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economic conditions prompt the latest recession of the 21st century.

Contrary to expectations, this period was characterized by political stability and reforms. Fiscal stimuli and central bank actions helped stabilize economies, and international support was provided through the IMF and other financial institutions.

However, the global financial crisis of 2008 and subsequent economic downturn highlighted the need for a more integrated and flexible response to economic challenges.

In the following sections, we analyze the impact of the crisis on various countries, focusing on the strategies adopted and the outcomes observed. This analysis will provide insights into the future of economic policies and the role of international cooperation in应对 future economic challenges.
Hershberg 2010; Cleary 2006; Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Weyland et al. 2010). Excellent single-country study analysis of the rise of the left also exist (Anria 2010; Ciccariello-Maher 2013; Hunter 2010). However, less is known about the particular character that the region has assumed since the Left Turn. The political reorientation that started at the inception of the new century triggered considerable changes in the democracy, citizenship, and constitutional arrangements in the region. Evaluating these changes is the main objective of this volume. In doing so, the authors ask specific questions: What were the social, political, and economic consequences of the partial unmaking of the neoliberal consensus in Latin America? Why did some countries stay on the neoliberal course? Were the left-leaning governments that came to power in the 2000s a throwback to the pre-neoliberal consensus? What was new and what remained unchanged in terms of economic development, social policies, regional integration, political representation, constitutionalism, and participation? Have ideas of race and decolonization changed in the region? What are the new challenges regarding violence and security? Discussing these questions helps us analytically frame and understand the major transformations experienced by Latin America in the first two decades of this century, evaluate those changes and continuities, and provide some insights into the region’s future direction.

In selecting the contributors and topics included in this volume, we had several goals in mind. First, we aimed for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Latin America. Thus the contributors to this volume have been formally trained and/or conduct research and teaching in an array of disciplines, including philosophy, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology. We strongly believe this interdisciplinary collaboration provides the reader with the best approach to understand contemporary Latin America. Second, alongside contributions from eminent Latin Americanists working in U.S. academia, we sought to give voice to the work of outstanding scholars who write from Latin America, such as Maristella Svampa, Marcela Cerrutti, and Roberto Gargarella, from Argentina; Thamy Pogrebinschi and Adrian Gurza Lavalle, from Brazil; Oscar Vega Camacho, from Bolivia; Gisela Zaremberg and Ernesto Isunza Vera, from Mexico; and David Smilde, who lives in between Caracas and New Orleans. In some cases, we are proud to say this is the first time their scholarship is published in English, providing the reader with an original and firsthand analysis of ongoing processes in the region. Finally, we aimed to cover the current trends in the region with regards to the domestic and regional political economy, democracy, institutions (such as constitutions, the judiciary, and participatory innovations), and the perennial issues of race, decolonization, violence, and migration to the United States. These topics structure the four parts of the volume, as described in what follows.

National and Regional Models of Development

The first part of this volume centers on alternative models of development found in Latin America since the Left Turn, which started with the 1998 election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and continued with leftist national victories in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Paraguay during the first decade of the new century.

In Chapter 1, Maristella Svampa analyzes extractivism as the emergent model of development and accumulation in Latin America—whether by governments on the right (Colombia, Mexico, Peru) or left of the political spectrum (Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Argentina). As Svampa explains, the transition from the Washington Consensus to what she calls the “Commodity Consensus” has implied the “reprimarization” of Latin American economies. As it had been the case over a century earlier, during the period of export-led growth that characterized the economies of the region from the time of their insertion in the international economy in the late nineteenth century until the Great Depression (from circa 1880 to 1930), the economies of the region—riding on the commodity boom of the early 2000s—once again relied heavily on the exports of primary products, including nonrenewable resources. But as Svampa notes, the extractivist model can be interpreted in terms of departures from as much as continuities with past economic models. Extractivism has created conflicting narratives of economic development, particularly in countries ruled by the Left (such as in Bolivia under Evo Morales or in Ecuador under Rafael Correa), between the national governments, which emphasize extraction for economic development, and the indigenous and environmental social movements, which seek to preserve their territories and way of life (at times referred to as “Living Well” or “Buen Vivir”). Thus conflicts have increased over the control and use of the territory and the environment, especially in ecologically preserved areas (such as the Tipnis National Park in Bolivia) and in the Amazonia (as in the case of the Yasuní National Park in Ecuador). Svampa also documents the changes in trade that have taken place during the first fifteen
years of the twenty-first century, noting the shift in Latin America's trade dependency from the United States toward China.

