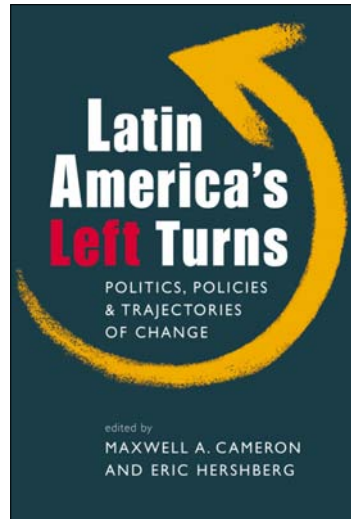


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Politics, Policies, and
Trajectories of Change

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Latin America's Left Turns: A Tour d'Horizon

*Jon Beasley-Murray,
Maxwell A. Cameron & Eric Hershberg*

In the wake of a series of electoral victories often dubbed a “pink tide” by the media, there has recently been a resurgence of interest in the diverse movements, parties, and leaders that comprise the contemporary Latin American left. After three decades during which the region followed (more or less reluctantly, depending on the case) the imperatives of neoliberal economic restructuring, diverse forces on the left—from Argentina to Venezuela, Brazil to El Salvador—have now captured the imagination of vast swaths of the continent’s population, taken hold of the reins of government, and promised change. Leaders such as Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Fernando Lugo, Mauricio Funes, and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva have made bold claims about their determination to promote equality and to transform how power is exercised in Latin America. These claims, and the ambitions they reflect, have animated renewed interest in Latin America by progressive intellectuals and commentators around the world. The region can hardly be characterized, as one pundit recently posited, as “forgotten” (Reid 2007). Many disparate political and theoretical projects find inspiration or succor (or in some cases causes for anxiety) in what they claim to see happening in Latin America. Our aim in this book is to provide a wide-ranging but grounded and thorough analysis of these “left turns,” to consider their future prospects, and to examine their implications for political theory in the wake of neoliberalism.

We are concerned with the antecedents, present practice, and implications of these Latin American left turns. The complex and diverse circumstances that have given rise to this phenomenon are one central focus of this book. Another has to do with how politics is practiced by different currents of the Latin American left. In the first instance, this has to do with relations between state and society that are being reinvented, sometimes in quite novel fashion, as well as with the operation of institutions. We are also interested in the policy ramifications of the striking shift in social and political dynamics in the re-

gion. That the left has been on the rise is incontrovertible. What it does once in power, however, is a subject that time is only now permitting us to answer, albeit in very preliminary fashion. Yet the prominence of the left is not solely a function of its presence in the halls of government. A key message of this book is not only that the Latin American political landscape has shifted leftward, but also that this shift emerges from and affects the underlying logics of political interactions that matter above and beyond what takes place inside the state apparatus. The long-term effects of the left turns, and their likely durability, can only be a matter of debate.

Latin America's pink tide in part manifests itself in the succession of elections in which leftist presidential candidates have either won or performed nearly well enough to take office. Hugo Chávez's 1998 victory at the polls in Venezuela marked a trend that continued with the leftward shift in the Concertación in Chile—the triumph of Socialists Ricardo Lagos in 2000 and Michelle Bachelet in 2006; the rise to power in Uruguay of Tabaré Vázquez and the Frente Amplio, and that of Néstor Kirchner during that same year (with Kirchnerismo prolonged with the 2007 victory of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner). Further advances included those of Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2005, Rafael Correa and Daniel Ortega in Ecuador and Nicaragua during the following year, Álvaro Colom's ascent to the presidency of Guatemala in 2007 and, in 2008, that of Fernando Lugo in Paraguay.¹ The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) presidential candidate Mauricio Funes won the election that took place in El Salvador in March 2009 and (albeit in rather different circumstances) Honduras's José Manuel "Mel" Zelaya also attempted to shift his government toward the left before being overthrown in June 2009.² Furthermore, it is notable that Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Ollanta Humala, and Ottón Solís nearly won the vote in 2006 presidential balloting in Mexico, Peru, and Costa Rica, respectively, and that even where the left has failed to reach office at the level of the executive, it frequently has made important advances in legislative and subnational arenas. Such was the case in Mexico and Colombia in 2006 and 2007, respectively, to cite but two examples.

But well beyond cases where the left has occupied the corridors of government, we see an underlying trend toward the emergence and mobilization of social and political currents variously protesting against the current political order, affirming or seeking recognition for subaltern groups, and demanding social and cultural change as well as political citizenship (Schaefer 2009; Schiwy 2008). Not only are popular movements making new demands, but as Benjamin Ardití maintains in his contribution to this book, they are doing so with greater efficacy than at any other moment since the arrival in Latin America of the third wave of democratization. In part this can no doubt be attributed to the cumulative effects of a quarter century of democratic politics, as well as to widespread dissatisfaction with what Peter Smith has termed "the

glacial pace of social progress” (Smith 2005:297), but it also testifies to the growing capacity of progressive sectors to recruit new adherents and to motivate followers to enter (or disrupt) the public sphere. Especially noteworthy is the degree to which, in reaction, the dominant discourse has incorporated key features of the left’s agenda, another phenomenon emphasized by Arditi.

