

POLICY VERSUS POLITICS:

Recent Trends in Textbooks on Latin American Politics

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THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT. By RONALD H. CHILCOTE. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984. Pp. 178. \$25.00 cloth, \$12.95 paper.)

POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA. By STEVEN W. HUGHES and KENNETH J. MIJESKI. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1985. Pp. 256. \$32.50 cloth, \$13.95 paper.)

PUBLIC POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA. By JOHN W. SLOAN. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984. Pp. 276. \$25.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.)

POLITICS, POLICIES, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited by ROBERT WESSON. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984. Pp. 262. \$13.95.)

LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT. Second edition, revised and updated. Edited by HOWARD J. WIARDA and HARVEY F. KLINE. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1985. Pp. 672. \$48.50 cloth, \$20.00 paper.)

THE POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT. By GARY W. WYNIA. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. 318. \$39.50 cloth, \$11.95 paper.)

Max Weber characterized politics as a vocation and wrote with passion about the dilemmas confronting the practitioner, the hard choices and dirty hands that would inevitably challenge the politician facing the moral and ethical paradoxes posed to those who exercise political power: "[H]e who lets himself in for politics, that is, for power and force as means, contracts with diabolical powers and for his action it is not true that good can follow only from good and evil only from evil, but that often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant."¹

Weber's characterization of politics rings true to the challenge facing most Latin American political leaders: ethical dilemmas and moral paradoxes abound, presenting hard choices at every turn. A "vo-

cation" was never more necessary for the individuals called to the responsibilities and vicissitudes of public office, and the qualities Weber listed as preeminent for the politician—true passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion—are still essential.

Because of the current state of Latin American politics and the level of concern in Washington over U.S. involvement in Central America, the debt crisis, and drug traffic, most Latin American politics classes are heavily oversubscribed. Students want to understand the sources of current conflicts as well as the meaning and consequences of alternative solutions for their own lives. For many students, such a course will provide their first and only exposure to Latin America, and it will be their professors' only chance to dispel long-standing myths, stereotypes, and false preconceptions of the region, its peoples, and political traditions. This opportunity leads one to ask what is available in general introductory textbooks for teaching Latin American politics in the United States? How satisfactory are these texts for introducing a generation of undergraduates to the political patterns of the region? How effectively do the available texts capture the dilemmas of political life? More specifically, to what extent do textbooks on Latin American politics help students understand the issues currently attracting major attention as well as the wider issues of development and democracy? Do these books help students understand the periods of repression in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile? To what extent are such textbooks helpful in allowing students to assess the choices being made in Cuba and Nicaragua? Have scholars found effective ways of talking about the role of the military in politics—or the role of the United States in Latin America?

One cannot ask a textbook to do everything. Such a prodigious work would put those of us teaching in the field out of work. But one might fairly ask, how much help does a textbook give, either for a course wholly devoted to Latin America or for a course in comparative politics containing a section on Latin America? The texts under review in this essay are successful in a number of respects. Although they differ in coverage and intent, all six manage to link their consideration of Latin American politics to wider trends in comparative politics, usually to the relation between regime type and economic development. Conversely, all these authors attempt to give the student some clues about why Latin American politics has elements that are uniquely its own. Some explanations rely on the old standards of history and geography. But one also finds the return and reworking of concepts such as political culture and political legitimacy.

At the same time, one encounters a sense of frustration in these books, reflecting the inability of political science as a discipline to integrate an understanding of politics and political institutions with the

mysteries of economic development. As dependency theory (in its several permutations) and notions of bureaucratic authoritarianism have waned in appeal, political scientists have searched for more satisfactory explanations for the bottlenecks in Latin American development patterns.² One response to the present impasse has been to put new emphasis on public policy; another has been to reexamine the development ideologies of political leaders and their impact on development strategies. Political scientists who have taken this route argue that concentrating on regime type (socialist versus capitalist, or democratic versus authoritarian versus totalitarian) is less satisfactory than the comparative examination of public policy. Several of the texts under review are premised on the belief that examining the formulation and implementation of public policy will be a better guide than regime type to understanding performance. What have been the consequences of this analytic shift? Has it produced new insight in the study of Latin American politics?

