The final chapter shows the full-scale right-wing repertoire to contest Left-inspired public policy and political proposals. Cannon identifies three kinds of strategies displayed by the elites: within the legal frame (such as elections), mobilisation practices (such as demonstrations and street politics, media campaign, economic destabilisation) and illegal or extra-constitutional activities (such as the coup d’état in Honduras in 2009 or recent paramilitary actions in Venezuela). The book supports the idea that the higher the level of threat to neoliberal elites, the more likely the use of diverse strategies to remove or reverse the threat; this menu of resources ‘can be activated depending on the strategic circumstances’ (p. 117).

*The Right in Latin America* is an excellent book not just for its deft combining of sociological elite power theory and studies on right-wing parties but also for the impressive amount of data collected from numerous interviews in four countries, from press and think tank documents, and from statistical sources. Cannon opined two years ago that ‘The Right is experiencing its most concerted challenge from the Left since the armed insurgencies of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and up until the end of the Central American revolutions in the 1980s’ (p. 102). Things seem to have changed incredibly rapidly since then. Macri’s electoral victory in 2015, Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment in 2016 and the very conflictive year that Venezuela is currently experiencing suggest that the pink tide has already ebbed.

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**ERNESTO BOHOSLAVSKY**


This book represents an ambitious attempt to tackle a long-standing puzzle: what stopped Peru from joining the ‘Left turn’ in recent Latin American history? Unlike most of its neighbours, and despite conditions in common (weak institutions, access to natural resource rents) that have been singled out as explanations for the rise of leftist governments in the region, the neoliberal reforms adopted in the early 1990s have remained largely in place in Peru. Building on classic theories of political power and influence (Dahl, Lukes, Gramsci, Wright Mills), John Crabtree and Francisco Durand provide a comprehensive explanation of Peru’s recent political history based on the power of elites and the weakness of civil society. The authors lay the blame on ‘political capture’, defined early in the introduction as the way ‘powerful elites are able to use overwhelming political muscle to protect and project their economic interests’ (p. 1). As in a zero-sum game, it is suggested that the gains of the elite come at the expense of the rest of the population, and are facilitated by the weakness of civil society. To illustrate the lack of response from societal actors to elite dominance, they borrow Cotler’s metaphor of a ‘triangle without a base’, whereby individuals in the base of the society are unable to articulate or aggregate their preferences and interests. This asymmetrical relationship between elites and masses has not only persisted and reinforced itself since the independence but has also widened since the adoption of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s.

After the introductory chapter, the authors locate their argument in the theoretical debates surrounding the notion of political capture and some of its mechanisms, in both developed and developing countries, such as ‘revolving doors’ or ‘agenda...
control’, especially since the rise to prominence of neoliberalism in the 1970s. In that sense, this book represents a laudable exercise of putting the Peruvian case into perspective, using the changes in the world as the context behind these political and economic transformations.

In Chapter 2, the authors take a step back in time in order to demonstrate the longevity of this distribution of power in Peruvian society and its link to an extractive model that has remained in place to this day. The history of the country since its independence is ‘narrated’ from the perspective of its natural resources across time: guano, sugar and cotton from coastal plantations, minerals, fishmeal. Peru’s main exports have always come from extractive resources, controlled throughout its history by the economic elite, with a brief exception during the military government headed by Velasco Alvarado (1968–75). Chapter 3 discusses this hiatus in Peruvian history, where Velasco’s regime changes were not upheld by leftist forces and were thus reversed only a few years later.

The core of the book is in Chapter 4 and following chapters. In Chapter 4 we are introduced to the scope and nature of market reforms that transformed the nature of the Peruvian state in the early 1990s, and that have remained virtually unscathed to this day. To understand why the reforms reinforced a pattern of domination that survived the fall of Fujimori’s regime and escaped the pink tide that swept the region the authors show how the business elite captured the state through the funding of political campaigns and lobbying, how they relied on technocrats in charge of orthodox economic management (Chapter 5), and how the reforms weakened the state, especially at lower levels of government, and social organisations such as trade unions, which left the elite largely unopposed.

