

Tu, Wei-ming. *Way, Learning and Politics: Essays on the Confucian Intellectual*. Albany: State University of New York, 1993.

Wittfogel, Karl. *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957.

*Soek-Fang Sim*

### LATIN AMERICA

Traditional interpretations of authoritarianism in Latin America root this phenomenon in the style of Iberian colonization in the region. The Hispanic world, this argument alleges, was naturally more authoritarian than Anglo-Saxon cultures. Furthermore, the cultures they encountered in the New World (particularly the Aztec and Inca Empires) were themselves very hierarchical, which further facilitated authoritarian forms of governance. Subsequent interpretations have generally rejected the racist implications of these theories in favor of more sophisticated and nuanced explanations. Nevertheless, debates continued on how best to confront authoritarian tendencies.

Authoritarianism is related to, but distinct from, dictatorship and totalitarianism. Unlike totalitarianism, authoritarian regimes sometimes allow limited political pluralism (though, unlike in a democracy, that opposition is limited and often not legitimate). In addition, authoritarianism lacks a defined ideology, which characterizes totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, authoritarianism tends to rely on apathy rather than a mobilized and engaged population. George Philip notes how rising inequality under democratic government leads to disenchantment, with significant minorities preferring authoritarian over democratic leadership. Some scholars contend that democratic systems can be strengthened through a reformation of political institutions, such as political parties and electoral processes. Others maintain that prolonged socioeconomic crises are a larger threat to stability and that economic growth is necessary to prevent a lapse back into authoritarianism. These economic policies, however, often take the form of neoliberal reforms that are profoundly antidemocratic and lead back to an authoritarian style of governance.

### Caudillos

During the nineteenth century, authoritarian political structures were expressed in the form of caudillo styles of leadership. A lack of a functioning democratic system that allowed for peaceful transfers of power from one civilian government to another led to a series of palace coups and military governments. Facing a power vacuum after the disappearance of patriarchal monarchies at independence, leaders sought legitimacy through charisma and appeals to tradition rather than expressing a coherent ideology. A caudillo, which broadly means a “strongman,” style of government represents the use of charisma rather than military force to keep political forces under control through promotion of allegiance to a central leader. These caudillos were not necessarily of a specific ideological orientation, could be associated with liberal or conservative politicians, and could take a military or civilian form; in addition, they might be rooted in either urban or rural populations and be oriented toward either modernizing or tradi-

tional forces. Perhaps the most common unifying thread among caudillos was their appeal to nationalism. Caudillos sometimes relied on legal means, including elections and plebiscites, to legitimate their control but once in office tolerated no dissent to their authority. Representative of this in Mexico are both Benito Juárez (r. 1861–1872) and Porfirio Díaz (r. 1877–1880; 1884–1911) who came into power claiming to support freely contested elections but then became deeply entrenched in power. Both caudillos were liberals from the poor and largely indigenous southern state of Oaxaca. They relied on this home base of support to maintain themselves in power even as their policies increasingly served elite interests. Juárez is commonly regarded as Mexico’s first “Indian” president though he implemented legislation that took land away from rural villages. Díaz ruled using the strategy of *pan o palo* (carrot or the stick) to reward lavishly his supporters and repress brutally his opponents. It took the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) to remove Díaz from power after thirty-four years, one of the longest-running dictatorships in the history of Latin America.

One of the most noted and resilient examples of Latin American authoritarian regimes is that of General Antonio López de Santa Anna (1794–1876) during the first half century after Mexico’s independence in 1821. Santa Anna held power eleven different times with catastrophic results perhaps unequaled in Latin America’s history, including the loss of half of Mexico’s territory to the United States. Seemingly contradictory ideological principles, including adhering to federalism, centralism, liberalism, conservatism, and even monarchism, characterized his different times in office. When liberals held the upper hand, he ruled Mexico as a liberal. Later Santa Anna became a conservative and passed some of the most reactionary legislation in Mexico’s history. Historians often point to his charisma and political opportunism as explaining his success in holding onto (or, more accurately, repeatedly returning to) power. Will Fowler, however, finds such interpretations to be unsatisfactorily simplistic in explaining Santa Anna’s resilience. Rather, his success is a result of elite support, motivated by the desire to preserve hegemonic class interests. Santa Anna’s promises to deliver political stability and prevent social dissolution were more important than differences in ideology. A subsequent long tradition of casting the ruler as a villain is what has made it “difficult to understand why he was so successful” (Fowler, p. 13). Santa Anna perhaps was no worse or no more opportunistic a leader than his contemporaries, just perhaps more successful in riding out political changes. In Fowler’s assessment, his commitment to elite privilege and detachment from partisan politics ultimately made him an arbitrator of competing ideological interests. Whichever group currently held the upper hand courted his support in order to consolidate its control over the country.