Turning first to the question of what is available, two of the texts are revised versions of books that appeared in the late 1970s, Howard Wiarda's and Harvey Kline's *Latin American Politics and Development* and Gary Wynia's *The Politics of Latin American Development*. As the titles imply, both books explore the relation between politics and the issues of development. Wiarda and Kline provide a comprehensive introductory essay (treating history, governmental processes, interest groups, and public policy) and a concluding chapter that looks to the future in emphasizing the patterns of change now characterizing the region and the numerous points of tension between Latin America and the United States. This material remains largely unchanged from what appeared in the first edition (published in 1979). The remainder of the text is composed of individual chapters on nineteen countries written by a varied group of specialists. As the editors point out, their volume is enormously flexible in allowing instructors to choose among the range of countries offered, employing the introductory material as desired.

Such an approach is bound to produce some unevenness in coverage, but by and large, instructors will be able to add additional theoretical and substantive material to lend coherence and depth to their courses. The Wiarda and Kline volume is an ideal starting point. While it is hard to imagine decent country studies in twenty-five pages, the contributors succeed admirably, and all include bibliographies for further work and excellent maps. Most important, the country studies have been updated. The same is not true of the introductory and concluding material, and although these chapters are fine ones, substantial changes have transpired over the past eight years and some extended reflection on the implications of these changes from the editors would have been most welcome.

Wiarda and Kline sought broad coverage and wide utility and achieved it. The contrasting goal of Wynia's *The Politics of Latin American Development* is to demonstrate the usefulness of a particular analytic model for examining Latin American politics. To this end, he elaborates Charles Anderson's model of Latin American politics and particularly the central issues in establishing legitimate government. Wynia employs comparisons and contrasts to good effect, drawing examples from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Peru, Mexico, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Unlike the essays in the Wiarda and Kline text, these discussions are not comprehensive treatments of each nation but attempts to demonstrate regime types—populism versus democratic reform and military authoritarianism versus revolutionary regimes. Wynia's text is phrased in terms of the choices posed to political leaders and gives students a comprehensive grasp of the political dilemmas confronting leaders as they pursue economic development.

In the course of elaborating the "rules" of Latin American politics, Wynia constructs the "game" of politics, with chapters addressing the democratic "game," the revolutionary "game," and so on. This approach does not employ a game-theory model; rather, it uses the game metaphor to explain recurring patterns. Wynia is self-conscious about such usage and points out that politics is a deadly serious pursuit in which participation may mean risking one's life. Nevertheless, the use of the game analogy will require instructors to point out that it is not intended to be an ethnocentric statement about Latin American political systems. U.S. politics can also be approached in this fashion, and students may find the volume more useful if it is taught in this context or in a comparative politics course in which a variety of other approaches are employed. The Wynia book achieves a level of coherence impossible in multiauthored texts and uses individual country material to good advantage.

In his 1984 state-of-the-discipline paper "Political Science and the Study of Latin America," Arturo Valenzuela argued that scholars working on Latin America, particularly Latin Americans, have made significant contributions to comparative politics through their elaboration of theories of dependency, contemporary corporatism, and bureaucratic authoritarianism.³ For those wishing to trace the roots of dependency theory, Ronald Chilcote's *Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* will serve well. Chilcote sorts out the various strands of thought in the dependency school and relates its development in Latin America to classical Marxist thought and contemporary world-systems views. This text grew out of Chilcote's graduate seminar, and it is probably best pitched at that level because undergraduates might want more application to political life than this theoretical summary offers. Such discussions have a rather disembodied quality, and the link to contemporary

issues is too overdetermined to be of much heuristic use. On the other hand, specialists and graduate students will find this book very useful, particularly the imaginative and instructive tables and figures that Chilcote uses to conceptualize the relation between the various schools of thought.

