

dynamics between the working-class women and their organizations, but also the Bolivarian revolutionary state during the Chávez mandate. According to Elfenbein, sometimes these interactions are evident, while at other times the state and its agents keep them in inaccessible and undetermined areas, away from working-class women and their organizations. Many times, the strategy and interests of the revolutionary *Chavista* project demand it. As shown throughout the work, this *Chavista* state advocates the rights of this social sector, but at the same time does not protect them.

In line with these observations, and from my position as a Latin American academic who, in Peru, heads the Socially Responsible Leadership, Women, and Equity Research Group at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, I enthusiastically and highly recommend reading, disseminating, and discussing *Engendering Revolution*. I have no doubt that it is an original contribution to gender studies in the region and to political work on the Bolivarian Revolution. I really appreciate its novel conception and development, derived from a US feminist perspective. It focuses on analyzing a complex, multiracial, and multiethnic Latin American society that always demanded greater social justice and greater gender justice during Chávez's long presidential term, despite the inclusive and benefactor discourse of the revolutionary Bolivarian state. Furthermore, in this work, Elfenbein conducts a masterful extended case study with a methodology that she adapted in a creative manner to the social reality under study.

Finally, this overwhelming book offers a new way of approaching the gender role and gender justice in Venezuela, a thorough research that seeks to find the essence of the dynamics of relations between the state and poor women and their organizations in that country. Moreover, this research also reveals how the government or the state can offer poor women and their organizations support and the promise of integration and, at the same time, redirect the action, time, and energy of this social sector, leaving social justice and gender justice subordinate to the primary objectives of the government or the state.

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Thomas Carothers and Andrew O'Donohue, eds., *Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarization*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2019. Figures, index, 319 pp.; paperback \$34.99, ebook.

This book studies the challenges of political polarization for democracy. For a long time, scholarship on polarization looked almost exclusively at political parties and party systems. Most definitions of polarization focused on ideological distance between positions of parties, candidates, or voters on the left-right scale. Frequently invoked examples from the Latin American context included the polarization

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between the Liberal and the Conservative parties in Colombia for most of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, or between Peronism and Radicalism in Argentina in the second half of the twentieth century.

With the recent publication of this volume, as well as two special issues edited by Jennifer McCoy and Murat Somer (Polarization and Democracy: A Janus-faced Relationship with Pernicious Consequences, *American Behavioral Scientist* 62, 1, 2018; Polarizing Polities: A Global Threat to Democracy, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681, 2019), research on polarization has caught new steam and steered toward an understanding of polarization as a societal process in which people's identities and interests line up along a single divide and people form into political groups that are seen in a competitive, "either-or" relationship with each other, overshadowing people's other, normally cross-cutting, identities (McCoy and Somer 2018, 2019). The analytical focus has thus shifted toward the origins and causes of polarization, the role of polarizing actors, and their strategic and ideological aims, as well as the reaction of the opposition, conceptualizing polarization as a dynamic, political, and relational phenomenon.

Against this background, *Democracies Divided* examines the roots, trajectory, and consequences of polarization, as well as remedial actions against it. These four topics are covered in all nine case study chapters, spanning Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Readers primarily interested in Latin America might immediately think of the polarizing populism that arose in the 2000s with radical leftist reformers challenging fundamental elements of the political system, as seen first and foremost in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, but also in Honduras and Nicaragua. While the volume's introduction, conclusion, and several other chapters engage with those cases (particularly Venezuela), the two chapters focusing on Latin America deal with more recent instances of polarization. Andreas Feldmann argues that polarization in Colombia is fueled by conflictive and incompatible views on the 2016 Peace Accord between the government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the country's most emblematic guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Umberto Mignozzetti and Matias Spektor analyze the Brazilian political crisis leading to the 2018 electoral victory of right-wing populist Jair Bolsonaro.

As the editors emphasize in the introduction, polarization is a continuous phenomenon, ranging from regular competition between political parties that is a normal feature of democratic systems to a high level of intensity that can corrode democratic systems. Furthermore, polarization may originate and spread at either the elite or the mass level. Severe polarization—a situation in which people perceive politics and society in terms of "us" versus "them" (McCoy and Somer 2018)—is expected to be particularly harmful for democracies. Carothers and O'Donohue establish three criteria to determine the intensity of polarization, suggesting that severe polarization fuses elite and mass polarization, is structured around a binary division, and is sustained—that is, it lasts beyond a specific polarizing event.