It is tempting to assert that today’s left-wing governments have unprecedented room for maneuver. Their ideological adversaries are discredited; some were even forced from power in the face of massive popular protests. Although the right has by no means disappeared and retains considerable political as well as economic influence, left-wing presidents currently enjoy greater electoral legitimacy, as well as the solidarity of their peers in the hemispheric neighborhood. Moreover, the geostrategic context could hardly be more propitious: the United States, bogged down in a costly and protracted “war against terror” elsewhere, buffeted by an economic crisis of enormous magnitude, and governed as of 2009 by Democrat Barack Obama, is unlikely to commit significant resources to intervene against even the most radical of social experiments to its south. No less important, the boom in commodities prices between 2003 and 2008 boosted government revenue in most South American countries, opening opportunities for significant investments aimed at promoting greater equity. Even where the current crisis is taking its toll on local economies, the past few years of rapid growth has more often than not provided an important buffer against external shocks, as Eric Hershberg suggests in the concluding chapter to this volume, opening opportunities for countercyclical spending to mitigate the impact of economic slowdown. Hence arguably the left’s worst enemy can only be itself, should it fail to take advantage of this historic conjuncture. Yet the Latin American left faces daunting challenges—and it is in part because of its diverse responses to these challenges that we stress that these are left turns in the plural. We do not suggest that the left turns are irreversible, or that they constitute the final word for progressive politics in the region, although the conditions that have created them are unlikely to disappear in the short term and they have gone some way toward fulfilling some of their expectations.

The often tumultuous protests that in many cases brought left governments to power express social needs and demands that have accumulated since the debt crisis of the early 1980s and the ensuing period of economic adjustment and restructuring, to say nothing of the historic injustices that linger from the region’s colonial past and its protracted periods of conservative authoritarian rule. The lefts that came to power on the back of these protests must make good on their promise to bring tangible change, even as global economic storm clouds gather. Unless they manage to alleviate the misery and poverty still endured by many millions, the pink tide may fade in an undercurrent of disillusionment (Luna and Filgueira 2009).³ The stakes are higher than electoral fortunes alone. More

broadly, can movements and parties work together, outside and inside government, to articulate and implement visions for the future? Can such visions be translated from rhetoric and diplomatic grandstanding into specific policies, sustainable programs, and concrete results? And can this be achieved within a renewed commitment to a more meaningful understanding of democratic politics and the republican ideal?

The last point is especially critical. A widely recognized failure of neoliberalism lay not only in the flaws of its policy recipes—not all of which were without merit—but also in the manner of its execution and the lack of a commitment to democratic accountability and deliberation. There was little or no attempt to seek agreement or approval for the terms of the Washington Consensus; indeed, if it was ever a consensus, it was only so inside Washington. Market-driven and almost viscerally antipolitical, the neoliberal leaders of the 1980s and 1990s substituted technocratic formulae for democratic debate (Hershberg 2006). The lefts cannot repeat this mistake. If they are truly to change, even revolutionize, the continent's social, economic, political, and cultural landscape, they must maintain and deepen their links with the social forces required to put their policies into practice and turn their visions into reality. Part of the lefts' challenge, therefore, is political: left-wing movements and the political parties and leaders that aspire to channel their energies into the political order have to reimagine the very constitution of a possible democratic society.

A central contention of this book is that the "left turns" are best described as a multiplicity of disparate efforts to reopen or refound the constitutional order or social pact. Indeed, even in its tamest versions, the Latin American left manifests what Laura Macdonald and Arne Ruckert (2009), coinciding with Emir Sader (Sader et al. 2008), and John French in Chapter 3 of this volume, have termed "post-neoliberalism in the Americas." Even in countries where the disjuncture from the past seems most attenuated, such as Chile, what is in play is more than another of the swings of the political pendulum for which the region is notorious. Some have argued, for instance, that the Chilean experience since the rise to power of Ricardo Lagos in 2000 is best understood not merely as a prolongation of neoliberalism but rather as a pursuit of what Richard Sandbrook and colleagues (2006) have labeled social democracy in the global periphery. In this view, superficial continuities mask underlying departures from orthodox conceptions of citizenship, which were premised on the incorporation of individuals, as producers and consumers, into markets. What are emerging instead are openings to agendas that privilege collective rights and solidarities and aspire to achieve universal social citizenship. In so doing, they signal a fundamental rethinking of state-society relations, to a greater or lesser extent according to the case. More fundamentally still, the electoral victories that have attracted such attention can often be seen as symptoms of a deeper change in which insurgent social movements, from the Mexican Ejército

Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) to the Argentine *piqueteros*, have forced a reexamination of the fundamental constitutional tenets of Latin American republics. At times hydra-like and almost anarchic in their diversity, these movements of what Jon Beasley-Murray (in Chapter 7 of this volume) conceives of as the “multitude” have also provoked experimentation with new forms of community and new modes of politics. Social movements have exposed the fictitious nature of mechanisms of representation behind which lay ethnic marginalization, urban disorder, and abysmal social gaps. Another challenge for left-wing political parties, then, is to renew the constitutional order, while also sustaining a creative constituent process of democratic experimentation and innovation. It may be that the fate of the left turns hangs on the extent to which they can achieve this delicate balancing act.

In short, the future of the current left turns, indeed the future of Latin America as a whole, will be defined by the relationship between publics and politics, society and state, movements and parties, and constituent and constituted power. Will Latin America turn toward the rule of the many, concretely affirming the *res publica*, or will leftist governments simply play for time and thereby perpetuate the rule of the few?