Three texts promise a new emphasis on policy. They are John Sloan's *Public Policy in Latin America*, Steven Hughes's and Kenneth Mijeski's *Politics and Public Policy in Latin America*, and the edited volume by Robert Wesson entitled *Politics, Policies, and Economic Development in Latin America*.

As Sloan explains, his *Public Policy in Latin America* is an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of ideology that blind students to what is actually occurring. He proposes a public policy focus as the best way to understand what a government does: "[I]t is more important to know what government does than to know who is doing it" (p. 5). Sloan views policy as the choices a government makes, given its understanding of the range of choices available. He frames his discussion around the central debates over the order in which accumulation and distribution should occur and the tension between bureaucratic government and mobilization. Excellent case material is found throughout the book, and the application of theory to the experience of Latin American countries is well executed. Students will find here a framework for understanding the origins of death squads, the sharp increase in repression and state terrorism, as well as the limited arena for solutions. Sloan's book deserves a wide readership.

In this era of private-sector development and efforts to limit the role of state enterprises in the economy, Robert Wesson's collection, *Politics, Policies, and Economic Development in Latin America*, should be fun to teach. The opening essay is highly readable, with sweeping and unmasked assertions that make it an ideal starting point for a class. A careful discussion of his essay will help students see the prevailing debates and conflicting assumptions that characterize the field. For Wesson, the issue is economic growth and what prevents Latin American countries from achieving it. In contrast to the ambiguity and tentativeness of other authors, Wesson's position is clear. He sees an expanding state sector in Latin America as problematic and mass demands and the responsiveness of politicians to those demands as the major villains slowing or preventing development. For those who are less than happy with dependency theory, Wesson's book is a good counterpoint. He locates Latin America's difficulties within its own borders and political processes. He then returns to political culture for his explanation but primarily to find fault with it.

After considerable attention to the lack of correlation between regime type and economic growth, Wesson concludes, "[I]t would seem

that institutions on the surface are less decisive than customs, values, traditional power relations and political culture beneath" (p. 237). He has little use for attempts by political leaders to use state enterprises to bring about political and social transformations and greater equity: "To make an enterprise an instrument of change inevitably undermines, perhaps destroys, its productive capacity as political criteria replace economic ones and political mobilizers replace business managers" (p. 239). "Institutions do make a difference," Wesson concedes, "but the best have a high failure rate in conditions of poor public morality, lack of common values, social division, and widely divergent and narrowly promoted interests" (p. 243). In the end, his answer to the admittedly difficult problem of underdevelopment is a candid call for power to the producers: "Economic policy should not be in the hands of soldiers or demagogues, but of persons with primarily economic concerns" (p. 244).

For Sloan, on the contrary, the impact of political culture is less apparent than Wesson's "poor public morality and lack of common values." Sloan suggests that political culture is not irrelevant but fragmented. Furthermore, his definition of the goals of government contrasts with that of Wesson. For Sloan, participation and equitable distribution count. This position is not a naive stand. Sloan is careful to point out the restraints on public policy that grow out of the pressures for participation and better distribution, but his book will help students understand the relation between such demands and the increased abusiveness of many regimes.

Given Wesson's position on redistribution, his choice not to include a socialist regime among his case studies is disappointing because students would gain considerable insight from explicit attention to the comparisons and contrasts required when considering any of these regimes. It is worth noting that the essays on individual countries in the Wesson volume do not necessarily follow his line of argument. Written by other authors, they frequently offer perspectives that diverge from that of the editor.

Most of the texts are relatively free of jargon, or if they insist upon it, they get it out of the way in the first few chapters. The conceptual material is not overly pretentious, and most authors are content to state the dilemmas and their claims on insight in plain English. Only the Hughes and Mijeski volume insists upon "feedback" and the like in the opening chapters.