Different models of economic development are also analyzed through the lens of fiscal policy and public spending. In Chapter 2, Nora Lustig and Claudiney Pereira provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of the effects of fiscal policy and social spending. They measure the direct and indirect taxes and government subsidies, as well as the conditional cash transfer programs and social spending in health and education in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay in the late 2000s. The authors analyze the effect of these fiscal and spending policies on poverty reduction. The countries that collect the most revenue and spend the most achieve the greatest equalizing effect through direct taxes and transfers (Argentina and Brazil). However, when transfers in-kind such as quasi-free services in education and health are included, inequality declines substantially in all six countries, irrespective of levels of revenue and total spending. With regard to poverty reduction, Uruguay stands out as having reduced poverty the most, after taking into account all direct and indirect transfers, cash transfers, and indirect subsidies. The authors present a set of caveats having to do with size of economies of compared countries and raise warnings regarding the sustainability of the redistributive model in Argentina—particularly relevant since the election of right-wing President Mauricio Macri at the end of 2015. They also point to the disturbing fact that consumption taxes in Brazil offset the poverty-reducing effect of direct cash transfers, making the moderately poor net-payers into the Brazilian fiscal system. Interestingly, however, once in-kind transfers in education and health are included, reduction in inequality is observed across the six countries—albeit by one quarter of the equivalent rate in advanced OECD countries.

Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens, in Chapter 3, focus on the study of social investment (namely, cash transfers and social spending in education) and its impact on income inequality and poverty reduction. They arrive at a clear policy prescription: spending on education cannot substitute for spending on social assistance. Social investment in education must be complemented with targeted cash transfers that will lift the poor out of poverty. As Huber and Stephens show, cash transfers to the poor are a prerequisite to building the human capital of the future. Parents need to be lifted out of poverty for their children to attend school, raise their expectations about educational attainment, and successfully develop cognitive skills. They prove their argument by analyzing the development of cognitive skills, among other education variables, in fourteen countries of South and Central America.

Moving to the regional level, in Chapter 4, Isabella Alcázar provides a political economy analysis to compare the effects of debt, democracy, and economic crises in the 1980s and in the 2000s. She argues that the incentives created by debt crises and democratization led to the creation of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) in the 1980s, which built on shared conceptions of economic development, as well as on prior bilateral trade and nuclear agreements between Argentina and Brazil. During the 2000s, economic crisis and the ongoing institutionalization of democratic regimes led to the creation of other regional institutions, such as Unasur, and, paradoxically, to the demise of the role of Mercosur in the region.

However, looking through the lens of intraregional migration, Marcela Cerrutti argues in Chapter 5 that Mercosur has played a pivotal role in migration policy. She shows that since the crisis of neoliberalism and the advent of leftist governments, migration has been increasingly linked to issues of human rights and citizenship, particularly among the countries constituting Mercosur. Thus, the Residence Agreement of 2002 grants equal treatment and recognition of equal rights among natives and migrants in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Cerrutti provides a detailed account of the adoption of this agreement in Argentina, which was the first Mercosur country to incorporate many of the Agreement's provisions in its new migration law.

Jointly, the five chapters that constitute the first part of the volume provide the reader with an in-depth account of the main futures of the national economic models adopted in Latin America since the Left Turn, the consequences of their taxation and redistributive policies on poverty and income inequality, and the international and domestic politics that led to the formation and subsequent evolution of regional international organizations such as Mercosur.

**Democracy and Its Discontents**

Since the turn to the left in the region, many social scientists have criticized the increased centralization of power in the national executives and the detrimental effects this has had on democracy. Venezuela is possibly the country
in the region that has seen the most dramatic social, economic, and political changes in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. It has been the fiercest critic of neoliberalism, putting forward the "Socialism of the Twenty-First Century" instead. It is also a country where constitutional and political institutional changes have led critics to dub its political regime "competitive authoritarianism," (Mainwaring 2012) and where the worsening economic crisis is contributing to heightened social protest and government repression.