Policy Challenges

Few observers of Latin America’s recent history would dispute the contention that states in the region are plagued by weaknesses. Starved of resources, deficient in institutional capabilities, and lacking widespread legitimacy, Latin American states predictably fail to coordinate processes of economic development, to engage the populace in the construction of universal citizenship, or even simply to respond to demands from below in any adequate form. State weakness is not merely a feature of the contemporary landscape. Quite the contrary, the “limits to state autonomy” were the focus of social scientists studying the region well before the lost decade of the 1980s and the ensuing experiment with neoliberalism (Hamilton 1982). The latter no doubt exacerbated matters, contributing to what Sandbrook and his colleagues (2006) have labeled the “historical burden” confronting developing countries worldwide, but the problem predates the era of globalization that Latin America encountered following the international debt crisis of the 1980s. Developmental states have been notable for their absence in Latin America. Even where developmentalism made its greatest advances, states lacked both the embeddedness and autonomy needed to fulfill the full range of functions associated with sustained and equitable development (Evans 1995).

Yet as the region experiences an unprecedented wave of electoral victories by forces on the left of the political spectrum, no task is more urgent for

incoming governments than that of configuring states that promote generalized prosperity and create mechanisms for citizen engagement with the *res publica*. If Latin American states are to survive their current crisis of legitimacy, then they need to be better funded, more efficient, and more reflective of public preferences than those that prevail in the region at the time of this writing or that have existed in the past. It is not a simple matter of reconstructing what was in place at some Golden Age. Rather, what today's leaders and, indeed, the entire political class confronts is the challenge of refounding the Latin American state. Any progressive alternative in the task of state management must enhance its capacity to distribute resources, to oversee effective institutions, and to represent the citizenry democratically. The first entails boosting historically limited taxation capacity and greater progressivity in revenue generation; the second requires bureaucratic reforms; and the last requires greater transparency and accountability. That the state is at the core of the challenge for the organized left merits emphasis. Brazilian social scientist Emir Sader is also one who asserts that the left's task is to reconstruct the state so as to overcome the deterioration sparked by the combination of authoritarian regimes and neoliberal policy prescriptions of the past quarter century (Sader 2008). What this formulation elides, however, is that the gaps leftist governments must overcome are rooted much further back in history. Even during the heyday of developmentalism, the region lacked institutions conducive to the sustained provision of social welfare and democratic accountability: mid-twentieth-century populism, for instance, was not a manifestation of state strength, but rather evidence of its weakness. Similarly, the empirical record shows that the limited extractive capacity of Latin American states predates the neoliberal era.

The policy challenges and possibilities for Latin America's lefts extend across multiple domains: ensuring competence in domestic macroeconomic management, advancing toward a redistribution of assets, sustaining productive international alliances, and achieving stable internal governance are but several of the most pressing sets of issues on the agenda. Left-wing governments have initiated innovations in all these areas, but the specific strategies adopted have varied widely and overall there is as yet little consensus as to what is to be done or what can be achieved. Each domain is still a site of dialogue, disagreement, and contestation internal and external to the left. In what follows we aim simply to enumerate core issues that confront progressive forces as they engage these distinct but interrelated challenges.

Priorities for national macroeconomic management include fostering growth and reducing vulnerability to external forces. Advocates of the so-called Washington Consensus assigned priority to maintaining macroeconomic stability and keeping inflation at bay. To a large degree these goals remain central to policymakers throughout the region: Brazil and Uruguay provide examples

from among countries that have embarked on a leftward turn. Elsewhere, however, there appears to be some slippage, linked in part to attempts to stimulate growth and certainly in the interest of boosting consumption. The otherwise quite different cases of Venezuela and Argentina exemplify this trend. Similarly, as Paul Haslam documents in Chapter 11 of this volume, there have been varying approaches to foreign investment and to relations with multinational corporations and international financial institutions. Whether any of this has an effect on relationships with the global financial system remains to be seen, as does the related and perhaps more important issue of the sustainability of any departures from orthodoxy. The challenge will be to determine the conditions under which alternatives to mainstream macroeconomic prescriptions emerge, the degree to which different approaches shape relations with the global economy, and the capacity of different formulae to stimulate sustainable growth with steady improvements in equity.

Efforts to reduce the region's intolerably unequal distribution of income and assets highlight rival approaches to poverty alleviation but also go well beyond that to encompass underlying visions for the extension of social citizenship rights. Relevant considerations in this domain include fiscal policies (both revenue and expenditures), social welfare and insurance, and approaches to the provision of health and educational services. Here again there is growing variation in both proposals and policies, yet so far there has been limited comparative analysis of the immediate impact on welfare or the durability of the identifiable short-term trends. Debates about distribution inevitably raise questions about the implications of *asistencialismo*, the persistence of populism, and the potential for crafting socialist or social democratic alternatives in the region, all of which speak to the question of how today's lefts will differ from their competitors and from their predecessors during earlier phases of Latin American development.

Under neoliberalism, protectionist economic policies were radically cut back and Latin America now finds itself inserted into a global political economy that until recently, at a moment of high demand for the region's commodities, offered opportunities for prosperity but that today as much as ever presents competitive challenges that tax the capabilities of states and firms throughout the region. What sorts of industrial policies are conducive to stimulating competitiveness? Where is productive upgrading taking place, and how can it be diffused across the economy? To what extent can productivity-enhancing measures—whether in primary, secondary, or tertiary sectors—be consistent with the imperative of increasing both the levels and quality of employment?

Domestic governance is a problem for the left as much as for the right, however much the latter tries to make "law and order" its particular mandate. Most Latin American states have lost whatever capacity they once had to provide security for the population, and the left requires a vision and policies to

ameliorate the climate of violence that undermines the quality of life in city and countryside alike. But problems of governance and security are not solely about everyday violence; they also indicate pervasive deficits in accountability. These range from failures to secure justice for human rights violations, present as well as past, to a lack of transparency in the distribution and deployment of public funds. Corruption remains an Achilles' heel of Latin American democracies just as it was of the dictatorships that preceded them. Only at their peril will left governments ignore its noxious consequences for their legitimacy and durability.

