THE
RIGHT
AND
DEMOCRACY
IN LATIN
AMERICA

Edited by
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In many ways, this volume proposes a journey through uncharted territory. Despite widespread interest in the Right in political discussion and scholarly debate, its study as a political force organized for the electoral struggle remains underdeveloped in comparative politics. This has been the case particularly for scholarship on Latin America. Much has been written on political parties and collective actors in the region, yet no comparative study of Latin American conservative parties has ever been carried out. The few book length country case studies seldom transcend the ideographic and offer little guidance for systematic comparative research. As a result, we possess not only a meager understanding of the electoral Right’s historic role in democratic politics in Latin America, but also a hazy idea of how to study the beast in contemporary democratic settings where it has emerged as a vigorous actor.

The uncertain transitions that opened possibilities for democratic and progressive agendas in the past decade have given way to crisis-ridden consolidations dominated by the political agendas

The author wishes to thank his friends and teachers in the Latin America Ph.D. Study Group at Columbia University for providing the stimulating intellectual environment in which the ideas presented here originated. Thanks are also due to Margaret Rink, Brian Ford, Peter Snow, Todd Shapiro, and Judith Swartz for their helpful critiques on previous versions of this chapter.
The Right and the Consolidation of Democracy

The Right has traditionally been seen as the driving force behind the consolidation of democracy in Latin America. This is largely due to the historical context of the region, where the Right has often been associated with economic liberalization and free-market policies. However, the role of the Right in this process is complex and multifaceted.

In many cases, the Right has been instrumental in promoting democratic practices and institutions. For example, the Right has been credited with helping to establish the rule of law and with promoting the development of a free press. In addition, the Right has often been a key player in the process of constitutional reform, which is crucial for the consolidation of democracy.

However, the Right has also been criticized for its role in the consolidation of democracy. Some argue that the Right has used democratic institutions to further its own interests, such as by promoting economic policies that benefit the wealthy at the expense of the poor. Additionally, the Right has been accused of using democratic institutions to suppress political opposition and to maintain its own power.

Overall, the role of the Right in the consolidation of democracy is a complex issue that depends on the specific context and the actions of individual politicians and parties. It is important to recognize both the positive and negative aspects of the Right's role in the consolidation of democracy.

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Collective Action and the Electoral Right

The Right's Electoral Potential

The Right's electoral potential is shaped by the confluence of several factors. Firstly, the Right's policies are often characterized by a strong emphasis on individual rights, free market principles, and limited government, which resonate with a broad cross-section of voters. Secondly, the Right's ability to mobilize grassroots support through social and online networks, which has been facilitated by the technological advancements of recent decades. Thirdly, the Right's traditional strengths in rural and suburban areas, which provide a solid base of supporters. Lastly, the Right's ability to effectively use electoral strategies, such as voter turnout campaigns and targeted fundraising, to maximize its electoral gains.

The Right's Electoral Strategy

The Right's electoral strategy often centers around the use of negative campaigning, criticizing the policies and leadership of the incumbent party. The Right also relies heavily on mobilizing its base through a robust grassroots mobilization effort, which includes canvassing, door-knocking, and social media outreach. Additionally, the Right's ability to appeal to a broad range of voters, from conservatives to moderates, is a key factor in its electoral success.

The Right's Electoral Challenges

The Right faces several challenges in its pursuit of electoral success. Firstly, the Right's policies, which often contrast sharply with those of the incumbent party, can alienate voters who are seeking more moderate or centrist solutions. Secondly, the Right's reliance on negative campaigning can be perceived as divisive and unappealing to voters who seek a more positive and solutions-oriented political discourse. Thirdly, the Right's mobilization efforts, while successful, can also alienate certain constituencies who may feel excluded or marginalized by the Right's focus on a select group of core supporters.

The Right's Future Prospects

The Right's future prospects depend on its ability to adapt to changing political and social dynamics. The Right will need to evolve its message to better resonate with a more diverse electorate and to respond to the changing priorities and concerns of voters. Additionally, the Right will need to continue to refine its mobilization strategies to effectively engage with a broader range of voters and to overcome the challenges posed by its political rivals.
The Right and the Constitution of Democracy

Conservative electoral movements and democratic politics are in conflict in the sense that political parties, social groups, unions, churches, newspapers, armies, etc. strive to impose their particular vision of society on the population. The conflict exists between the political order and the democratic process, between the party system and the democratic institutions. It is a conflict between the political leadership and the democratic process, between the party system and the democratic institutions. It is a conflict between the political leadership and the democratic process, between the party system and the democratic institutions. It is a conflict between the political leadership and the democratic process, between the party system and the democratic institutions.

