

and pleasures of a shared mourning'. A chapter by Michael J. Lazzara on Diamela Eltit's *Puño y Letra* sees it as part of a literature of witnessing; Elizabeth Lira presents a historical analysis of policies and dilemmas concerning Chile's recent authoritarian past; and Francesca Lessa looks at how Uruguay has come to terms with the memory of past violence.

Perhaps most daring and comprehensive in this volume is Vikki Bell's afterword, which ties together the various chapters while making a substantial contribution to the analysis of the 'long present' in these countries. Departing from the observation that even the most cultural expressions of confrontation with the past should be understood as political action, Bell relies upon the hindsight of political theorists such as Plato and Hannah Arendt to stress that many of the struggles over memory are centred on the constitution of political subjects, their relationship to social institutions, and their historical imaginations. Bell also notes that the tremendous shifts in state policies and their contestation by organisations and associations in civil society starting in the 1990s or 2000s, as new generations came of age (and, let me add, as new politicians came to power), are due to the freedom of post-dictatorship that opened room for struggles in a 'long-term present' along with new forms of performative politics, memorials and preservation of sites of detention, torture and extermination.

Although some of the contributions suffer from an overuse of jargon and over-theorisation, overall this book represents a useful collection of studies in a burgeoning and important domain of research. I would recommend it for upper-level courses dealing with the long-term legacies of human rights violations and the protracted democratic transitions in the Southern Cone.

Wake Forest University

LUIS RONIGER

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Ana María Bejarano, *Precarious Democracies: Understanding Regime Stability and Change in Colombia and Venezuela* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), pp. xvii + 350, \$40.00, pb.

Ana María Bejarano challenges the conventional wisdom that the pacted democracies of Colombia and Venezuela followed similar regime trajectories since 1958 and are the exceptions to Latin America's regime evolution. She argues instead that the pacts negotiated in each country that year had very distinct motives, characteristics and consequences for democratic progress and erosion in each country. Taking a historical-institutional approach, Bejarano questions both resource-endowment structural explanations and mode-of-transition explanations for the emergence of 'precarious democracies' in these two countries.

Bejarano's goal is to shed light on processes of democratisation and de-democratisation, and she succeeds brilliantly. She aims to understand variations among 'unhappy' democracies – those missing some essential condition of procedural democracy (the familiar elements of universal suffrage, competitive elections, civil rights and liberties, and the absence of external controls or vetoes by unelected actors).

While not the first to focus on political institutions, Bejarano's book does an admirable job of comparing these two political regimes and tracing their path-dependent histories. Beginning with the consolidation of the state and its relationship

to political parties in nineteenth-century Colombia and early twentieth-century Venezuela, she argues that a weak state controlled by warring, elite political parties had very different implications for Colombia's path compared with the relatively stronger state and late-emerging parties in Venezuela. In Colombia, the elite-led Liberal and Conservative parties were the main vehicles for both the army and state-building, and even became a substitute for the 'nonexistent state', claims the author. These same parties dominated Colombia's political history from independence until very recently. In contrast, Bejarano sees Venezuelan institutional history as exhibiting a strong break with the past, with the disappearance of the Liberal and Conservative parties and the military-led creation of a strong centralised state in the early twentieth century, before the discovery of oil. This laid the basis for modern, mass-based parties to emerge in Venezuela beginning in the 1930s and, paradoxically, a more favourable basis for democratic development.

Bejarano also takes on the mode-of-transition explanation that lumps Venezuela and Colombia into a single category of pacted democracies. She argues that variations among pacted transitions are crucial to understanding their subsequent evolution. More specifically, in Colombia the problem faced in 1958 was how to create trust between parties after a century of violent confrontation. The resulting pact was rigid and unrepresentative, requiring an alternation in the presidency and an evenly split division of legislative, regional and local elected positions between the two dominant parties. The Left was explicitly excluded from participating in the electoral game, and consequently the social and ideological polarisation existing in the country was played out not within the party system, but between the government and an armed insurgency.