Three issues cut across the above policy domains. First, effective ideas about policy emerge from epistemic communities, which are sometimes highly technocratic, yet their successful implementation requires appropriate social coalitions. The age of technocracy is over: good ideas that do not resonate widely and good policies that lack sociopolitical underpinnings are ultimately useless. Second, the nation-state is no longer the sole territorial or political unit of relevance to social, political, and economic change. National governments define countries' macroeconomic policies and their international relations, but they are constrained by globalized markets and traversed by transnational social movements. At the same time, subnational institutions and publics increasingly manage distribution and fashion novel forms of participation and accountability. Third, left-wing governments differ from one another and from their competitors in their approaches to politics itself. They have distinct modes of symbolic politics, the discursive and other means by which they recognize distinct constituencies and open the political sphere to their concerns. And they differ also in the extent of their encouragement of participation, their transparency, and their responsiveness to demands articulated by different social forces. Any discussion of the left, then, must move from an analysis of policies to a consideration of political organization and modes of representation.

Social Democracy and Socialism, Populism and Post-Liberalism

In the past, the options for Latin America were often defined in terms of reform versus revolution, and a major point of contention was the extent to which political forces of the left were willing to submit themselves to the democratic rules of the game. But submitting to the democratic rules of the game meant, in addition, accepting the legitimacy of the interests and values of other forces, not all of which were necessarily democratic—including business, social elites, and even, as in Chile, the armed forces. As a result, the democratic transitions that began in the late 1970s and gathered momentum through the 1980s were seen as conservative: the left was required to accept that in return

for transitions from authoritarian rule, it would have to moderate its demands and both accept the basic parameters of a capitalist market economy and leave certain entrenched social inequalities alone.⁴

The left turns unfolding in the region are as heterogeneous in their politics as they are in their policies, but all accept democracy, at least in principle; similarly, nowhere is the left pursuing a radical statist project that is inimical to the interests of the business community as a whole. Even in Venezuela, where the public sector has historically taken a lead role in the oil-driven economy, the private sector is deeply fearful but on the whole takes up a larger share of the economy than it did before Chávez came to office. Nevertheless, attitudes toward democracy, understandings of what democracy means, vary considerably, and so does the extent to which the lefts in government are willing to pursue a more interventionist strategy in the economy. The challenge is to characterize these differences accurately and to capture the underlying tensions that give rise to them.

In contrasting the range of approaches to politics inherent in the diverse left-wing forces in the region, there is a tendency to identify and differentiate political projects through dichotomization. Often these dichotomies are reworkings of the distinction between liberalism and socialism, reframed in the Latin American context in terms of social democracy and populism. The most noteworthy, but hardly the only, example is provided by the works of Jorge Castañeda (Castañeda 2006; Castañeda and Morales 2008).⁵ Our book takes issue with Castañeda's view that the left is divisible into one or another of two categories, social democracy or populism. The "two lefts" thesis is tendentious—a way of nodding in favor of moderate social democracy while shunning radical populism (Barrett, Chavez, and Rodriguez-Garavito 2008). And the line drawn by Castañeda between the two types of lefts is slippery and may shift: while Venezuela's Chávez and Bolivia's Morales, for instance, are usually cast as populist radicals, and Chile's Bachelet or Uruguay's Vázquez as social democrats, the position of, say, a leader such as Brazil's Lula may depend on which elements of their political styles are emphasized. Moreover, some of those frequently dismissed as populist claim explicitly to be spearheading a socialist project for the twenty-first century. The validity of such assertions merits careful consideration rather than perfunctory dismissal.

We argue against the tendency to conflate socialism and populism, not because we doubt there are convergences between the two, but because this conflation is too often a maneuver to suggest the futility of radical left alternatives in order to promote what may be, in some contexts, an illusory social democracy. Dichotomizing the left into radical populists and social democrats conveniently reproduces the old cleavage between revolution and reform within the new context of democracy and globalization. That is, it says that the radical left may not be pursuing anticapitalist revolution, but neither is it acting

responsibly within the context of electoral democracy and the market economy. It may not be totalitarian, but it is illiberal—or so the argument goes. Meanwhile, social democracy is held out as the alternative to be pursued by responsible reformers. Yet social democracy in the current Latin American context may turn out to be another liberalism, and one that, in Latin America, conceals an inhuman face.

Liberalism, although not always an explicit point of reference, thus lurks near the surface of this debate—and our effort to make this clear is a central contribution of this book. At first sight, liberalism is central to the debate on left turns because social democracy takes it for granted—that is, social democracy builds on liberal institutions—while populism ostensibly rejects it. Social democracy assumes the validity of liberal procedures, such as parliamentary representation, codification of citizenship rights, and the separation of powers; it also assumes that equality before the law and rights of citizenship can be leveraged for the material advancement of the working classes. Finally, social democracy rejects the claim that the inherent contradictions of capitalism must lead to polarization and crisis.