In the context of this conflict, the role of parties is determining the outcome of elections. Parties are not only for winning the electoral game but also for shaping the social and political landscape. The electoral victory of a party is not just a matter of numbers but a matter of power. It is the power to shape the political agenda, to set the terms of the debate, and to influence the social and political processes. The role of parties is not only to win elections but also to build coalitions and to shape the political landscape.

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A working assumption of this chapter is that conservative parties are a necessary condition for political stability in capitalist countries. The democratic process, however, may often provide a counter-example to this assumption. For example, the political stability of Latin America and the Caribbean is often attributed to the presence of conservative parties. However, this does not mean that the absence of conservative parties necessarily leads to political instability. In fact, the absence of conservative parties can lead to political instability, as seen in the case of Venezuela. Therefore, the presence of conservative parties does not necessarily guarantee political stability, but the absence of conservative parties can lead to political instability. Thus, it is important to consider other factors in addition to the presence of conservative parties when analyzing political stability in capitalist countries.
and pre-1973 Chile, political parties play a vital mediating role between corporatist institutions, the state, and society, and generalize the class claims of corporatist institutions into society-wide projects of government. Corporatist institutions are not in themselves instruments of societal consensus building. At best they are instruments for class compromise and negotiation. Where they serve as primary channels for the political action of privileged social strata, they are little more than agents for popular class encapsulation (as in Brazil and Mexico), or aggravators of zero-sum class confrontation (as in post-Peronist Argentina). In the forging of mass consciousness, corporatist institutions are complementary to parties. They are not substitutes. It can also be argued that populist or middle-class parties, due to their commitment to the structural preservation of capitalism, perform the functional task of making democratic politics safe for the socioeconomic interests of the upper classes. The history of Latin American social conflict, however, undermines that argument. Class struggle in Latin America since the advent of mass politics has tended to be about the distribution of resources generated by capitalist development; only infrequently has it been about the overthrow of capitalism itself. In the ferocious distributive struggles of Latin American populism, populist and middle-class parties have been historically unable to assure that the interests of the privileged classes will be given priority over those of the middle and lower classes that form their core constituencies. Parties with organic ties to the upper social strata that are capable of influencing political outcomes have proved essential to the willingness of Latin America's upper classes to submit class-conflict to the binding authority of democratic institutions. One need not be a conservative to recognize the value that a viable conservative party has for a democratic regime. The stability of bourgeois democracy requires a party committed to the interests of the bourgeoisie.

STUDYING THE ELECTORAL RIGHT

The Social Base

Core Constituencies

The rejection of class, which characterizes the practice of conservative movements, also pervades how conservative movements are perceived in theory. This rejection has been led by conservative intellectuals and scholars interested in conservatism as an ideology. For example, Russell Kirk, a prominent U.S. conservative intellectual, states outright that conservatism is "not confined to the interests of a single class; it is found in all classes and occupations." In his 1957 essay on conservatism, Samuel Huntington took issue with aristocratic conceptions of conservatism, suggesting instead that it be seen as a positional ideology not necessarily linked to the "interests of a continuing social group." This line of thinking, rooted in scholarship on the ideological dimensions of conservatism, has been most influential in scholarship on conservative parties and movements.

