during the Echeverría period or the global economic situation under de Madrid and Salinas as contributing to their treatment of competing elites, the broader, underlying understanding of what drives elite politics remains a bit of a mystery.

Finally, the study seems to strike a rather ambiguous tone with respect to the impact of elite consensus on democracy. Since most aspects of democracy – political parties, elections, social movements and so forth – are beyond the scope of Palace Politics and brought into the argument only to demonstrate their weak explanatory power, Schlefer nonetheless ends by noting that Mexico became democratic after 'political elites, by tearing that consensus to shreds, destroyed the old authoritarian regime' (p. 225). Not only is the causal relationship and the dynamic linking the breakdown of the elite consensus and democratisation largely unspecified here, but the erosion of the consensus that began under Echeverría also occurred many years before the breakthrough to democracy. The author then leaves the reader with the question of whether democracy is capable of re-forging a new elite consensus and whether elite consensus is a necessary ingredient in the consolidation and deepening of democracy. By a political scientist specialising in Mexican politics, Palace Politics provides an engaging and insightful journey tackling old and familiar works, questions, and mysteries surrounding Mexico's unique authoritarian system.

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Harvey F. Kline, *Chronicle of a Failure Foretold: The Peace Process of Colombian President Andrés Pastrana* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007), pp. xi + 229, $39.95, $19.95 pb.

In the beginning of 1999 the Colombian president Andrés Pastrana was convinced peace was within reach. In a speech on 7 January 1999, he stated that he did not believe guerrilla forces were winning the war, but that they wanted to search for a new stage in democratic life. 'May we wake up in peace in 2000,' he concluded. It was only a few hours later, during the first talks between Pastrana as a president and the guerrilla movement FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), that the sound of optimism faded. The leader of the then 15,000-strong FARC, Pedro Antonio Marín (also known as Marulanda or Tirofijo), failed to show up. The first talks did not go well. In his book Chronicle of a Failure Foretold (the title refers to García Márquez' Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada), Harvey F. Kline argues that the peace process of President Pastrana was doomed from the beginning. Pastrana became interested in a peace process when he campaigned for the second round of the presidential elections. The peace process began as a tactic to win the election and Pastrana was not well prepared. But a more fundamental reason for its failure, as Kline states, is that Colombia is made up of political archipelagos: an assortment of regional political systems with a variety of disorganised organisations including the guerrilla groups, paramilitary squads and the national government itself. In many regions the government is not the strongest actor. The variety of groups is manifested even within the guerrilla movement FARC, whose decentralised fronts operate more or less independently within a broad framework of action decided by the central Secretariat.

In the first part of the book Kline sets the context for the peace process under the Pastrana government. It provides a concise introduction to the Colombian

conflict and its armed groups and then analyses the peace processes under President Belisario Betancur in the 1980s and during the more recent presidencies of Virgilio Barco and César Gaviria. As an analytical tool, Kline identifies various major themes that may constrain a peace process, such as a lack of unity (among the guerrillas or the government), a lack of continuity (changes in the negotiating team), a lack of details in agreements (leading to conflicting interpretations of the text) and what Kline calls 'symbolic imperial presidency' (chief negotiators who in the first place strive to secure their place in history, an attitude that can lead to bad bargaining decisions not in the interest of the peace process). These major themes are referred to in the following chapters, indicating when such a theme plays a role in the peace process.

In the subsequent chapters, Kline chronicles the Pastrana government's peace efforts with the FARC (and with the smaller guerrilla group ELN, the Ejercito de Liberación Nacional). Pastrana agreed with the most important precondition of the FARC: the establishment of a Switzerland-sized demilitarised zone in the south of Colombia, controlled by the FARC themselves. Meetings were held in the centre of the zone in San Vicente del Caguán. Many talks focused on the agenda of further talks, but the two sides also discussed a number of political topics, ranging from land distribution, to the struggle against paramilitarism and political reforms. The FARC insisted that a ceasefire was something to be negotiated later. A promising episode during the process, as described in the book, was a tour of Europe to familiarise participants with the mixed economies of Western Europe. Representatives of the government and the FARC had an opportunity to get to know each other personally, far away from the conflict. Even the then FARC-spokesman Raúl Reyes felt optimistic, raising his glass at a cocktail party, 'We Colombians cannot continue killing each other'. But the negotiations in San Vicente were frozen many times. Both attacks by paramilitary groups (for which the FARC blamed the government) and by independently operating FARC fronts interrupted the peace process. The most substantive agreement reached during the whole negotiation process was a prisoner exchange. The negotiations ended in February 2002 according to Kline for two immediate reasons: the cease-fire proposals showed that no progress had been made in this important issue, while the FARC fronts continued their military actions against important political leaders.