In Venezuela, the problem in 1958, according to Bejarano, was more of a coordination issue: how to tame Acción Democrática's majoritarian temptations, seen in the first experiment with democracy during the 1945–8 Trienio, and create trust among the parties that the electoral game would be fair and that they would not be excluded by the dominant party. The result was a more flexible and inclusive pact that preserved electoral uncertainty and required power-sharing only for the first presidential term. Her analysis of the evolution of the pacted democracies in Venezuela and Colombia leads her to reject both the earlier assumptions that elite-negotiated pacts would necessarily have a positive effect on democratic transitions, and the later negative perceptions of such pacted transitions as elitist, conservative and exclusionary, and thus harmful for democratisation.

In Bejarano's analysis, the consequences of the historical-institutional legacies of state and party formation, and the nature of the transitional pacts in 1958, were a stunted and exclusionary democracy in Colombia, and an inclusionary, competitive democracy in Venezuela in the initial decades after transition. Nevertheless, to fully explain the different capacities of each of the young democracies to address armed challengers, Bejarano has to resort to some structural explanation: the oil-induced demographic changes in Venezuela reduced the size of the landed elites and the peasantry while creating an urban middle class. The guerrilla insurgency of the 1960s was based in that middle class, with few ties to urban workers or rural peasants, and was thus short-lived. In addition, the oil-fed state was able not only to control its territory, but also to provide incentives for legal political participation. In contrast, the Colombian insurgency was much more rooted in the peasantry and, faced with a weak state that had experienced a partial collapse in the decade of *La Violencia*, was able to survive for decades.

Bejarano goes on to examine how, after building relatively well-institutionalised party systems in the first three decades after their transition, both Venezuela and Colombia suffered crises of representation in the late 1980s. Her identification of twin crises of state capacity and party representation is reminiscent of the institutionalist explanation in McCoy and Myers' *The Unravelling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), although this work is not referenced in her text. The last chapter of the book addresses how the historical legacies in each country gave rise to two polarising, controversial figures, Álvaro Uribe and Hugo Chávez, and political decay in the 2000s.

Although the analysis stops in 2006, Bejarano provides some warnings for current junctures in each country. The Colombian state's inability to guarantee basic civil rights and liberties became the primary limitation after the 1991 Constitution, and was exacerbated by the Uribe administration's single-minded focus on strengthening the state's coercive power in the 2000s. Bejarano warns that failure of a democratic state to elicit voluntary consent by providing services, justice and protection can easily lead to an authoritarian reconstruction of state power. The Santos administration's recognition of the social roots of violence and its gamble on a peace process seem to be a sign that it is heeding Bejarano's warning.

Bejarano characterises Chávez's Venezuela as being on the path toward authoritarianism, but a more apt warning for the fate of Chavismo's version of the 'politicized state' may come from her analysis of the failures of the 1980s and 1990s: parties so fused with, and dependent on, the largesse of the state that they created an 'inefficient and poorly staffed bureaucracy and a corrupt and partisan judiciary' unable to withstand a drop in oil revenues. We should look forward to Bejarano's next book analysing the next stages in Venezuelan and Colombian 'precarious democracies'.

Georgia State University

JENNIFER L. MCCOY

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Leah Anne Carroll, *Violent Democratization: Social Movements, Elites, and Politics in Colombia's Rural War Zones, 1984–2008* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), pp. xv + 447, \$45.00, pb.

I first met Leah Anne Carroll in Colombia in the late 1980s, when the systematic assassination of Patriotic Union political activists and candidates was well under way. Her fieldwork was very demanding, as it involved visits to three of the most violent rural areas of the country: Arauca, Urabá and Caguán. If I recall correctly, at that time she was going to Arauca. Her book is a remarkable achievement, which has taken some time to compile but gives us detailed accounts of patterns of violence in these three regions which have not previously been brought together in this interpretative fashion. This is not an ethnography of war, but an effort to draw out comparative learning for students of democratisation and social movements about the difference the latter can make in contexts of violence, armed conflict and state repression. As such, it is a welcome break from the focus on armed actors in conflict. After an exhaustive (and sometimes exhausting – the rich detail does not make for an easy read) analysis, Carroll is able to arrive at conclusions that would escape the reach of other research. They are summed up in the final sentence of the book: 'Slowly, as small steps are being made to bring the laws of the center even to the red zones, the peasant and labor movements of the war zones are acquiring the rights of citizenship.' As Colombia