Even among scholars not influenced by this vein of thought, opposition to the study of conservative electoral movements as vehicles for upper-class collective action is widespread. This opposition is due to the difficulty in disentangling the protagonisms of a single social sector from the web of alliances and political projects that make up the conservative electoral movement. Carlin Acuña, for example, in his studies on the collective action of Argentine business, adds the polyclasse nature of conservative parties to propose that "parties are not the actors on which to focus the analysis of capitalist class political organization under democratic regimes." Acuña's interest is the political behavior of Argentine entrepreneurs, particularly industrial entrepreneurs. Thus he is correct in asserting that corporatist business associations provide a more fine-tuned view of business collective action than do political parties, which must reconcile the competing and often contradictory agendas of a varied constituent base. Yet the arenas for business collective action are multiple, as Acuña makes clear in his work. Alongside corporatist institutions, political parties are a vital arena where the socially powerful mobilize for the competitive struggle for power. Uncovering how they do this, and how their relationship with their party and their social allies shapes their capacities to act politically, is important to our understanding of a critical dimension of upper-class collective action in democratic politics. The polyclasse nature of conservative parties, therefore, should not be a reason to avoid studying their relationship to class conflict. Quite the contrary. As the complexity of the political process obscures relationships that lie beneath the ideological and institutional surface of political life, it becomes even more necessary to develop ways to uncover those relationships. We therefore need to develop a framework to help us accomplish a seemingly contradictory objective: to emphasize the relationship of a party to a specific class while simultaneously affirming its multiclass nature. The main obstacles to this endeavor lie not in our object of research, but in the conceptual tools we use to study it.

The relationship between the upper social strata and electoral movements can be clarified if we introduce the notion of core constituencies. All parties aspiring to power must be polyclassist. Their relationship to certain social constituencies, however, will be more significant than their relationship to others. A party's core...
contribution will be more important to the shaping of a party's political agenda, particularly for high-stake issues, than mere participation in the political leadership of a majority or minority government. In this sense, the role of the opposition party in the political system is not necessarily less important than that of the governing party. The opposition party can provide a necessary counterbalance to the government, ensuring that policies are not pursued arbitrarily or without adequate scrutiny. It can also serve as a watchdog for the public interest, holding the government accountable for its actions.

Additionally, the opposition party can contribute to the democratic process by offering alternative perspectives and policies that can be considered by the government. This can lead to a more inclusive and balanced political discourse, as both sides of the political spectrum can present their viewpoints and solutions to the issues at hand. The presence of a strong opposition party is crucial for a healthy democracy, as it helps to prevent the concentration of power and ensures that government actions are subject to scrutiny and debate.

In conclusion, the role of the opposition party in the political system is crucial. It provides a necessary counterbalance to the government, ensuring that policies are not pursued arbitrarily or without adequate scrutiny. It also contributes to the democratic process by offering alternative perspectives and policies that can be considered by the government. This helps to prevent the concentration of power and ensures that government actions are subject to scrutiny and debate.
The Right and the Constitution of Democracy

Conservative legislators, who have traditionally been the most vocal on the subject of political dynasties, were quick to seize the opportunity to redefine the role of the judiciary in a way that would benefit them. They argued that the current system was biased against them and that it favored the interests of the more established politicians. In this way, they sought to limit the influence of the judiciary and ensure that future elections would be won by those who were best able to sway the public opinion.

The process of constitutional change was not without its challenges, however. Many people were opposed to the idea of limiting the power of the judiciary, and there were concerns that the new constitution would be too restrictive. Nevertheless, the conservative legislators were determined to see their vision for a more stable and predictable political system become a reality.

In the end, the conservative legislators were successful in their efforts. The new constitution was passed, and it quickly became clear that the changes would have a significant impact on the political landscape. The ruling party, which had been struggling to maintain its grip on power, was now strengthened, and the opposition parties were left to struggle for the support of a more conservative electorate.

The new constitution was also seen as an important step in the process of modernization, as it provided a clearer framework for the operation of the government and the protection of individual rights. It was hoped that this would lead to a more stable and prosperous society, and many people were excited about the prospect of a brighter future.

However, there were also concerns that the new constitution would be used to limit the influence of the judiciary and to suppress political dissent. The ruling party was seen as increasingly authoritarian, and there were concerns that the new constitution would be used to stifle the voices of those who opposed its aims.

In the end, the new constitution was a mixed blessing. While it provided a clearer framework for the operation of the government and the protection of individual rights, it also led to an increase in authoritarianism and a suppression of political dissent. The future of the country remained uncertain, but it was clear that the process of constitutional change had set the stage for a new era of political activity.
Conservative electoral movement building is a story of harmonizing tensions between upper-class core constituencies and mass base, of reconciling the often conflicting imperatives of maintaining internal cohesion while pursuing external growth. These tensions apply as much to newly forming conservative movements as they do to parties with centuries of political experience. A conservative party’s evolution is intimately tied to the way in which its political leadership mediates these tensions in its quest to build an electoral majority.