In contrast to social democracy, populism and socialism are antagonistic to liberalism, but for different reasons. Populism claims to bypass bureaucracy and constitutional mechanisms, understood as instruments of exclusion and oligarchic control, and seeks to express the will of the people directly and spontaneously. Populism is endemic in Latin America, and it has often, as in the case of Argentine Peronism, served as the shock force by which political inclusion has been achieved, albeit sometimes at the expense of secure civil rights or the rule of law. Yet populism is a Janus-faced creature, to be found as much on the right as on the left: for instance, though sometimes anti-imperialist, it is also frequently linked to virulent forms of nationalism, and its charismatic leaders have often used, some would say betrayed, popular struggles for personal gain and the strictly partisan.⁶

Socialism, like populism, rejects liberal features of institutional order, but for reasons of class, not national interest: at the level of production, socialists argue that the inherent contradictions of capitalism are insuperable; at the level of political institutions, socialists doubt the possibility of advancing the interests of subaltern classes within a liberal constitutional order whose supposed neutrality is seen as a means to safeguard economic profit and social exploitation.

Liberalism often functions as the normative ground upon which these options are assessed, all the more so at a time when traditional versions of socialism have lost intellectual traction or political persuasiveness. Yet the Latin American lefts have persisted, in spite of the crisis of socialism, by redirecting their critical slings and arrows not at capitalism but at the ideas associated with global capitalism in the Latin American context—that is to say, the policy recipes of neoliberalism. With the exception of the Zapatistas, today's Latin

lefts speak more of neoliberalism than of capitalism and they question the performance of democratic governments more than the principles of democracy. Even in the World Social Forum, the tendency is toward communitarianism (for instance, participatory budgeting or a recovery of supposed indigenous values of reciprocity) rather than communism, at least as that has been traditionally conceived. Perhaps better, they seek new ways of being in “common” than those suggested by traditional communism and, as such, break with long-held conceptions of anticapitalism. In some ways they even build on some aspects of neoliberalism, not least the way in which it emphasized fluidity and connectivity over the rigid borders and fixed conduits between state and society stressed by state socialism and traditional conceptions of communism alike.

Yet the failure of neoliberalism to generate sustainable and broadly shared material improvements, combined with the precariousness of liberal institutions, especially in the context of booming commodity prices for much of the present decade, gives rise to a convergence between radical populism and current articulations of socialism. It is even harder to separate populism and socialism in a context in which all parties in the struggle accept some version of democracy. Radical populists, socialists, liberals, and social democrats all agree that popular sovereignty is foundational, and that it can and should be expressed in government, directly or indirectly, through the mediation of elections. This is the fundamental source of legitimation for contemporary left-wing governments: that the political parties and leaders of the left, whether they be socialists, social democrats, or radical populists, best represent the interests and desires of the vast masses of the people. But who are “the people”? Crucially, they are not the same as “the citizenry.”

In Latin America, liberalism and related ideas of citizenship are terms often opposed to the people, the popular sectors, or *lo popular*. Liberalism has seldom been securely embedded in Latin American societies; it is an ideology often associated, at least in the tropics, with its apparent antinomies such as the dispossession of indigenous peoples or the rule of oligarchic elites. Neoliberalism reinforced the association between liberalism and exclusionary economic and social policies. Radical in its hostility to the state, neoliberalism was deeply conservative in its technocratic and elite-driven approach to policymaking. Neoliberal technocrats extolled the virtues of the market, but had little patience with the public sphere. They were content to operate within the parameters of liberal institutions provided these did not constrain the radical restructuring of state-society relations necessary to liberate markets.

Social movements, in opposition to this trend, not only rejected neoliberalism, but also exhibited ambivalence and impatience toward liberalism. Liberalism’s weakness in Latin America reflects the inability of successive models of capitalist development, most recently neoliberalism, to create shared and sustained prosperity, and the limits of the advancement of the interests of

the popular sectors within precarious and often exclusionary legal and institutional orders. Hence the increasing salience of what Benjamin Arditi has designated “post-liberalism”: not the rejection of capitalism or liberal citizenship *per se*, nor complacency with the human misery that results from neoliberal policies imposed in conceptions of precarious citizenship, but an affirmation of “something outside liberalism, namely, an excess of politics vis-à-vis the liberal scheme” that “loosens the connotative link between electoral and democratic politics” (Arditi 2008:73).

The notion of post-liberalism helps us understand the wave of constitutional reform that has accompanied the rise of left-wing governments. Claudio Lomnitz calls this “foundationalism,” a desire to refound the republic and revive nationalist and popular projects that have been thwarted in the past, but also to reconsider the nature of political representation itself (Lomnitz 2006). Some of this vogue for constitutional reform arises from the perception that neoliberalism (especially in the form of trade agreements, as well as rules on intellectual property rights, investment, and services) has had a constitutionalizing effect. In Mexico, the Zapatista uprising followed changes to the constitution that were undertaken as part of neoliberal reforms to complement the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In this sense (and others), it is important to note how the left turns build on as well as react against developments that took place under neoliberalism.

In short, to answer (1) whether it is meaningful to speak of social democracy in Latin America; or (2) whether populism—as opposed, say, to socialism—is the unavoidable form that protest against the status quo takes; and (3) whether shifts to the left are due to failures of neoliberalism, we must ask why the lefts often articulate a political outlook that exceeds or bypasses liberal institutions. Left-wing parties’ political challenge is to rebuild states so that they provide more robust mechanisms for transforming urgent demands for change into alternative policies, in the process creating more open, participatory, and just societies. At the same time, post-liberalism suggests that this transformation will forever remain both incomplete and excessive and that social movements will always press against the new borders and refined hierarchies that inevitably result from such institutionalization. Can parties and movements, nonetheless, negotiate the institutional void created by the insufficiencies of liberalism in the Latin American context?

