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Review

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*Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America.* Edited by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully. (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1995. Pp. 578. \$60.00.)

The shift throughout Latin America from democratic into bureaucratic authoritarian political regimes during the late 1960s deflected scholarly attention away from political parties and party systems. During the 1980s electoral politics made a major comeback, but the first scholarly accounts of Latin America's reconstituted political parties and party systems (Ronald H. McDonald and J. Mark Ruhl. 1987. *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, and Charles Ameringer, ed. 1992. *Political Parties of the Americas*) were highly descriptive. The research that Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully assemble in this volume intends to move beyond description in ways that advance our ability to compare and contrast Latin American party systems.

The absence of an analytical volume and the idiographic character of existing work on Latin American political parties and party systems provides the *raison d'être* of this research. The editors seek to develop a useful conceptual map for comparing Latin American party systems and propose one that emphasizes levels of institutionalization. Mainwaring and Scully begin with careful definitions of party system and institutionalization. For them party system displays a set of patterned interactions in the competition among political parties, thus excluding from this research authoritarian polities that permit only one party (4). Democratic party systems, the object of their concern, are considered institutionalized when four conditions obtain: stability in the rules and nature of interparty competition, component parties that possess somewhat stable roots in society, major political actors that accord legitimacy to the electoral process and to parties, and party organizations that exist apart from the interests of ambitious leaders (5).

The Mainwaring/Scully framework has five principal themes: (1) parties and their role in shaping how democracies function; (2) whether or not the party system has been institutionalized; (3) the marked differences in the degrees of institutionalization; (4) the relationship between party system institutionalization and democratic consolidation; and, (5) the impact of variation in the number of parties and the ideological distance between them. They postulate that data from individual countries organized around these themes will cast new light on discussions about which kinds of institutional arrangements would be most propitious for building solid democracies and stimulate debate among scholars and democrats seeking institutional reform (34).

This volume grew out of research funded over several years by the Ford Foundation and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at Notre Dame University. In addition to the editors, thirteen other social scientists, each with significant in-country field experience, participated as authors of twelve individual country chapters (Venezuela, Costa Rica, Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, Argentina,

Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador). With the puzzling omission of Guatemala these 12 encompass Latin America's large and medium-sized democratic states. Midway through the project Mainwaring and Scully organized a conference at which other scholars working on political parties in the developed and developing countries critiqued the evolving conceptual framework and individual country chapters. Insights from that conference enrich the work under review.

*Building Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* finds that an understanding of the region's political parties and party systems requires that they be viewed as both independent variables shaping social behavior and dependent variables responding to new developments in society. The editors conclude this volume by interpreting individual country experiences as confirmation that the degree of party system institutionalization shapes the ability of key structures and leaders in each to respond effectively to rapid change. Without coherent parties and an institutionalized party system responsive capability remains low and the prospects of democracy are bleak (474). However, the existence of institutionalized parties and party systems does not guarantee democratic consolidation. Recent waves of democratization in Latin America have created unprecedented opportunities for institutionalized parties to strengthen their linkages with social and political actors and thereby establish themselves as effective mechanisms to express and channel interests in society. Nevertheless, over the past decade Latin American political parties have been rocked to their foundations as they attempted to deal with the most severe economic crisis of this century. Even with institutionalized political parties and party systems, in most countries democracy hangs by a slender thread.

New frameworks pretending to order comparative political research in ways that would provide fresh insights proved disappointing in the 1960s. While the framework Mainwaring and Scully advance in this volume seeks to avoid the premature generalizing that discredited those earlier efforts it is not entirely successful. Some all-region operational characteristics of party systems that they discuss in their concluding section seem more closely linked to their own empirical work on Brazil and Chile than to any synthesis of findings from all 12 countries. Also, while the editors avoid the temptation to move from middle range to general system theorizing their framework reflects only the institutionalist perspective. Political culture and rational choice theories offer rich literatures with alternative explanations for political structure and process. Insights that these perspectives might bring to the island of theory which Mainwaring and Scully seek to craft remain unexplored.

The contributions of this volume far outweigh its shortcomings. First, individual country chapters highlight the region's rich variety of political parties and party systems, and the editors incorporate these differences into an innovative conceptual map. Second, this project is the first to incorporate Latin American experience with political parties into the broader theoretical and comparative literature of political science. In addition, Mainwaring and Scully assemble and draw upon

empirical evidence to advance our understanding of the most important dimensions along which Latin American party systems compare. Finally, this research confirms the crucial importance of other democratic institutions for building democratic political parties and institutionalizing party systems. It is a mandatory starting point for future efforts to more fully understand relationships between Latin American democracy and political parties.

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*The Collapse of a Single-Party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.* By Graeme Gill. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. 258. \$18.95.)

*From Leningrad to St. Petersburg: Democratization in a Russian City.* By Robert W. Orttung. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995. Pp. 332. \$49.95.)

Since 1991, there has been a scramble to understand the nature of the democratic transition in Russia. Indeed, not only has the collapse of the Soviet Union led many to fundamentally reconsider the comfortable "pseudo-theories" of the past, but it has sparked a search for alternative models to explain the process of democratization in the former USSR.

Two works which exemplify this trend are Graeme Gill's *The Collapse of a Single-Party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* and Robert Orttung's *From Leningrad to St. Petersburg: Democratization in a Russian City*. Each of these works focus on the period of transition, although Gill's study covers 1985–1993, and Orttung's 1987–1994. Each contends that the two key factors which explain the course of the transition are the institutional legacy bequeathed by communist rule and the dynamics and character of political conflict within the ruling communist party. Although their selected level of analysis differs, with Gill's work primarily focused on the conflicts within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and Orttung's on politics at the local level (particularly the transition from "Soviet" Leningrad to "democratic" St. Petersburg) both represent important contributions to our understanding of post-Soviet politics.

There are however significant differences in comparing the two works, particularly in the form of inquiry employed. Gill's work is more akin to an inductive and ideographic mode of inquiry which has characterized so much scholarly work on the Soviet Union. Orttung develops a theoretical framework to guide his inquiry, which borrows heavily from the neo-institutional and democratic transition/consolidation literature.

Gill's book is an impressively detailed narrative of the last years of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Moreover, he makes a useful, if not new, heuristic distinction between "ordinary" single party systems versus the "administrative party state." In fact, the explanation Gill offers is based entirely upon