Caudillos were not necessarily a negative force and have sometimes been divided into the categories of “cultured caudillos” and “barbarous caudillos” (Hamill, p. 5). Mariano Malgarejo from Bolivia is often considered to be a classic representation of the later. He abrogated land titles of Indian peasants and sold off large slices of Bolivian territory as if it were



**Tanks in Santiago during the Chilean coup.** In 1973 Chilean military forces overthrew the democratic government of President Salvador Allende, supplanting it with a dictatorship that widely repressed basic human rights and banned any political opposition. © HORACIO VILLALOBOS/CORBIS

his own personal property in order to generate funds to put down chronic revolts against his government. As a result, Bolivia lost to neighboring countries half of its territory as well as its outlet to the sea. Like Santa Anna, Magarejo was perhaps no worse than any other caudillo but just more active and successful at this style of government.

### Corporatism

Traditional interpretations of authoritarianism argue that after independence in the early nineteenth century, the Latin American republics had difficulties in shaking their Iberian heritage. Although they drafted constitutions that borrowed heavily on liberal ideals and institutions, leaders proved ineffective at governing. As a result, many Latin American countries soon shifted to dictatorial forms of government, marked with elite rule, political instability, militarism, and authoritarianism. This led some leaders to argue that the new republics needed strong, centralized governments more than social and economic equality. Fowler points to these as common reasons throughout Latin American history for the “longevity, resilience, and endurance” of authoritarian regimes, including “the consummate political skills of the dictators, their pragmatism, flexibility and timely opportunism, their use of clientelism, patronage and cooption, their personalist politics, prestige or charisma, and effective repression.” Authoritarian leaders supplemented these characteristics with the use of military forces, a manipulation of political parties, and expression of “a certain ideological vagueness” (Fowler, p. xiii). This au-

thoritarian tradition hindered the emergence of Western-style democratic forms of government.

Corporatist theories, which gained popularity in the 1950s, emphasized this Iberian heritage of authoritarianism to explain underdevelopment in Latin America. This authoritarianism expressed itself politically through a patriarchal monarchy, economically in feudalistic landholding systems, militarily with elitist structures, and religiously with the Catholic hierarchy. During its colonization of the Americas, Iberia transferred these authoritarian institutions to the New World. Corporatist interpretations blamed a failure of democracy and economic development on the persistence of hierarchical structures in modern institutions, with power flowing vertically from the top down. Jan Knippers Black summarized corporatist theories as “blaming the Iberians” (p. 4). Critics of corporatist theories have noted that countries like Chile that were subject to authoritarian military rule toward the end of the twentieth century were on the fringes of Spanish colonization and emerged out of a long democratic tradition. Given this reality, many aspects of corporatist theories begin to break down, as do interpretations that place blame on the legacy of hereditary absolute monarchies for the persistence of strong, centralized authoritarian structures.

### Bureaucratic Authoritarianism

In the second half of the twentieth century, personalist dictators such as Manuel Noriega (r. 1983–1989) in Panama gave

way to authoritarian military regimes, particularly in the South American countries of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay. These authoritarian regimes were unparalleled in their brutality and suppression of civil society and political movements. Fearing a rising leftist threat, both from electoral coalitions as well as armed guerrilla movements, these authoritarian regimes sought to redraw the structure of their countries along more traditional lines. Rather than relying on the personal power of an individual dictator, these regimes used military institutions to maintain control over society. The resulting bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes fundamentally restructured political and economic institutions to remake their countries along neoliberal lines that dramatically widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Critics claimed that these economic reforms were so unpopular that they could only be imposed through undemocratic means. Popular reactions to structural adjustments that sharply reduced living standards led authoritarian regimes to crack down even more viciously on their opponents.