In that sense, one of the main tensions in the book is the role of neoliberalism. Careful attention to Peru’s history since independence suggests the idea of continuity, of an extractive model of development that has remained largely intact for the last 200 years. On the other hand, it is argued that reforms such as privatisations and deregulation ‘transformed’ the Peruvian state. Claiming that there are more continuities than changes during this period, or that we can trace the weakness of the state and the power of elites to remote ages, the authors undermine, indirectly, an explanation favouring the role of privatisations and market reforms. It is not entirely clear if political capture was just exacerbated by neoliberalism or if it represented a different stage in Peru’s capitalist development, especially when the authors emphasise the new composition of economic elites since the 1990s. At the same time, it is hard to argue that there are continuities when the authors emphasise the role of privatisations and market reforms overall as conducive for elite power and state capture.

Perhaps a larger issue with the book is that there are only a handful of pages devoted to present the empirical evidence of political capture. Some of the examples are not convincing, as when the authors suggest that private-sector experience in itself is a manifestation of revolving doors. For instance, describing Kuczynski’s first ‘premier’ as ‘Fernando Zavala of the Apoyo group’ because he worked there early (and for a short time) in his career might be excessive. In other instances, a couple of key concepts, such as cognitive capture and corporate capture, are just briefly addressed, without further comment (p. 88).

It is often said that you are not supposed to judge a book by its cover — or its title. Crabtree and Durand’s volume fits squarely into that piece of popular wisdom, albeit not entirely for a good reason. On a positive note, the book is ambitious and broad in its grasp of Peruvian politics, both in a temporal dimension (going back almost 200
years to the country’s independence) and thematically, leaving no public policy uncovered. At the same time, the breadth of the topics covered undermines the parsimony of the thesis. While the title and the theoretical framework strongly suggest an argument that would shine a powerful light on the mechanisms behind elite power and state capture, the authors spend several pages discussing issues that are certainly relevant to understanding Peruvian politics but somewhat accessory to the central argument.

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OMAR AWAPARA


This volume appears as part of the Lexington Books series on Security in the Americas in the Twenty-First Century. Most of the chapters deal with US policy toward specific countries in the region during the Obama administration (2009–17), including Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Canada. There is also a substantive introductory overview of Obama’s policies in the region and a concluding analysis relating these policies to elements of international relations theory. The book offers contributions from 20 academics, including the editors, many with widely ranging backgrounds and experiences.

Editors Hanna Kassab of Northern Michigan University and Jonathan Rosen, at Florida International University (FIU), have taken on a very ambitious project. Besides a policy overview and 11 country case studies of US bilateral relations, the volume also attempts to articulate a ‘doctrine’, i.e. a clearly defined and distinctive set of Obama administration regional policy objectives. In addition, the editors asked contributors to offer policy advice for Obama’s final year in office and to provide their own theoretical framework for foreign policy analysis as well.

Many US foreign policy and regional scholars would be hard pressed to frame US–Latin American relations during the Obama years as a ‘doctrine’, because that term implies an overall coherence in regional foreign policy that was in fact largely absent. In reality, continuity with previous administrations would have provided a more accurate characterisation; some significant policy changes dated from President George H. W. Bush (1989–93) as responses to the end of the Cold War (e.g. Free Trade Agreements and support for democracies), or even earlier (e.g. the so-called Drug War). Others began with President Bill Clinton (1993–2001), including the Summits of the Americas, initiatives to improve relations with Cuba, and Plan Colombia to assist a government under siege in its efforts to secure a long-elusive peace. Indeed, the majority of the case studies themselves eschew references to a distinctive Obama foreign policy doctrine, toward Latin America at least, in favour of policy continuities. Khatchik DerGhougasian (Universidad de San Andrés) and María Belén Ahumada (Presidency of Argentina) reflect a view articulated in several of the other case studies as well: ‘[D]uring the [Obama] … years, nothing really changed in US–Argentine relations’ (p. 266).

As is the case with most edited volumes, some chapter contributions are more successful than others. The Cato Institute’s Ted Galen Carpenter offers one of the best, a masterful overview that provides a wide-ranging and detailed analysis of the major areas of the Obama administration’s policy concerns in the hemisphere – drug trafficking, criminal groups, immigration, trade, populism and relations with competing and