Accordingly, the chapters are grouped into cases that meet or do not meet the volume's definition of severe polarization. Turkey (chapter by Senem Aydin-Düzgit) and Kenya (chapter by Gilbert Khadiagala) are portrayed as instances in

which severe polarization contributed to the breakdown of democratic institutions, while the United States (chapter by Carothers), India (chapter by Niranjan Sahoo), and Poland (chapter by Joanna Fomina) are classified as cases of severe polarization that did not result in democratic breakdown. In turn, in Colombia and in Bangladesh (chapter by Naomi Hossain), polarization is not considered to be severe, as it is restricted to the elite level. Likewise, Indonesia (chapter by Eve Warburton) and Brazil are described as cases that stayed clear of severe polarization, despite recent political upheaval and contentious electoral competition.

Instead of treating specific instances of polarization as *sui generis* cases, the volume generates comparative insights. The conclusion summarizes the core findings on the four topics that structure the chapters; that is, roots, trajectory, consequences, and remedial actions. Divisions rooted in clashing social identities stand out as sources of severe polarization. This includes ascriptive identity divisions, such as religious cleavages that play a role in Turkey, India, Indonesia, and Poland; and ethnic or tribal divides, identified as crucial in the Kenyan case. In turn, ideological divisions between progressive and conservative approaches are pertinent in the United States but also in Colombia and Poland. The trajectory of polarization is significantly shaped by the tactics of polarizing actors and the substance of their programs, the response of opposition forces, and the temporal dynamics of actions and reactions. Additional factors that might drive or mitigate polarization include the design of the political system, the strength and impartiality of guardrail institutions (such as the judiciary), changes in the media landscape, and economic transformation. Regarding consequences, the different chapters concur that intense polarization not only poses risks for all institutions in a democracy, but also reverberates throughout society. Differences in national context notwithstanding, the case studies also show that attempts to reduce polarization have drawn on a common menu of remedial actions.

*Democracies Divided* appropriately emphasizes the global nature of the challenge of political polarization in democracies. Its most substantial contribution lies in the presentation of an analytical framework broad enough to enable discussions among different country and regional specialists. Another strength of the book is its coherent structure, as well as its timeliness. On the other hand, timeliness also brings disadvantages in analytical terms. The classification of some cases is based on a snapshot of the state of affairs up to 2019. As a consequence, very recent polarizing dynamics (as observed in Brazil, for example) are obviously not yet “sustained” and hence cannot meet the third definitional criterion for severe polarization.

Some of the case studies also challenge the first and second definitional criteria. For example, the fusion of polarization on the elite and mass levels is often difficult to diagnose. In cases like Kenya, it remains unclear to what extent polarization actually has a strong affective component at the mass level or instead is stoked by elite entrepreneurs. Furthermore, some cases of severe polarization defy the criterion of the existence of two large camps. Kenya, according to Khadiagala’s analysis, exhibits three influential ethnic groups that have entered into shifting alliances in the course of the past decades. For the case of Poland, Fomina shows that the homogeneous

governmental camp confronts a fragmented opposition. Regarding Turkey, Aydin-Düzgit points to the existence of several overlapping cleavages (Kurdish-Turkish, Sunni-Alawi, different political parties) that have varied over time in their capacity to cross-cut or reinforce the government-opposition cleavage created by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Such inconsistencies underscore that the volume charts new territory in the comparative analysis of political polarization. It leaves a number of problems unresolved that can serve as starting points for further research. One possible path would be a refined analysis of varieties of polarization. While the volume principally works with the concept of severe polarization and the distinction between elite and mass polarization, some case studies mention other varieties—such as asymmetric polarization—that would be worthwhile to explore. An additional limitation of the volume is the unsettled relationship between polarization and populism. Conventional descriptions of the two phenomena clearly have common features, such as the emphasis on a binary division (“us vs. them”) and the expected problematic effects on democracy. Although several chapters employ the concept of populism, the volume leaves open whether populism is a subtype of polarizing politics (McCoy and Somer 2019), polarization is a feature of populism (as Warburton suggests in her chapter on Indonesia), or populism can emerge without severe polarization (as Mignozzetti and Spektor claim for Brazil).

A further issue the volume touches on but does not explore in detail is the role of violence in polarization. In several of the countries studied, polarization has gone along with massive eruptions (Kenya and India) or isolated instances (Indonesia) of political violence. Elsewhere, polarization has been driven by discourses on violence—fiery rhetoric of political leaders endorsing acts of violence (United States and Brazil), or confrontations on how to deal with a country’s violent past (Colombia, and to some extent Kenya and Brazil).

These and other questions need to be further explored. Scholars of Latin American politics can apply the analytical framework provided to additional Latin American countries. *Democracies Divided* provides both researchers and practitioners with an insightful analysis of current challenges to democracy and an inspiring foundation for future research.

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