The Argentine political scientist Guillermo O'Donnell introduced the concept of *bureaucratic authoritarianism* to describe institutional dictatorships that were not a legacy of Iberian rule but used coercion to respond to what they viewed as threats to the capitalist system. While the revolutionary left condemned these dictatorships as fascist and turned to armed struggle as a means to overthrow them, O'Donnell argued "that the appropriate way to oppose them was through an unconditional commitment to democracy" (O'Donnell, p. xiii). These regimes resulted from a failure of democracy to extend the protections of citizenship to an entire population. A notable gap between liberal principles and exclusionary economic practices led to what O'Donnell terms "low-intensity citizenship" (p. 143). Unfortunately, economic inequalities persisted and even grew as part of neoliberal policies that were retained even after O'Donnell's long-desired return to democratic governance in Latin America.

Alberto Fujimori's (r. 1990–2000) government in Peru in the 1990s provides another important variation on the authoritarian tradition in Latin America. In what came to be known as an *autogolpe* (self-coup) or "fujicoup," Fujimori launched a coup against himself in April 1992 to shut down the congress and rewrite the country's constitution. Using what George Philip calls "semi-authoritarianism," Fujimori realized some significant policy achievements, including stopping inflation and ending the bloody Shining Path guerrilla insurgency (p. 169). More significantly, his violation of Peru's constitutional order did not lead to a fall in his popularity. Rather, many people believed that the country's crisis legitimized authoritarian measures. By 2000, however, the crisis had passed, and public opinion swung away from support for his abuses of power. His fall from power was neither a triumph of democracy nor a blow against authoritarianism but a result of popular responses to a changing political situation.

In an interesting twist on condemnations of authoritarian traditions in Latin America, James F. Petras and Frank T. Fitzgerald argue that sometimes democratic governments are not authoritarian enough to defend positive social reforms. Pointing specifically to Salvador Allende's (r. 1970–1973) gov-

ernment in Chile in the early 1970s and the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in the 1980s, they note that the ruling classes do not give up their elite privileges without a struggle. This argument contrasts these failed attempts at social, economic, and political transformation to that of Cuba. If the Cuban government had not taken the drastic authoritarian measures that it did in the early 1960s, the revolution's attempts to redistribute wealth to the lower classes and extend education and health care throughout the country would have failed. Because the bourgeoisie and their international allies are not ideologically committed to democratic rule, they do not hesitate to use whatever tactics might be necessary to undermine social reforms when they are implemented through democratic means. Ironically, Petras and Fitzgerald argue, social reformers need to utilize authoritarian tactics to defend democratic processes or risk total failure.

The fall of Salvador Allende's government in Chile is the most noted example in Latin America of a fall of a democratic government to an authoritarian regime. Rooted in a long history of civilian institutions, Allende pledged to put the country on a "Chilean Road to Socialism" that would utilize existing democratic structures to redistribute wealth in an attempt to end extreme economic and social inequalities. When his reforms led to nationalization of U.S.-owned copper mines and other industries, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped engineer a bloody military coup on 11 September 1973 that overthrew his government. General Augusto Pinochet (r. 1974–1990) then implemented one of the most savage military dictatorships in the history of Latin America. A country that had one of the longest democratic traditions in Latin America now became a prime example of an authoritarian regime that suppressed the basic principles of liberal democracy, including values of individual freedom, civil liberties, social and economic equality, and free elections. At the same time, these regimes embraced *laissez-faire* economic systems that critics subsequently termed "savage capitalism." As a type of dictatorship, they outlawed political opposition and greatly restricted individual freedoms.

As relations with the Pinochet dictatorship illustrate, the U.S. government "supported authoritarian regimes that promised stability, anticommunism, and economic trade and investment opportunities." David F. Schmitz notes how this policy conflicted with a theoretical embrace of the principles of liberal democracy and human rights. U.S. officials viewed Latin Americans as racially inferior and strong authoritarian leadership as necessary to maintain order, prevent social and political chaos, and implement neoliberal policies necessary for economic modernization (Schmitz, p. 304). Rather than fostering democratic institutions, U.S. support for authoritarian regimes often led to political polarization, instability, and radical nationalist movements. Critics constantly charge that such support conflicts with U.S. interests, virtually no matter how those interests are conceptualized. "Equating dictators with freedom," Schmitz maintained, "blinded American leaders to the contradictions and failures of their policy" (p. 7). Authoritarian regimes often performed poorly in terms of economic development and, together with extensive human rights viola-



tions, lost legitimacy internally. Democracy emerged and economies grew in Latin America in spite of, rather than because of, U.S. policies.