One of the strong points of the book is its richness in details on the talks, the documents and the subjects discussed. But the reader gets little information on the personalities of the chief negotiators and how they got along. Sometimes strong leaders who get along well are able to force a breakthrough despite all the underlying problems. The book provides little insight in the personality of FARC leader Marulanda who, according to some press reviews, was prouder of his background as a humble peasant than as a leader of a guerrilla movement. When former president Pastrana reflected on the process in an interview in 2008, he mentioned a striking difference between himself and Marulanda. While Pastrana was focusing on practical solutions for the future, the FARC leader still wanted to talk about the wrongs of the past that according to him needed to be settled first. It could be one of the reasons, according to Pastrana, for the final failure of the peace process.

Kline argues that president Pastrana was too eager to win peace in order to establish his place in history. This weakened his bargaining power, giving too much to his opponent. In his role as chief negotiator, Pastrana moreover neglected the complexities of Colombian society, or in the words of Kline 'the many political

archipelagos' that constitute Colombia. This is an excellent book that provides a lucidly written account of the peace process under the Pastrana government.

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James Dunkerley, *Bolivia: Revolution and the Power of History in the Present* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2007), pp. xv + 311, £18.00; €30.00; $30.00, pb.

Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), pp. xxiv + 177, £12.99, pb.

Bolivia is one of those small countries that actually makes the pages of international newspapers, most recently for the election of Latin America's first indigenous leader and the consequent reaction, both positive and negative, in the nation and beyond. These two books, in contrasting ways, provide invaluable contexts to current events: one, Revolutionary Horizons, was written in direct response to the dramatic, even revolutionary, developments; the other, Bolivia, is a collection of essays mostly written long before Evo Morales was a political player on the national scene.

Although Bolivia has the capacity to spark the imagination across the world, it is not, as James Dunkerley reminds us, 'for beginners' (p. 3) and both books are written by historians who are no neophytes in exploring the twists and turns of the past of this landlocked nation, where global politics regularly clash with very local and particularistic concerns. Moreover, the politics of race and ethnicity in Bolivia require careful understanding if simplistic analyses are to be avoided. In this, both volumes offer their readers interpretations of events that are nuanced, provocative and sophisticated, yet strikingly different.

Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson argue forcefully that the present in Bolivian politics is unintelligible without a sound understanding of the past. They offer the strong thesis that the election of Evo Morales is one in a series of revolutions that stretch back to the revolt led by Tupak Katari in the eighteenth century (a subject on which Thomson is particularly knowledgeable). This revolt, a scene in the closing act of the colonial period, which saw the siege of La Paz and almost achieved victory, is the first revolution. The second revolution is that of 1952, one of the most successful and far-reaching in Latin America's modern history, which overthrew the landowning oligarchy and ushered in a period of major reform and land distribution. The election of Evo Morales is the third revolution. This is, without a doubt, the controversial core to their book. Theirs is an archaeology of revolution where each epoch is sedimented onto its predecessors in 'horizons'. They also invoke a very Andean understanding of history where the past is present in today, and indeed the title of the final chapter underlines this sense of the immediacy of the past by invoking the Aymara concept popularised by the Taller de Historia Oral Andina, 'quip nayra uñtasis sartañani', which can be loosely translated as 'to walk ahead while looking back' (p. 149). One could quibble about the phrase and its translation but the authors clearly read the present through the lens of past struggles or even the very same struggle reincarnated in the present. One cannot help but be reminded of Eugene O'Neill's description of Ireland having no present or future but 'just the past happening over and over again today' and, although Hylton and Thomson have