Surely this addresses only one aspect of the question of social democracy, for Latin American countries typically lack the socio-institutional underpinnings of social democracy as traditionally understood. In their ideal-typical European form, social democracies resulted from cohesive labor movements allied with programmatic political parties that entered into a social compact with capital through which property rights are maintained while redistributive policies are pursued through state intervention in markets. Skepticism about the relevance of social democracy for the region is in part a reflection of doubt

concerning the organizational basis for such a project, on the one hand, and the willingness of Latin American capital to enter such pacts, on the other.

Political Parties and Insurgent Movements

Rather than dichotomize the left, we would do better to ask: why is liberalism insufficient in Latin America? What is it that makes social democracy so elusive, keeps populism so pervasive, and ensures that socialism is always somewhere on the horizon? The apparent “illiberalism” of some left-wing leaders and governments, such as Chávez in Venezuela, Correa in Ecuador, and Morales in Bolivia, reflects the collapse of political parties and representative institutions, as well as deeper social cleavages and inequalities. These deeper cleavages and inequalities could not be contained by conservative transitions that placed certain basic questions outside the agenda for public contestation. Moreover, a series of resurgent social movements, some increasingly organized and others less so, have in recent years put the question of political organization and constitutionalism back on the agenda. Political parties have been forced to respond to these movements and their disparate demands and, in doing so, to reconceptualize the role of parties and representational institutions.

Perhaps nowhere are the insufficiencies of liberal discourse more apparent than in the arena of indigenous politics, a topic that is almost completely neglected by those who would transplant social democracy into a Latin American context. The demands of indigenous peoples may appear to be revolutionary, yet at another level they are both deeply conservative (in the sense of conserving tradition) and in some ways surprisingly liberal. The idea of inclusion—that the indigenous peoples should have the right to participate in democratic self-government and to share in the economic opportunity to exploit natural resources—is only radical from the perspective of a status quo in which basic liberal rights and freedoms are denied within the context of market economies incapable of satisfying basic human needs. The specific demands, however, may be limited to redistribution of power and life chances rather than to a fundamental revolutionizing of all social relationships. Or they may demand revolutionizing social relationships through the fulfillment of long-denied liberal promises, such as full rights of citizenship. These seemingly radical projects have, moreover, arisen from institutional decay, and they lead to governments that operate not in the context of enduring institutional bargains, wherein programs may be easier to implement and sustain as well as constrain, but in contexts of policymaking that offer wide room for change but little hope of institutionalization. At the same time, indigenous movements can also tend toward an affirmation of subalternity that imperils the status of the nation itself and challenges the liberal ideals of hegemonic universality. In

some ways it is this tension, between liberal inclusion pursued through illiberal means and/or subaltern autonomy justified via liberal arguments, that characterizes Bolivia's ongoing constitutional crisis.

So the insufficiencies of liberalism are also inherent in the paradoxical processes of constitutional reform that have swept the nations where representative institutions are most tenuous. The new politics of constitutional reform appeals to a power that exists prior to existing laws and institutions: a constituent rather than constituted power. We acknowledge that there lurk here a series of dangers; there are very different modalities of what Arditì terms post-liberalism, and it would be wrong simply to affirm them en masse. But we also know that liberalism has often served authoritarian and disciplinary ends in Latin America, whether through the imposition of notions of private property on collective lands and communities or through the insistence on forms of indirect representation and electoral competition that often marginalize other forms of popular participation. At the same time, the left is in some ways less illiberal than it once was. Many of Latin America's lefts no longer champion armed revolution—or even the conquest of state institutions. They remain, however, the “torchbearer of the Cinderella values of the French Revolution” by means of a radicalization of democracy, whether or not that passes through the state (Arditi 2008:62).

It is in this sense that the commitment to constitutionalism is a novel feature of some left turns, most notably in the Andes, but it is a commitment that may be hard to sustain or to make stick in countries where constitutions are often seen as scraps of paper. Constituent power opens politics and expands the horizon of the possible, but will it address poverty, inequality, economic underperformance, or social exclusion? Will it take on the task of reforming state institutions, or should it be seen as a movement against or (perhaps better still) despite the state? To what extent will constituent power be expressed within constitutional channels and accept elements of checks and balances between branches of government as it seeks to overcome the resistance of established interests, be these within the state itself or in the broader society? The pitched battles under way from the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century in Venezuela and Bolivia highlight the importance of these questions. They also show that there are different modes of excess, different forms of post-liberalism (Beasley-Murray 2008).

There is also a tension between social movements and political parties. Social movements have an ambivalent relationship with the left governments and parties they accompany in the struggle for power. For, on the one hand, these movements underpin and enable the lefts' electoral successes; without their support, the lefts would still linger in the political wilderness. Yet on the other hand, movement radicalism undercuts the authority of the governments that it has implanted. Parties also represent a threat to social movements. When left-wing parties come to power, social movements are often coopted or

incorporated into public office and policy programs in ways that may deflate their capacity for mobilization. Put simply, if movements incarnate constituent power that parties subsequently channel and represent as constituted power, what is at stake is the extent to which this representation is a negation of the energies that drive the left turns and the extent to which state institutions can fulfill their promises and desires.

For this reason, a major focus of comparison in this volume is the contrast between Venezuela under Chávez on the one hand and Evo Morales and the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) in Bolivia on the other. These are the two cases that we believe deserve the most attention. There are several reasons. First, they are the two cases that have inspired the most heated debate and controversy, not only among progressive forces but among observers everywhere. Second, they provide the best examples for thinking about the issues of constituent power, the multitude, liberalism, and democracy that form the heart of this volume. Third, they are often lumped together by observers as examples of the populist left—for reasons as obvious as they are shallow. For those who see the left in old Cold War terms, the two represent a sort of axis of anti-imperialism. Such a perspective is blind to issues of pluriculturalism, which are central to understanding Bolivia, inattentive to the different ways the left has come to power and governed in both cases, and neglects the crucial relationship between parties and movements that we see as defining the range of options for the Latin American lefts. Finally, understanding the differences between the experiences of Bolivia and Venezuela helps to place other Latin American left-wing parties, movements, and leaders in a different perspective. Although a fully blown comparative analysis of all the experiences of the left in Latin America is beyond the scope of this book, our contribution has been to help sort out the similarities and differences between two of the most critical cases.

