explains that despite notable successes, which have forced the issue of equitable development for areas inhabited by tribal populations into the political agenda at the national and state level, rebel excesses and increasing state strength in terms of coercive capacity and redistributive programs are defeating the Maoists. The causes and the outcomes thus dovetail with James C. Scott's (*The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009)) argument that peasants futilely rebel in order to protect their economic subsistence and political autonomy against modernizing states.

Despite its comprehensive coverage of communist parties, the book suffers from two theoretical drawbacks that affect the overall explanatory narrative. The first weaknesses stems from the treatment of the communist parties as discrete state-level entities. The second problem arises from the argument that the Maoist movement is a monolithic threat.

The two major parliamentary communist parties, the CPI and CPIM, are Janus-faced entities. On the one hand, their state-level leadership has to adapt to local political realities in order to remain electorally viable in state-level legislative elections. On the other hand, their national leadership focuses on achieving power at the national-level, often as partners in broader coalitions. Consequently, the policy preferences of state and national-level leaders can sometimes be in opposition, while at other times national-level dynamics bolster state-level leaders. For example, whereas the West Bengal leadership of the CPIM gained valuable resources because the national party was a member of the United Progressive Alliance coalition led by the Congress Party in 2004, the national-level party leadership left the alliance due to its opposition to Indian nuclear collaboration with the United States, a foreign-policy issue irrelevant to West Bengal politics. In contrast, the frequent national-level alliances of the Congress Party with the CPIM in the early through mid-1990s led to a détente in West Bengal politics, consequently protecting the Left Bloc in West Bengal during a time when popular preferences were changing due to the collapse of socialism and introduction of free-market policies.

Finally, Chakrabarty views the Maoists as a unified, albeit loosely organized, movement that threatens the Indian state. This assertion is well supported by a detailed study of party programs, declarations by Maoist leaders, and an analysis of various inter-party meetings seeking to create a unified Maoist movement. Nevertheless, the presentation and evaluation of the nature of Maoist activities, which are far fewer than those on party platforms and the like, reveals that Maoist groups' attacks, revenues, and consequent preferences revolve around localized grievances of tribal populations and the control and taxation of locally available natural resources sought by private companies, in the same vein of Jeremy Weinstein's (*Prosperity and Violence* (2006)) findings on rural insurgencies. Thus, this indicates the possibility that Maoists repeatedly fail to cohesively threaten the national state because the strategies of their local successes undermines their cross-regional viability.

The aforementioned drawbacks, however, should not deter from two major contributions that make this book indispensable for scholars of Indian politics, Communist parties, and political development. For students of Indian politics and Communist parties, it provides the only contemporary coverage of both the parliamentary and insurgency Communist parties in a single monograph. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it holistically conceptualizes the ideological development, praxis, successes, and failures of a distinct "Indian Communism," which demands further study akin to its better known European and East Asian counterparts.

Decentralization in Africa: The Paradox of State Strength. Edited by J. Tyler Dickovick and James S. Wunsch. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2014. 319p. $72.00.
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— Jan Erk, *University of Cambridge*

Following the end of the Cold War, while the rest of the world focused on the seismic changes taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the African continent was undergoing its own political and economic transformation. No longer supported by their Soviet paymasters, all socialist regimes fell. The 1990s also brought an end to Western support of their anticommunist counterparts. The ideological defeat of socialist economic-development policies, and the disappearance of socialist foreign aid, brought everyone—genuinely or opportunistically—around liberal economic ideas. Aid was now conditional on democratization reforms and structural reform programs—including decentralization. Almost everywhere on the continent, large-scale reforms, funded and supported by international donors, arrived with a big bang and were put into law in a top-down manner. Twenty-five years on, the picture on the ground is uneven. Not all of the promises of decentralization have been met. In some places, the reforms seem to have engendered vibrant grassroots democracy at the local level; elsewhere, it has allowed the central government to permeate local politics and indeed exert control over what happens at the grassroots level; in other places, decentralization does not seem to have had any effect at all, and yet in a handful of them the reforms have remained on paper without any real change in day-to-day policy.

This edited collection takes stock of how things look 25 years after the reforms. The observations have both theoretical and applied lessons. Theoretically, this is an opportunity to examine the long-term consequences of institutional design, and to see whether comparative

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analyses using the nation-state as the unit of analysis and prioritizing the causal relationship between a few select variables across a large number of cases is the best explanatory approach. In applied terms, this is an opportunity to examine the real and long-term consequences of top-down institutional reforms and the "best practice" mind-set, which assumes that the same policies deliver the same results.