Like Sloan, Hughes and Mijeski in *Politics and Public Policy in Latin America* perceive a focus on policy as a means of getting a handle on politics. After a longish review of academic approaches to policy, the authors compare policy choices in six countries, two for each of their categories of regime type: democratic (Venezuela and Costa Rica),

military (Peru and Brazil), and postrevolutionary (Mexico and Cuba). Within each of the country cases, Hughes and Mijeski include assessments by leading experts, accompanied by their own analysis. This strategy is an effective one for combining expertise and coherence. The authors remain wedded to exploring the implications of regime type, however, and students may find the last chapters somewhat confusing when being led through the authors' intellectual gymnastics justifying their categorizations. But by and large, this procedure does not detract from the interesting case material drawn together in this volume.

What has the new emphasis on policy contributed to the broader understanding of Latin American politics? As is most apparent in the edited volumes, the term *policy* carries different meanings for political scientists, and wide variations in the content of "policy" case studies often result, despite an editor's best efforts to impose order or a common theoretical framework. The shift to policy is one attempt to unravel the internal dynamics of governments. As scholars have grown uneasy with comparing regime types and performance, they have looked to "policy" as a way of examining what produces such diametrically different results.

More interestingly, policy has recently been utilized to give new shape to discussions of political culture. By reintroducing this much-maligned concept and applying it to new issues in a comparative framework, a more sophisticated notion of political culture may provide a vehicle for reexamining values and attitudes and their impact on the choices political leaders perceive and make. Merilee Grindle's *State and Countryside: Development Policy and Agrarian Politics* provides a model of what this approach can achieve. Her study traces the impact of distinct development ideologies as they have been applied by policymakers to the agricultural sectors in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. By carefully tracing policymakers' responses to changing ideas about how to resolve agrarian problems, her study gives new meaning to political culture, its impact on development, and its international scope. If similar efforts can be made to examine the emergence and consequences of recent authoritarian regimes or the growing culture of violence or scarcity, scholars of Latin American politics may once again add new theoretical insight to comparative politics.

What has been left out of these studies of politics? What is missing? In many of the texts, the discussion of military regimes has a disembodied quality, with remarkably little attention devoted to the consequences of authoritarian politics. Some inheritance of military rule surely must exist in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Peru that might help analysts understand the consequences for Chile or Guatemala of the protracted struggles in those nations. It may be too soon for such issues to have found their way into theoretical constructs, but instruc-

tors should be signalling to students that these patterns have cast their shadow across political life in many Latin American nations and that their impact is not yet clear. Similarly, these texts convey little sense of the agonies individuals face in declining economies and the restrictions imposed in attempts to resolve the debt crises. No substantive discussion is found of the growth and elaboration of the informal market and its political consequences. If public policy is to be the new focus of political discussion, these issues are of considerable importance.

All the books under review would be strengthened by more systematic attention to the various roles played by the United States in Latin America. There is usually a symbolic nod in this direction, but students will find it impossible to understand current levels of resentment and frustration with U.S. policies unless they grapple with the issues in a detailed fashion.

The goal of textbooks is not necessarily to provide new information or interpretations, although in some instances that may occur. Their value usually lies in the degree to which they synthesize prevailing schools of thought and findings and help students understand prevailing debates. Thus it is surprising that none of these books (all published since 1982) have integrated the burgeoning research on gender, particularly on women's political participation. One hopes that as the female undergraduate population passes the 50 percent mark, queries about the role of women in Latin American politics will not go unanswered or unidentified in their textbooks.

What kinds of politics will produce economic development? According to the range of textbooks under review here, the answer is not known. What students will make of the choices posed to Latin American leaders seems unclear. Nor is it clear which policies have served nations well and which have been inadequate. The shift to policy is innately interesting, but I am not convinced that it has enhanced understanding of Latin American politics, unless by having examined this route it revives a concern with political culture, political leadership, and the constraints of the international system.

NOTES

1. See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 123.
2. For recent efforts, see David G. Becker, "Recent Political Development in Peru: Dependency or Postdependency?," *LARR* 19, no. 2 (1984):225-42.; and Stephen G. Bunker, "Debt and Democratization: Changing Perspectives on the Brazilian State," *LARR* 21, no. 3 (1986):206-23.
3. Arturo Valenzuela, "Political Science and the Study of Latin America," paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association meeting, Albuquerque, April 1984.