A Roadmap for What Is to Come

This book begins with three chapters that encourage readers to think in new ways about the contemporary Latin American lefts. Juan Pablo Luna uses the idea of constituent power to challenge the two lefts thesis that has carried such influence in the conventional literature. He suggests that the success of leftist parties in contemporary Latin America is built upon a broad electoral movement that opposes neoliberal reforms and represents the losers in the economic model implemented during the 1990s. There are both similarities among disparate left-wing parties and governments as well as important differences within both the putative populist and social democratic camps. Luna proposes a typology based on the programmatic content of left-wing leaders and parties and the constraints they face, both exogenous and endogenous. This enables him to contrast pairs of

cases that typically are placed in the same camp—Chile and Uruguay, Venezuela and Bolivia—by advocates of those who perceive the contemporary landscape in terms of two lefts, divided typically into “good” and “bad.”

Another recurring theme is post-*neoliberalism*. Chapter 3, by John French, criticizes the juxtaposition of the social democratic against the populist lefts as a disciplinary move by neoliberals (Beverley 2009). French shows that by postulating a politics of expertise and enlightenment, neoliberals exalted reason, rationality, and objectivity (the “cold” and disinterested) over a lesser sphere of emotion, passion, and “personalism” (the “hot” and blindly partisan, if not corrupt). French shows that regardless of how Venezuela’s Chavez and Brazil’s Lula have practiced politics in different ways, both are post-neoliberal (rather than post-liberal).

The contribution by Maxwell Cameron and Kenneth Sharpe begins with the observation that Latin American left turns have occurred within the framework of electoral democracy, and that the concerns about the illiberalism of the left (or indeed of some Latin American democracies generally) are belied by a remarkable commitment to constitutionalism on the part of precisely those leaders who have emerged in countries where liberal and republican institutions have historically been most weak: the Andes. Yet the commitment to constitutionalism can limit the possibilities for fundamental reform. Cameron and Sharpe see the allure of constituent power as a formula for attempting foundational change without revolutionary violence, but also stress the dilemma that such change must, they argue, of necessity be negotiated with other political forces that retain electoral resources and legitimacy—and thus are also entitled to their share of constituent power.

We then turn to two critical case studies, of Venezuela and Bolivia, respectively. Chapter 5, by Jennifer McCoy, sees dangers inherent in a regime based on constant mobilization. She addresses the contradictions within Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution as it moves beyond liberal democracy to a participatory, or “protagonistic,” democracy based on the idea of constituent power. McCoy notes that Chávez has relied on a politics of mobilization: Like Morales, and not unlike classical populism, Chávez constantly evokes an “us” versus “them.” But unlike the populists of old, not only does Chávez use the “constituent power” of the multitudes to alter the rules of “constituted power” under the old regime, he also seeks to change the underlying locus of power. McCoy acknowledges that the Venezuelan project represents the same demand for change and social inclusion, without ideological definition, in reaction to the unmet expectations from the promises of market opening and democratic restoration since the 1980s, and she seeks to assess whether the Bolivarian Revolution can indeed create a more participatory and equitable society.

Santiago Anria’s account in Chapter 6 of Bolivia under the administration of Evo Morales highlights the simultaneous workings of top-down and bottom-

up logics of governance and frames these in terms of different forms of accountability. Whereas the rural roots of MAS gave rise to grassroots control over the leadership, its extension into urban areas fostered the reemergence of patterns of rule reminiscent of earlier experiences of populism. At the same time, his analysis reveals the degree to which, even while MAS has managed to remain true to many of its campaign promises, opposition forces have been able to constrain the Morales government in ways that are not evident in Venezuela. In part this reflects the persistence of liberalism alongside pressures for the creation of new mechanisms of participation and representation.

The next two chapters focus on alternatives to liberalism, the tension between constituent and constituted power, and the role of the multitude in politics in the context of Bolivia and Venezuela. Jon Beasley-Murray begins Chapter 7 with Arditì's observation that the ballot box should be neither the point of departure nor the exclusive focus of any discussion of left turns—a phrase he sees as problematic. Left turns are symptoms of broader movements that cannot simply be reduced to electoral dynamics or processes of representation and deliberation within the framework of liberalism. Beasley-Murray emphasizes how events like the Caracazo—the eruption of protest and looting that occurred in the capital of Venezuela in 1989—mark the rupture of hegemonic social pacts and present an opportunity for the expression of constituent power. He criticizes Chávez's government, which he argues is exemplary of the so-called left turns as a whole, for the way it continues to assert the transcendence of constituted over constituent power. Yet he recognizes a double tension: on the one hand, constituted power is always dependent on the constituent power that it claims to supersede, but, on the other hand, and for all its creative drive to novelty, constituent power needs also to give rise to new habits and routines, new practices and institutions, with all the dangers that such routinization presents.