The collection is based on a project initially supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). There are 10 case studies that follow the framework that was originally formulated in the 2009 *Democratic Decentralization Programming Handbook* of USAID. All chapters follow the same four dimensions: authority, autonomy, accountability, and capacity adopted from this framework. This brings in a degree of internal coherence difficult to achieve in edited volumes—especially one that includes cases as diverse as Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. Most of them will not be that familiar to readers, and so this presents a challenge to both the editors and the authors of the case studies. The challenge is to provide some descriptive background while also pursuing explanatory goals. The majority of the case studies manage to balance these two intellectual goals remarkably well.

Most of the case studies seem to suggest that decentralization cannot be divorced from local politics and history. As the case studies on Mali, Nigeria, and Ethiopia show, decentralization also has to navigate the question of who is native to the land, especially when internal migration upsets delicate ethnic balances at the local level. Another interesting observation that emerges from the case studies is that when all the money comes from the center, the creation of local government encourages rent-seeking behavior. In their chapter on Nigeria, Dele Olowu and James S. Wunsch show how decentralization reforms have fueled demands for additional local councils as a way of "sharing the national cake" (p. 161). But it is in the concluding chapter by J. Tyler Dickovick and Rachel Beatty Riedl where most of the comparative lessons are provided. The authors highlight structural variables (demographics, geography, and economics), historical legacies (state formation, colonial heritage, and conflict), political institutions (authoritarian and democratic regimes; federalism and unitarism; political parties and party systems). The chapter also contains a very helpful overview of the 10 case studies.

In addition to the comparative lessons highlighted in the conclusion, a couple of other general patterns emerge. One is that by itself, decentralization and the minutiae of institutional design bringing this about mean little. It is the broader political and social context that seems to determine if and when decentralization will deliver on its promises. Decentralization is not a mere technical matter that can be confined to the subfield of public administration; it is inseparable from politics. A few months after the book was published, a scholar of decentralization, Gilles Cistac, was murdered in broad daylight in Mozambique's capital, Maputo. His work had found merit in the opposition party's claims for political devolution. There had also been the recent discovery of one of the world's biggest offshore gas reserves along the country's long coastline stretching into the opposition strongholds in the north.

The second general pattern is how almost all decentralization reforms can be traced back to the 1990s big bang. While this broad pattern seems to hold, individual variations exist, of course. The case study on Uganda shows how decentralization reforms initially had homegrown roots, only later to be joined by the prescriptions cooked up by various international donors. Thus, the risk of what might be called "too many cooks, too many best practices" came later. As Paul Smoke, William Muhumuza, and Emmanuel Ssewankambo put it in their chapter: "[The] government used external assistance for decentralization selectively. This kept reform motivation high and prevented an onslaught of development partners bearing diverse ideas and programs—the curse of decentralization in many developing countries. . . . [S]ome of the early donors were not experienced with decentralization in developing countries. This may help to explain why such an ambitious reform was so rapidly undertaken in a postconflict, low-capacity country" (p. 243).

Perhaps one angle that is missing from the comparative framework is subnational variation. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, there are huge domestic differences in the level of economic development, precolonial and colonial history, ethnic and religious composition, demographics, and even geography. And this is confined not only to the three large countries with federal systems: Nigeria, Ethiopia, and South Africa. To be fair, the chapters on these cases all address subnational variation (these also happen to be some of the strongest chapters in the volume), but this variation is not part of the framework guiding the work. In a couple of case studies, subnational variation is deliberately left out. For example, the case study on Tanzania inexplicably leaves semi-autonomous Zanzibar out and focuses on the mainland, using a seemingly technical public-administration language that in fact obscures rather than illuminates. As a result, not only do we miss out on what is politically most interesting, but also the frequent use of acronyms like LGRP, LGDG, HRM, LGA, PMO-RALG (just to name a handful) renders the text almost incomprehensible. Thankfully, most of the chapters do not bury the analysis in jargon.

One minor (and perhaps more stylistic) point that is not clear is the second part of the volume's title. Other than a little hint in the concluding chapter, it is never quite

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clear what this paradox is. But at the end of the day, despite a few patchy spots, the collection is remarkably coherent and contains insights that have both theoretical and applied relevance. Considering that there are 22 contributors and 10 different case studies in *Decentralization in Africa*, this is a credit to the editors.