By the end of the twentieth century, with a reemergence of democratic governments throughout Latin America, authoritarianism appeared to be safely buried in the past. Nevertheless, Leigh Payne points to the persistence of an authoritarian tradition in right-wing threats to democratic structures. These “uncivil movements” that use political violence to promote exclusionary objectives do not necessarily seek to overthrow democratic systems, but nevertheless they are able to shape the discourse and practices of democratic institutions. A search for social justice and equality all too often continues to be an elusive goal. In subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways, authoritarianism is still a force to be reckoned with in Latin America.

See also *Democracy; Dictatorship in Latin America; Nationalism; Pluralism; Populism; Totalitarianism.*

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Black, Jan Knippers. “Introduction: The Evolution of Latin American Studies.” In *Latin America, Its Problems and Its Promise: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, 3rd ed., edited by Jan Knippers Black, 1–17. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998.
- Domínguez, Jorge I., ed. *Authoritarian and Democratic Regimes in Latin America*. New York: Garland, 1994.
- Fowler, Will, ed. *Authoritarianism in Latin America since Independence*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1996.
- Hamill, Hugh M., ed. *Caudillos: Dictators in Spanish America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Arturo Valenzuela, eds. *Politics, Society, and Democracy: Latin America*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998.
- O’Donnell, Guillermo A. *Counterpoints: Selected Essays on Authoritarianism and Democratization*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.
- Payne, Leigh A. *Uncivil Movements: The Armed Right Wing and Democracy in Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- Petras, James F., and Frank T. Fitzgerald. “Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Transition to Socialism.” *Latin American Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (winter 1988): 93–111.
- Philip, George. *Democracy in Latin America: Surviving Conflict and Crisis?* Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2003.
- Schmitz, David F. *Thank God They’re on Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921–1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Marc Becker

**AUTHORITY.** The conceptual history of *authority* reveals it to be an essentially contested concept because of the many debates about its sources, purposes, and limits, as well as its proximity to the concept of power.

Since Plato’s critique of Athenian democracy, physical force and rhetorical persuasion have been viewed as types of power but not authority. Hannah Arendt observes that “[i]f author-

ity is to be defined at all, then it must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments” (p. 93). Indeed, it is only when authority fails that force or persuasion is used to elicit compliance. This distinction is reflected in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712–1778) discussion of what a legislator must do to form a political community guided by the general will:

Since, then, the legislator can use neither force nor argument, he must, of necessity, have recourse to authority of a different kind which can lead without violence and persuade without convincing. That is why, in all periods, the Fathers of their country have been driven to seek the intervention of Heaven, attributing to the Gods a Wisdom that was really their own. (pp. 207–208)

In this passage, religious authority is so widely accepted and unquestioned by the people that, if it is appealed to, no force or persuasion is necessary.

Rousseau’s legislator, however, might be engaging in deception by invoking religious authority as a proxy. To be authoritative, the legislator’s statement should be accepted or rejected on its merits. As Richard Friedman states, “[i]f there is no way of telling whether an utterance is authoritative, except by evaluating its contents to see whether it deserves to be accepted in its own right, then the distinction between an authoritative utterance and advice or rational persuasion will have collapsed” (p. 132). Deference toward authority may not be automatic, as those affected by it evaluate its statements to judge whether they are, in fact, authoritative.

Given this, it may be said that if power is the ability of some individual, group, or institution to control, coerce, or regulate others, authority is the recognition of the right of that individual, group, or institution to exercise power. In short, those over whom power is exercised recognize that whoever or whatever is exercising that power is doing so legitimately. There is an element of trust, faith, and recognition on the part of those following authority that the person exercising it possesses some quality (for example, wisdom, expertise, or the fact that the person was elected by the people) that ought to be deferred to. If this is the case, then authority, rather than simple power, exists and must be followed, adhered to, and, within limits, obeyed.

#### The Sources of Authority

One approach to authority focuses on the question of who has a right to rule, and on what this right rests. Early notions of authority based it on the right of the strongest, the many, or the wisest to make laws. For example, while Pericles (c. 495–429 B.C.E.) praises Athenian democracy as the rule of the many according to the rule of law, Plato (c. 428–348 or 347 B.C.E.) views it as an unstable form of government that rests on the opinion and force of the majority. Instead, he prefers authority be given to those who possess reason and wisdom. Also, from antiquity to the Middle Ages, authority is often related to the divine, with rulers seen as “gods” themselves or as receiving authority from a divine power. In the European Middle Ages, the notion of civil and religious authority was