Benjamin Arditì suggests in Chapter 8 that there is a close connection between post-liberalism and the politics of the left. Arditì describes post-liberalism as “something outside liberalism or at least something that takes place at the edges of liberalism.” As a democratic politics that transcends liberal mechanisms of representation in the electoral arena, it encompasses a series of radical and populist forces demanding both participation and redistribution. A central tension that emerges from the idea of post-liberalism is the need to reconcile demand for change, justified by appealing to the original, constituent power of the people to make their own institutions of self-government, and the victory of the electoral left within existing constitutional, legal, and democratic institutions. The very idea of “the people” implies subjects with wills, yet the people often irrupt into politics not as a coherent or stable subject but as an inchoate multitude. While this line or argument is developed most notably by Jon Beasley-Murray, post-liberalism, constituent power, and the multitude are recurring themes in this volume.

The final set of chapters examines policy challenges facing the contemporary lefts, taking as a point of departure the erosion in the capacity of historically weak states to provide for the public good under neoliberalism. Luis Reygadas and Fernando Filgueira address this deficit in the context of inequality and social incorporation. They analyze its evolution over time as well as different models of social policy and welfare state development. They go beyond the conventional treatment of income inequalities by considering inequalities along lines of gender, race and ethnicity, rural and urban settings, and information. With regard to the latter, they devote special attention to the character and significance of the digital divide, an issue that most governments on the left have failed to address.

Juan Carlos Moreno-Brid and Igor Paunovic review the macroeconomic development strategies of left-wing governments in Latin America. Although they acknowledge that the left has not put into practice a coherent alternative to the Washington Consensus, they find that the left does govern with different policy priorities in three major areas: (1) macroeconomic policies (fiscal stance, exchange rate, and monetary policy); (2) sectoral policies (distinctive elements of industrial and competitiveness policies); and (3) social policies. These are features of the current regional landscape that Hershberg addresses in the concluding chapter, which focuses on the intersections between domestic conditions and trends in the broader global order.

One area where the left has made a big difference is foreign direct investment (FDI). Paul Haslam gives particular attention to the modes of bargaining that characterize relations between states and private corporations. Focusing on Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Venezuela, Haslam finds that significant shifts have taken place, and that FDI is now confronted by new regulations and pressures that depart from the Washington Consensus ideal. Rather than entirely novel arrangements, however, the past decade has witnessed a revival of patterns of bargaining characteristic of relationships between foreign investors and the state that were typical of the import substitution period.

The final chapter, by Eric Hershberg, moves beyond the conventional focus on internal dynamics to consider how crucial features of the external context may shape the prospects for different currents of the Latin American left. Encompassing the characteristics of the region's ties to the global economy, the evolution of diplomatic relations within Latin America and the waning influence of the United States, as well as the region's exposure to ideational shifts with regard to forms of democratic politics and the appropriate components of development policies, the chapter identifies much that is distinctive about the current conjuncture alongside enduring features of the landscape. Hershberg concludes that the international context matters, and crucially, but that the ways it will impact developments will be mediated by domestic institutions and sociopolitical coalitions. A central task for the Latin American lefts will be to

forge institutions and coalitions that enhance capabilities for pursuing policies that redistribute power and resources in ways that are consistent with the expansion of citizenship.

Although we do not purport to cover the full range of issues necessary for a reconsideration of the significance and likely fortunes of the contemporary lefts in Latin America, we hope that this collection of essays will help to identify avenues for further analysis, highlighting the diverse forces and trends that make up the shifts to the left in the region and offering critical elements for a prognosis for their potential to fulfill the promise of transformation in a region of the world that cries out for meaningful change.

Notes

An earlier version of this essay introduced a collection of articles published in *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (March 2009). That collection, like this volume, resulted from a project undertaken at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University designed to illuminate the origins, nature, and implications of Latin America's left turns. We are grateful to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Peter Wall Institute at the University of British Columbia for funding that initiative.

1. Whether to include Nicaragua as part of the pink tide is controversial, since Ortega led an "orthodox" faction of the FSLN against reformists and reached office thanks only to an alliance with some of the country's most reactionary politicians. His policy positions on such matters as abortion further call into question his left credentials. Yet, opposition to abortion rights is substantial in pink tide cases—witness Tabaré Vázquez's veto of a liberalization law in 2008—and Nicaragua's international alliances are strongly within the left camp.

2. The Honduran case suggests a number of twists to our account that, for reasons of timing, this book is unable to consider. His deposition may come to be seen as some kind of watershed, and it is undoubtedly the sternest challenge faced by the Latin American left in recent years. It is worth noting, however, both that Zelaya did not originally present himself to the Honduran electorate as a candidate of the left and, also, that social mobilization in his support followed rather than preceded what we might characterize as his own personal "left turn."

3. Indeed, evidence presented by Luna and Figueira (2009) highlights the degree to which the performance of incumbents determines their prospects for remaining in office. Having said that, we would not agree with Hagopian and Mainwaring (2005) and others who speculate that the survival of democracy will hinge on regimes' capacity to deal successfully with exclusion and security. The *quality* of democracy will reflect its success in confronting these challenges; its *survival* may be less in doubt.

4. The classic formulations of this dilemma can be found in the four volumes published as part of the Transitions from Authoritarian Rule project, organized by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, and published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1986.

5. Analogous arguments are put forth by Reid (2007) and Weyland (2006), among others. Additional recent works on the Latin American left include Arnson (2009);

Sader and Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (2008); *Los colores de la izquierda* (2008); Barrett, Chavez, and Rodriguez-Garavito (2008); and Macdonald and Ruckert (2009).

6. That populism of the right remains a salient category in Latin America is evident in contemporary Colombia, where Álvaro Uribe has personalized politics, presenting himself as a charismatic leader responsible for taming guerrilla forces and providing “democratic security.”