Unpacking political transformation in Venezuela, in Chapter 6, George Ciccariello-Maher studies the Bolivarian Revolution, initiated by Hugo Chávez, through three moments, beginning with the movement away from the liberal and representative components of democracy. In this moment, Chávez called into question the separation of powers and promoted a participatory and social conception of democracy, which, according to Ciccariello-Maher, had long roots in Venezuela's history. The second moment is the adoption of the 1999 Constitution, where constituent and constituted powers interact with one another. The third moment is the centrifugal movement toward dispersed forms of communal power. According to Ciccariello-Maher, the process of transformation initiated by Chávez builds on the existing history of social movement activism. However, the extent to which dispersed communal power could be compatible with President Nicolás Maduro's poor handling of the economy, concentration of power, and cracking down on the political opposition should invite further analysis and future research.

To such end, the neo-Weberian full conflict theory of David Smilde, in Chapter 7, provides an excellent analytical framework. Smilde depicts the ideological, economic, military, and political power networks present in Chavismo and in the opposition camps. Smilde's nuanced approach to conflict allows him to examine the tensions inherent in the Chavista project, while explaining its main sources of support. In highly politically polarized countries, such as Venezuela, the neo-Weberian full conflict theory is a suitable tool to analyze conflicts and tensions and better understand the complexities of national politics.

The discussion of political arrangements emerging in Latin America continues in Chapter 8, where Paulina Ochoa Espejo, changing the focus to the case of Mexico, asks provocatively, "Are the New Left movements democratic or populist?" She answers the question by focusing on the meaning of "the people" (el pueblo). She proposes a different criterion for demarcating populism and liberal democracy: self-limitation. From this perspective, populists defend their policies by the claim that people want them. Liberal democracy, in her view, also appeals to the people, but to signal that their claims are fellible, and thus limit their reach. She applies this criterion to the contested 2006 elections in Mexico.

As the parties in power and the political regimes in the region continue to change, it will be interesting to see the extent to which the Ochoa Espejo's criterion to distinguish between democratic and populist democracies can be further validated and extended to other contexts and historical events. We also wonder whether Ochoa Espejo's normative framework could be productively combined with the sociological neo-Weberian full-conflict theory advanced by Smilde, and/or complemented with the ideas of communal democracy presented by Ciccariello-Maher, to more comprehensively study the social bases of support of ruling and opposition coalitions and their standing vis-à-vis the political regime claims these groups support and legitimize.

Citizenship, Constitutionalism, and Participation

The study of political regimes, which are the main object of analysis in the second part of the book, is complemented in the third part of the volume with the study of political institutions and their historical and recent transformations. This section opens with two chapters devoted to Latin American constitutions and judiciaries, followed by two chapters that focus on the new forms of citizen participation, promoted by recent legal reforms and institutional innovations.

In Chapter 9, Argentine constitutional expert Roberto Gargarella reviews Latin American constitutional history from its origins in the nineteenth century to the present, focusing on the main transformations: from the division of powers within government at the moment of state building, to the declaration of rights in the early twentieth century, to the promotion of human and social rights in the late twentieth century, to the arrival of new experiments on what he calls "dialogic constitutionalism." However, Gargarella remains skeptical about the reach of these reforms, positing that the hyperpresidentialism of the nineteenth century (or what he calls the "engine room" of Latin American constitutions) has not changed. Is it possible to make constitutional changes when the main features of Latin American constitutions remain practically the same? Gargarella sees a tension between the new participatory, more democratic constitutional reform initiatives and
judiciaries of the recent past and the hierarchical organization of power still prevalent in the region’s constitutions and governments.

Shifting her focus to the last quarter century, Sandra Botero, in Chapter 10, analyzes the constitutional courts of the region in terms of neoliberal and social constitutional reforms. What are the political dynamics triggered by the active exercise of judicial power? In Botero’s view, neither path dependence nor ideology can account for the activist role of judges. Focusing on the case of Colombia’s constitutional court, Botero argues that the type of appointments to constitutional courts affects their future activism, which she analyzes in the areas of women’s reproductive and sexual rights and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights.

