementation of an accusatorial criminal system, and the adoption of international anticorruption standards and strategies were crucial. However, the authors contend that these reforms alone cannot account for the varying outcomes of the Lava Jato operation.

To fully account for how “anticorruption crusades” flourish, succeed, and sometimes stall, the authors focus on three moments, two of which are crucial: serendipity, agency, and backlash. The “moment of serendipity” is an episode in which prosecutors find some sort of suggestive incriminating evidence, by pure chance, that facilitates development of an anticorruption crusade. The argument developed here is less compelling when compared with the moment of agency and backlash described later in the book: it relies not only on the “lucky discovery” made by prosecutors but also on “zealous prosecutors” or “law enforcement agents with a strong anti-corruption drive” (46). This zealotry is more attitudinal or institutional

than serendipitous, as demonstrated in the case of Argentina. Additionally, in some cases, such as Mexico, there seemed to be suggestive discoveries—that is, evidence that incriminates politicians—but no zealous prosecutors drove the anticorruption crusade.

The “moment of agency” is key to understanding the rise and fall of anticorruption crusades. Prosecutorial agency has two pillars: a zealous prosecutorial strategy and the creation of task forces. Because prosecuting grand corruption using conventional legal methods proves to be challenging, zealous prosecutors use unorthodox strategies to investigate and litigate corruption crimes. In fact, prosecutors thus need to put in motion creative interpretations of legislation. This includes conceptualizing and framing the crime in such a way as to secure extended periods of pretrial detention, which is sometimes in tension with due process. Zealous prosecutors also use innovative legal tactics like plea bargains, and they cultivate relationships with banks and other international entities to facilitate information sharing. Additionally, they must devise a strategy to effectively communicate the significance of their cases to the public, thereby ultimately enhancing the survival of the crusade. They also obtain information on the defendants and strategically leak it to journalists to produce a snowball effect. Zealous prosecutors are strongly committed and persistent.

The second pillar of the moment of agency is key to the successful implementation of anticorruption crusades: the operation of specialized units or task forces. When a team of prosecutors is assigned to the same case over an extended period of time, it is able to develop specialized toolkits for prosecuting challenging cases like political corruption. Prosecutors in these specialized units do not get sidetracked by routine criminal cases; instead, they focus on unraveling the intricate paths of corruption and have the necessary time to meticulously “follow the money.”

The third pillar, the “moment of backlash,” is the most innovative part of this book’s contribution to the literature on judicial politics. It offers insights into the repercussions of prosecutorial and judicial activism on the legitimacy and, in some cases, the political independence of both courts and public prosecutors’ offices. When facing prosecution, politicians often wield all their power to erode public trust in the courts, judges, prosecutors, and the legitimacy of anticorruption cases. They accuse judges and prosecutors of “lawfare” and the use of justice as a political weapon to destabilize politics, sometimes even democracy. Both scholars and practitioners must pay close attention to these processes of delegitimizing courts and prosecutorial offices in the context of cleansing politics of corruption, because they tend to erode democracy.

The last part of the book deals with Lava Jato’s unexpected consequences on the public and on the political system. How do voters come to understand anticorruption

crusades? Despite the criminalization of important cases of political corruption, why do some citizens not fully support the prosecution of this type of crime? Citizens’ reactions to political corruption scandals and prosecutions are not uniform. Optimists tend to focus on the result—justice is being done—whereas pessimists believe that politics will be always an unredeemed and repulsive business. The authors claim that the optimistic view leads to political reengagement, while the pessimistic view drives citizens to political cynicism. Using mixed methods—conjoint survey experiments and focus groups—to evaluate citizen opinions on the criminalization of grand corruption, the authors find varied results. In Brazil, citizens tend to be divided along partisan lines regarding Lava Jato’s outcomes. Supporters of the Workers’ Party (WP) describe the efforts to criminalize corruption as lawfare, whereas non-WP voters are generally content with the judicial outcomes. In Peru, citizens, regardless of their partisan preferences, hold very critical and negative views about the prosecutorial toolkit and discretionary measures, such as plea bargains.

Future research should take seriously the paradox highlighted by the book: the adverse impact of anticorruption crusades on public opinion and their role in destabilizing politics. Public frustration with anticorruption crusades cannot be overlooked, because it often fuels tendencies toward populist authoritarian choices. However, the zealous prosecution of corruption remains necessary to instill hope in a democracy that upholds the rule of law and prevents political impunity.

The book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the conditions under which the prosecution of political corruption succeeds, particularly in countries with young democracies. Additionally, it reveals the various and unexpected effects that prosecuting corruption has on voters’ attitudes and, consequently, on the stability of democracy.

**Gender and Violence against Political Actors.** Edited by Elin Bjarnegård and Pär Zetterberg. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2023. 297p. \$115.50 cloth, \$39.95 paper.  
doi:10.1017/S1537592724000148

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*Gender and Violence against Political Actors* is an ambitious and much needed contribution to the study of violence, politics, and gender. The editors bring disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological diversity to a scholarly exploration of how “gender dynamics are manifested in violent acts against political actors” (241). Drawing especially on scholarship from peace and conflict studies, political science, and feminist studies, the book seeks to move beyond