Key Research Variables

The variables that shape the outcomes of conservative party politics, that is, the strategy of the party, its ideology, and its fate, are

FIGURE 2.1
Conservative Electoral Movements: Research Variables

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Conservative Electoral Movements and Democratic Politics

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many. As the preceding sections have shown, what a conservative party is and does is not solely the result of its relationship to its upper class core constituencies, no matter how important that relationship may be. Its constituencies in other social strata are vital to its mass mobilization capabilities, and can thus exert a powerful influence on the internal dynamics of the party and its external strategies. The party leadership must also interact with a complex sociopolitical environment and channel its activities through a given set of political structures. All of these variables structure the constraints and opportunities for political action.

The actions and strategies of political leaders are also shaped by the internal dynamics of their parties as institutions (or agglomerations of parties, as is often the case in Latin America). Internal institutional factors — such as organizational structure, internal electoral or decision-making rules, factionalism, and power-sharing arrangements — can exist autonomously from the party’s social base. They belong to an organizational realm that often takes on a life of its own.28 They will, however, have a significant impact on the party’s relationship to its electorate and on its capacities for mass mobilization.

The puzzle that the study of conservative electoral movements seeks to solve, therefore, is how the interaction between the party leadership and key social, political, and institutional variables shapes its political agenda and determines the logic, strategy, and structure of conservative political action. Figure 2.1 sketches some of the key variables to be taken into account.

TOPICS FOR AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AGENDA ON LATIN AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE ELECTORAL MOVEMENTS

The Media and the Electoral Right

One of the most striking features of democratic politics in Latin America over the last decade has been the growing importance of mass media in election campaigns and the attendant decline of parties and party structures. The implications of this development are many. The styles and images of politics change, as do the strategies and messages of political movements. More importantly, however, the displacement of party politics by mass-media politics affects the distribution of political resources between contenders, as well as the capacities of collective actors to use the electoral process to their advantage.

In the past, when party structure, organization, patronage, and clientelism were the main ingredients for winning elections, conservative and non-conservative movements competed on a
the electoral Right's core political interests is the mass media, whose power and capacity to influence politics is increasingly under threat. The rise of populist and nationalist movements, which provide an opportunity for the Right to gain political ground, has highlighted the importance of the media. 

The Right's strategies involve the use of the media to frame issues in a way that is favorable to their agenda. This can be seen through the manipulation of narratives, the creation of a sense of crisis, or the highlighting of perceived threats. The media can also be used to create a divide between groups, pitting one against another and thereby reinforcing the need for a strong leader or a strong state. 

The Right's control over the media is not limited to traditional channels like newspapers and television. Social media and the internet have become key platforms for the dissemination of Right-wing propaganda and misinformation. This has raised concerns about the role of the media in a democratic society and the need for critical thinking and media literacy. 

The Right's efforts to control the media are not just about influencing public opinion. They are also about shaping the political agenda and influencing policy decisions. This can be seen in the way that the Right has been able to influence immigration debates, climate change policies, and other key issues. 

One of the key challenges facing the Left in countering the Right's media strategies is the need to develop effective counter-narratives. This requires a deep understanding of the Right's messages and the ability to communicate these in a way that is compelling and relatable to a broad audience. It also requires the use of diverse media platforms to reach different segments of the population. 

In conclusion, the Right's control over the media is a threat to democratic values and the rule of law. It is crucial that we work together to counter these efforts and ensure that our democracy remains strong and vibrant.
the Right's turn to party politics, as well as the relative distance its leaders have maintained from the armed forces since the return to democracy.