Mexico's Evolving Democracy: A Comparative Study of the 2012 Elections. Edited by Jorge I. Domínguez, Kenneth F. Greene, Chappell H. Lawson, and Alejandro Moreno. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. 304p. $55.00.
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— Roderic Ai Camp, *Claremont McKenna College*

Election specialists and Latin Americanists alike will welcome this edited work on Mexico's 2012 presidential election. It should be viewed as the third in a series of outstanding analyses of three Mexican presidential elections: *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000* (2004), and *Consolidating Mexico's Democracy: The 2006 Presidential Campaign in Comparative Perspective* (2009). They remain the most thorough evaluations in English of the three campaigns. All three are linked methodologically, using original panel surveys throughout the campaign period to measure changes in voter preferences; thematically, providing overwhelming evidence that campaigns matter significantly in electoral outcomes in Mexico; and comparatively, within Mexican politics, and among countries, such as Eastern European democracies, which have recently emerged from authoritarian eras.

This work consists of 11 chapters, nine of which are specific analyses of Mexican campaign politics, and the remaining two chapters, creating a contextual introduction for this event (Chappell Lawson) and a broad, comparative, collective assessment of the central conclusions (Jorge Domínguez). A refreshing aspect of these overviews is that the editors have performed this task in each volume, joined by Alejandro Moreno in *Consolidating*. Thus, they are cognizant of the arguments made previously since the pathbreaking 2000 election ending the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) seven-decade rule.

Lawson and Domínguez both agree that voter preferences changed significantly during these campaigns, altering the outcome of the 2000 and 2006 elections. The frontrunner at the beginning of the 2012 campaign remained the winner at the election's conclusion; nevertheless, many voters still altered their preferences. A major shift characterizing the 2012 election that distinguishes it from its immediate predecessors is that partisan attachments were weaker. An equally important conclusion, which both editors also identify, is that Mexican voters share a strong tendency to choose candidates on the basis of qualities related to performance. It is refreshing that Domínguez readily corrects his earlier findings based on the current volume's conclusions. Many of the contributors also correctly indicate that voters evaluate characteristics that inform the candidate's ability to govern (Kathleen Bruhn's chapter, p. 37). In highlighting this finding, perhaps it would be more elucidating to emphasize that the public's perception of the most important issues facing Mexico—economic variables (poverty, unemployment, inflation) and security issues (violence, drugs, organized crime)—have not significantly changed since 2000. Most Mexicanists would argue that the present administration's failures have comparatively little to do with its policies, and much more with their ineffective implementation.

An important change in the 2012 election, compared to its predecessors, is social media's increasing role. The three leading candidates of the major parties—PRI, the National Action Party (PAN), and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)—actively used Twitter and Facebook to communicate to their likely supporters. Domínguez and Moreno explore in detail the impact of a student-oriented social media campaign, #YoSoy132. They demonstrate from the panel surveys that it reduced Enrique Peña Nieto's lead and boosted that of his strongest opponent, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD), but reversed its influence late in the campaign. As an uncited survey revealed, one explanation for this rejection was the belief that this independent movement was linked to a political party. The fact that only 12% of Mexicans currently have confidence in political parties can be attributed, in large part, to their reputation before 2000. The importance of social media in electoral campaigns is also tempered by the fact that data on Mexicans who are actual Twitter and Facebook users clearly demonstrate that they are well educated, enjoy higher incomes, and are urban residents, and that they express little confidence in any Mexican institutions.

A broader issue, which many of the authors touch on, and far more significant to Mexico's future, is the extent to which the variables they analyze adversely affect Mexico's democratic consolidation. The work of many Mexicanists has documented the declining respect for or faith in the democratic political model. Jim McCann, who has contributed to all three volumes, cites the revealing Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) data, which should be widely used with these panel surveys, suggesting that Mexicans have become "more pessimistic about the workings of multiparty democracy" (p. 99). A second important finding is that nonpartisan voters, a significant percentage of likely voters since 2000, is a growing segment, a conclusion Kenneth Greene emphasizes. As he suggests in his notes, an "amazing 86.2% of voters changed vote intention at least once in the four-wave 2000 study and 45.2%" in the 2006 study (p. 149). Greene's finding takes on greater significance if the reader was aware of the fact that the distribution of partisan voters

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