

a whole, since its historical scope does not include the present-day transformation of the relationship between cultures brought about through a combination of technology, the neo-liberal wrecking ball, and globalization. Instead of Bob Marley we have Bill Gates, reality T.V., and Twitter.

Although, *Los lugares del saber* is, in many respects, a praiseworthy attempt to think outside the box, the essays are too disparate to add up to a new paradigm.

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ARMANDO RAZO: *Social Foundations of Limited Dictatorship: Networks and Private Protection during Mexico's Early Industrialization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Porfirio Díaz was once thought to be the most powerful ruler in the Americas. In 1910, as the nation celebrated the centenary of its independence, Díaz surrendered his thirty-five year dictatorship to a scattered rebellion led by the wealthy, eccentric landowner Francisco I. Madero. Until that time Díaz had presided over an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity. We now know, of course, that he had never been omnipotent, but rather had brilliantly constructed a system that relied on occasional, selective coercion, the dictator's personal prestige, and a variety of arrangements with regional elites. This combination of factors resulted in an era of relative political tranquility and steady, if not spectacular, economic growth. Although in the long term, it appears, perhaps, that Díaz had built a house of cards, Armando Razo argues persuasively that Díaz's system, carefully put together by himself and his finance minister José Yves Limantour, was the foundation of the country's impressive economic growth. Razo maintains that limited dictatorship provided the "credible commitment" that facilitated the expansion of the economy.

Razo seeks to explain why dictatorships produce economic growth when the "extant theory of institutions and growth asserts that formal political institutions as found in advanced democracies provide the necessary incentives for economic growth." The fact that since the 1960s many so-called authoritarian regimes, such as the East Asian Tigers, generated rapid expansion has undermined this notion and poses the central question: what explains growth and development in nondemocratic settings? According to Razo, we need to explain first why private actors trust their governments in the absence of democratic constraint

and, second, why dictators use their power to foster growth rather than prey on society (p. 2).

To the author, the answers to his questions lie in the notion of selective (not universal) commitments by the dictator to associated networks of beneficiaries. Thus, “successful dictatorships will rely on an exclusive network of private protection with the collective capacity to punish predation” (p. 11). In effect, Razo argues that far from being all powerful, Díaz was checked by strong elites (I would argue the strongest were regionally based, such as the Monterrey group or the Laguna group or the Terrazas in Chihuahua), and his inability to totally concentrate the power in his own hands was the foundation for Mexico’s economic growth during his dictatorship.

The system as it evolved was an ingenious balancing act. Razo argues that it really began to take shape only after a very difficult period between 1877 and 1890, at which point these powerful elites concluded that they actually needed Díaz, and they would allow him to become dictator. They chose to sell out rather than continue to contest the political arena endlessly. Díaz had obviously made enough inroads into their power so as to make these regional elites want to reach a settlement. For the first decade or so, Díaz used coercion to bring the regional bosses under control. We can see how the process works as Razo traces the decline in expenditures in the federal budget for the military, concluding that by 1890 the state-based elites were no longer a threat. Díaz also centralized power in the hands of the bureaucracy in Mexico City. Using roll-call data from the Mexican Congress, Razo explains how over the first decade or so Díaz enhanced his standing by gradually taking over the initiation of government policy. He was able to shrink congressional opposition to his policies by taking over legislative functions and employing executive decrees, delegating economic policy-making to groups outside the legislature.

Turning to the economy, Razo maintains that “policy making processes in Porfirian Mexico were dominated by private agreements between the executive government...and affected economic actors” (p. 81). Business, especially large industrial concerns, made private deals with Limantour and Díaz. These often involved monopoly rights. Razo then examines all of the policies promulgated by the Porfirian regime (more than five thousand decrees) from 1890 to 1898. He concludes that Díaz’s government aimed them at selected protected interests, not the economy as a whole. Foreigners were among the protected class. Villagers with collective landholdings, of course, were not.

The last point Razo makes is that there was an intricate network of political operators and economic elites who were tightly connected. The author examines in detail the careers of hundreds of Mexican officials and establishes their

interconnections with economic elites. These links were too strong for Porfirio Díaz to overcome. According to Razo, the dictator ruled only at their pleasure.

Social Foundations of Limited Dictatorship persuasively buttresses the emerging historiography that maintains that Porfirio Díaz was neither the omnipotent dictator nor the evildoer portrayed by the official Revolutionary party during its seven-decade rule from 1929 to 2000. He was in many ways a political genius, in other ways just very fortunate. He built a regime based on the very weakness of the previous sixty years of unsuccessful Mexican governments: regionalism. Razo asserts that the balance of power lay with the entrepreneurs/regional bosses, for Díaz really served at their pleasure. The claim rings true up to a point. It was a close contest. The dictator and the elites need each other. As the Revolution of 1910 would prove (as the period between 1821 and 1880 had already proven), contesting power was ruinous to themselves and the nation.

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EDUARDO SÁENZ ROVNER: *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*. Translated by Russ Davidson. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

The pithy title of Saézn Rovner's 2005 book, *La conexión cubana*, now available in a fine English-language translation by Russ Davidson, alludes to the famed police thriller involving a heroin shipment on its way from Marseilles to New York. The reference is apt; much of the study deals with the rise of Havana as a transshipment point in drug trafficking networks that linked European and Andean middlemen and producers, including some in the port city of Marseilles, to markets in the United States. But, given the prominent role that Sáenz Rovner assigns to immigrants, and given his efforts to untangle connections between the drug trade, gambling, and corruption, *The Godfather II* (1974) may come to readers' minds more readily than other films. Indeed, Michael Corleone's foray into Havana illustrates some of the author's surprising findings: contrary to the popular perception, mobsters based in the United States learned to avoid the drug business in order to concentrate on gambling at luxury hotels and casinos. Cuban authorities allowed this in part because the mafia ensured the integrity of gaming, a concern in the early 1950s when allegations that Havana's croupiers were crooked threatened the tourism business.

The volume consists of twelve chapters that follow Cuba's presidential succession from the 1920s to the early 1960s, albeit with some detours. One chapter addresses the opium trade and Chinese immigration to the island and the Ameri-