Similar trends have also emerged, however, in countries where the conservative civil-military relationship has been marked more by continuity than rupture. In countries such as Brazil, El Salvador, and Chile, the military continues to enjoy high prerogatives in the political system. It maintains a monopoly over areas of policy and security that are outside the reach of civilian control, and its veto (or worse) of progressive agendas is still an important resource for the civilian Right. Nevertheless, in each of these countries, the civilian Right has increased its margin of autonomy from the military, and has become more assertive in setting the agenda of conservative politics. In Brazil, the rise of Fernando Collor de Mello was accomplished through a mass mobilization campaign that gave the civilian Right a base of support independent from the armed forces. Collor was supported by the armed forces in the general election, but his rise owed little to the military institution. This has given him greater autonomy as a political leader than that enjoyed by his predecessor, José Sarney, or other veterans of the presidential ARENA/PDS Cohort. In El Salvador, Cristiani's rise reflected the partial displacement within the party of the party's paramilitary founders by business leaders and civilian professionals. One result of this has been an unexpected degree of decision-making autonomy from the armed forces by the ARENA-led government. In Chile, both the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) and Renovación Nacional have taken center stage in defending the continuity of Pinochet's socioeconomic project. With over 40 percent of the electorate behind the parties of the Chilean Right, the General's continued presence in Chilean politics is no longer as indispensable as it used to be.

In part, these symmetrical changes in the conservative civil-military relationship are logical outgrowths of a return to democratic politics. Democracy, after all, implies the supremacy of civilian authority over military power. This has not, however, always been the case in Latin American democratic politics. Strong indications exist that the civilian Right and the military have more to do with the political dynamics of this specific democratic period than with the general tendencies of democratic politics. Conservative disenchantment with the military as a political ally seems more widespread among the Latin American upper social strata than in previous periods. This may in part be explained by the autonomy that the armed forces displayed in the authoritarian regimes of the 1960s and 1970s. Instrumentally, therefore, alliances with the military have not proven as attractive as in the past to the civilian Right. Other factors, such as the declining strength and militancy of popular movements and the Left in many countries, and a more favorable international context for democracy, might also help explain the relative independence displayed by the civilian Right toward the armed forces in the 1980s. In many cases these changes are subtle. They are, nevertheless, significant. The search for their determinants should be a central focus of research in scholarship on the Latin American electoral Right.

Socioeconomic Crisis and the New Electoral Right

Latin America today is undergoing the deepest and most generalized socioeconomic crisis since the Great Depression. At issue in this crisis is the decline of state-centered models of development that emerged as a regional response to the Great Depression and the post-war push for economic development. As state-centered models of development have come into question, the only political force — on either the Right or the Left — historically linked to nonstate-centered models of development is the liberal Right. Long dormant as an electoral force, it has now taken the initiative in shaping the debate and political agenda of democratic politics in several countries. This development has had a profound impact on the Latin American electoral Right, transforming both its strategies of mass mobilization as well as its internal party relationships. The rise of new Right parties in Latin America must be examined in light of the generalized socioeconomic crisis affecting the region today.

State Crisis, the Electoral Right, and the Shifting Public Debate

The rise of the new Right in Latin America is intimately linked to widespread dissatisfaction with the state's performance. The new Right is coterminous with liberalismo and anti-stalinismo. The intellectual substance of its appeals has consisted of two elements. The first has been a frontal assault against the state's inefficiency, corruption, and authoritarianism in the economic and social realms — giving the Right, in some cases, the offensive on an issue related to democracy — as well as the pernicious effect of the state crisis on the middle and lower social strata.

The second element of the new Right's appeal has taken aim at the intricate array of state-economic elite relationships that make up the power structure of the developmental state.42 This critique, rather than focusing on a monolithic, blundering state, fine tunes its attacks on specific socioeconomic interests whose economic dependence on the state gives them a stake in the continued role of the economy. Predictably, a big part of this critique is aimed at the labor movement and its corporatist connections to the state. It is also,
However, aimed at the consolidation of democracy, the Right is not a homogeneous bloc. It can be divided into two main camps: the "genuine Right" and the "Right wing". The former is made up of traditional political representatives, while the latter is composed of new political figures who have emerged in recent years. The "genuine Right" is characterized by its conservative and traditionalist stance, while the "Right wing" is more liberal and open to new ideas.

In many respects, therefore, the new Right arises from the development of capitalism, which is itself a product of the historical development of society. It is a reflection of the underlying contradictions of capitalism, which include the exploitation of workers, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and the erosion of democratic institutions. The new Right is not a force to be underestimated, as it represents a significant threat to the development of democracy.

In conclusion, the study of the Right is crucial for understanding the dynamics of contemporary politics. By examining the historical roots of the Right and its current manifestions, we can gain a better understanding of the challenges facing democracy and the need for continued vigilance against the forces of reaction and oppression.
The chapter has also proposed the definitions of political struggle as defined by the field of study. The chapter also examines the capacity of different actors to influence political decisions. It is most useful to identify ideological properties as suitable for the political movements involved in the field of study in question.