Chapters 11 and 12 focus on relatively recent institutional creations that seek to promote citizens’ participation and deliberation in public policy decision-making and in the distribution of social services and public goods. Interestingly, the authors provide contrasting interpretations regarding the vitality of these participatory institutions and their effects on democracy. In Chapter 11, drawing from a comparative analysis of institutional innovations for participation created throughout Latin America, Thamy Pogrebinski argues that the new forms of participation and deliberation we see in the region amount to a “pragmatic turn” for democracy, which deepens the meaning and substance of the social component of democracy. In her analysis, this pragmatic turn is intrinsically linked to the rise of the Left in the governments of the region after 1999 and to the constitutional reforms that followed.

Drawing from an analysis of public opinion surveys carried out in Mexico, in Chapter 12 Gisela Zaremberg, Ernesto Iunza Vera, and Adrián Gurza Levalle provide a less optimistic view of the effects of participatory institutional innovations on democracy. In their assessment, these new institutions have been weakly implemented and have little impact on people’s life or their access to the state. Instead, Mexican individuals, they argue, continue to rely on political parties as their main intermediaries with the state.

**Race, Decolonization, and Violence**

The final section of the volume discusses race, decolonization, and the urgent problems of violence, security, and international migration. In Chapter 13, Juliet Hooker adds to the extensive literature on the meaning of *mestizaje* by elaborating a very original and refreshing interpretation of the work of José Vasconcelos. By carefully grounding Vasconcelos’s work in space and time, especially within the concrete political context in which they emerged, Hooker constructs a Vasconcelos who is clearly anticolonial in his rejection of U.S. ideas about race and U.S. imperialism. She argues that while Vasconcelos’s philosophical and political valorization of *mestizaje* is a clear anticolonial answer to global white supremacy and U.S. imperialism, the vision cannot be considered fully de-colonial. His rejection of U.S. imperialism and white supremacy was limited, in that it did not fundamentally challenge the reification of racial hierarchies in Latin America.

In Chapter 14, Oscar Vega Camacho revisits the meaning of decolonization in South American politics and thought. In his words, decolonization is “the struggle against and resistance to colonial power relations on multiple scales in a historical process for emancipation and liberation.” Vega Camacho analyzes the demand from social and indigenous movements for decolonization in relation to the ideas and political projects of plurinationality and “Buen Vivir,” particularly as they have developed in Bolivia since 2006. In order to map the main conflicts that lie ahead in Bolivia’s process of democratization, he then introduces three topics closely linked to decolonization and plurinationalism: social movements, constitutional politics, and social economy efforts.

Irina Carlota Silber, in Chapter 15, brings us closer to the everyday and personal consequences of war and instability in El Salvador, a country suffering, as are other Central American countries, from violence and insecurity. However, the situation as experienced in the everyday lives of residents remains underexplored. More importantly, the implications for migration, especially the push for families to cross into the United States, raise humanitarian concerns that transcend national boundaries. Building on over twenty years of longitudinal, ethnographic research in the District of Chalatenango, a former war zone, and with the Salvadoran diaspora, Silber argues in favor of a critical anthropology of security and illuminates the insecure and precarious lives of Salvadoran citizens and their interpersonal and structural connections.

**Conclusion**

As the second decade of the twenty-first century comes to a close, significant political change in the ideological orientation of the democratically elected
governments of Latin America is taking place, with swings to the center-right in highly polarized countries such as Argentina, Paraguay, Peru, and Brazil, and increased tensions affecting continuity of the leftist projects in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela. Violence, meanwhile, remains high in Central America and Mexico and has spiked in Venezuela.

While we cannot provide definitive answers on the direction that Latin America will take in the twenty-first century, our hope is that the highly insightful chapters that follow and that analyze the main economic, social, institutional, and political transformations that have taken place since the Left rose to power at the beginning of this century will shed light on why some Latin American countries broke with the neoliberalism of the previous era while other countries experienced more continuity than change in the realm of economic policies, as well as in their institutional creations and reforms. Overall, we are confident this volume will contribute to a better understanding of the tensions and contradictions that are the current signature of Latin American societies and politics.

References


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