gues precisely the opposite, at least in conjunction with presidential governments. His analysis also will stimulate further debate between those arguing the merits of parliamentary versus presidential forms of government. Coppedge's argument for curtailing presidential power in Venezuela hinges upon the high incidence of stalemate between the president and Congress, which is not well established empirically other than during the previous AD government.

State University of New York, Buffalo GARY HOSKIN

Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico: The "Perfect Dictatorship"? By Dan A. Cothran. Greenwich, CT: Praeger, 1994. 272p. $55.00.

Dan A. Cothran is a new recruit to the rather large corps of interpreters of Mexican politics, but he follows squarely in the established mode. The problem in writing about Mexican politics is to interpret a large mass of rather contradictory data with a model that has internal logic, accounts for most of the data, and coheres with what we think we know about politics in general. Thus, in one version, the Mexican regime was, until recently, an authoritarian socialist system; and elements that did not fit into that interpretation were simply a facade for public consumption or were imposed by the necessity of living next door to the leading state in the world capitalist system. (Or vice versa: there are different versions of this essence-and-facade model.) Another possibility is to take contradiction itself as the essential feature of the system, which becomes one in which an elite maintains itself in power by pursuing policies that appeal to different interests even though these are policies that, taken by themselves, might be thought to derive from opposed ideological positions. This is fundamentally the approach that Cothran takes in the first two-thirds of the book, where he lays out his theoretical model. It is a good job, written in a straightforward unadorned style and marked by common sense and balanced judgement.

In addition to the elite strategies model, Cothran also explicitly endorses the modernization or political development model, which accounts for conflicting evidence by finding it to belong to different stages of development through which the political system is going, in response to a changing society.

Cothran has a fair knowledge of the literature, but with substantial gaps; and his grasp of Mexico's political history weakens from time to time. The real difficulty, however, comes with the recent period, in which the pace of change has accelerated and events have started escaping the control of the ruling elite, so that changes begun as tactical moves to accommodate conflicting pressures have acquired a momentum of their own. Here, the model of elite control referred to in the book's subtitle does not do the whole job of explaining events, as Cothran realizes. In the latter third of the book, in which he discusses the most recent period in Mexican history, no clear themes emerge, and contradictory tendencies are left unresolved and unreconciled. The situation is not helped by the fact that his shortcomings in knowledge are rather more frequent in this section of the book. This is ironic, since Cothran himself was clearly a witness of some of the events he describes, particularly the election campaign of 1988, and has more first-hand knowledge of this period. Apparently, one can be more fully informed and a more judicious commentator about events that have long gone—that have been much written about and analyzed extensively—than about more recent events on which no interpretive consensus exists. I think this would have been a good time for Cothran to have shown more confidence in political development theory and unequivocally interpreted the recent period as the supersession of the elite control model by the modernization model. Of course, modernization, like nostalgia, is not what it used to be. The modernized world economy turns out to be neoliberal, rather than a mixture along Scandinavian lines, and decision-making power seems to reside more with the bond markets and currency speculators than with national governments; but otherwise, those of us who discovered political development in the 1950s and 1960s turn out to have been not so wrong after all.

University of the Pacific MARTIN C. NEEDLER

Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World. By Arturo Escobar. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. 290p. $19.95.

The concept of *development* has played a core role in the theory and practice of economic change and political economy since 1945. Simply put, *development* refers to a broad pattern of macroeconomic structural transformation that, ideally, results in a shift of national economies from low-wage and low-growth systems. Although there has always been substantial disagreement about how such structural change can be effected, there is no doubt that at its best, development has been a focal point for all those who have hoped for a world order of stable prosperity and progress.

However, as Arturo Escobar's interesting new monograph, *Encountering Development*, shows in rich detail, the theory and practice of development has also been characterized by extraordinary errors of cultural bias, misunderstanding, and (ultimately) failed promises (pp. 1–4). It is Escobar's central thesis that there is no linear or universal model of economic and social development that can be objectively applied to the diverse local cultures of the societies misleadingly grouped under the heading of the Third World (pp. 1–17). Indeed, Escobar argues passionately that the construct of the Third World is an ethnocentric invention of the post–World War II West; and development is an equally flawed "regime of representation" crafted from a conflictual ensemble of ideology, partial interests, and the attempt of the West (esp. the United States) to impose its power-driven interests on non-Western peoples (pp. 10–11). In the end, development collapses as a unifying conceptualization of economic change—an outcome the author implicitly welcomes as the basis for an alternative "imagining" of multiple, non-Western paths of progress (pp. 212–26). This reconceptualization is supposedly necessary in order to contribute to the liberation and political visibility of non-Western peoples who have long been subjected to the constraining power of a complex developmental "apparatus" that has sought to make the "Third World" peoples subordinate and powerless (pp. 154–211, esp. 154–71).

If Escobar is even approximately correct, two enormous consequences follow for political science and political economy. First, it follows (if I have read Esco-