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stability. Also, in Venezuela, the weakness of conservative party organisation in the face of Acto Democracia's overwhelming organisation during the 1945-48 Trienio provided an example of a brief democratic experiment. This contrasts with the relative stability of the democratic regime inaugurated in 1952, in which a strengthened conservative Christian Democratic Party, COPEI, forged consensus behind the new system. I address the Argentine case, as well as new developments on the Argentine Right since 1983, in Edward L. Gilleon, The New Electoral Right in Argentina," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 21, 3 (1979).


22. Huntington, in "Conservatism as an Ideology," was concerned with conservatism as an ideology. It was clear to advise that his formulations were not intended for use in the study of party, advice that unfortunately has not been heeded in most of the literature on conservative parties and movements.


24. In recent articles, Peter Maier argues that it is more feasible to think in terms of structural change in party systems than in parties, since it is virtually impossible to identify the structural "scene or core" of an individual party: if, however, we analyse a party's relationship to society in addition to its institutional and organizational aspects, it is its social base that distills its essence or core. This would permit us to do what Maier considers problematic: distinguishing between changes in identity of a party and changes in a party's core. See Peter Maier, "The Problem of Party System Change," Journal of Theoretical Politics (forthcoming).


26. Ibid., pp. 111 and 222.


28. One of the most forceful theoretical arguments of the autonomy of a party's internal organizational dynamics from the specific configuration of social forces that support it is Antonio Padovano's. See his Political Parties: Organization and Power (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Patanei used strong criticism against what he labels the "sociological prejudice" in the literature on political parties, which sees intraparty struggle and dynamics as mere reflections of struggles and dynamics in the social coalition that supports the party. In the approach I'm presenting in this chapter, I recognize, along with Patanei, that the organizational and social dimensions of party politics constitute two separate levels of analysis. However, rather than concentrate analysis on one of these levels, as Patanei does at the organizational level, I place a greater stress on analyzing the interaction between the two. In part (but not only in part) this is necessitated by the fluidity of the organizational dimension of party politics in much of Latin America, which made it difficult in fact to focus primarily on internal institutional variables to explain the outcomes of party politics.


30. As evidenced by newspaper headline coverage of a political rally held by Mario Vargas Llosa in Cajamarca, Peru, in August 14, 1989, "Overfllowing Crowd at Maris's Rally in Cajamarca," proclaimed its première as 'leader of the democratic opposition,' and someone who had been a member of Vargas Llosa's FREDOMO. "Night Attendance at FREDOMO Rally in Cajamarca, commented the heading of the center-left daily La República.

31. Including the last two days before the election, when party advertising was prohibited by law.


33. For a recent account of these developments, leading to ARENA's capture of the presidency in 1989, see Gabriel Gaspari Tapia, El Salvador: el accession de la nueva derecha (San Salvador: CIDAS, 1990).


35. An illustration of this is provided by the two-track logic of Peruvian president Carlos Menem's alliance with the Argentine upper social strata in July 1988: an alliance with Alvarez Alegaray, leader of the Unio del Centro Democracia, and a corporatist alliance with Argentina's most important multinational corporation, Bunge y Born, whose top executives were given control of the country's Ministry of the Economy. Not only was it necessary for President Menem to resort to these two expressions of Argentina's cosmopolitan elite separate, but it separated the liberal party leadership collaborating with Menem and the business executives running the Ministry of the Economy behind the government until Bunge y Born's withdrawal from the alliance in late 1989.


38. It has also permitted Colón to enact backlaws in the military budget and to challenge the armed forces in a number of areas previously outside of civilian jurisdiction. For a newspaper account of these developments, see "Brazil's Leader makes Military Toe the Line," New York Times, September 10, 1990, p. 6.

42. The characterization of this dimension of the new Right critique is provided by William Niven in his stimulating chapter in this volume.
43. Enrique Gheki, interview with the author, Lima, Peru, August 12, 1989.
45. The fact that he had been governor of the northeastern state of Algara, was the son of a traditional political family, and mobilized the support of the bulk of the conservative political class did not seem to temper his public antipolitical class enthusiasm.