

**RICHARD SANDBROOK, MARC EDELMAN, PATRICK HELLER,
AND JUDITH TEICHMAN. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN THE
GLOBAL PERIPHERY: ORIGINS, CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS.
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS: UK. 2007**

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Social Democracy in the Global Periphery is a rare find in contemporary social science; it is a hopeful piece, an optimistic vision where development, equity, success in the global market, and bettering the lives for the poor can coexist, a pitch for the “perfect imperfect society” (pg. 232). In this book, four social scientists—Richard Sandbrook, Marc Edelman, Patrick Heller, and Judith Teichman, experts on Mauritius, Costa Rica, Kerala, and Chile respectively—come together to explore the conditions that have permitted some seemingly unimportant peripheral countries to balance the pressures of globalization while simultaneously managing to provide basic welfare for the vast majority of their citizens. In a context where social scientists have concentrated on the effects of globalization in worsening the quality of life in the developing world, the ideas presented lay the foundations for a new research agenda by opening the discussion on welfare states from advanced industrial to peripheral countries. Furthermore, the case study on Chile draws from numerous kinds of sources and data to offer a provocative viewpoint from which to analyze the policies of the *Concertación*. While the argument has some conceptual and logical complications that might make it not hold as a causal explanation, this book is of tremendous interest in that it allows us to move beyond theories of exceptionality and cultural explanations and opens up a new field for research.

Through comparative historical analysis using in-depth case studies, the authors examine Kerala, Costa Rica, Mauritius and Chile to identify the causes of what they call *periphery social democracies*. They conclude that there are necessary structural, configurational, and conjunctural causal factors. The structural conditions are two-fold: on the one hand, an early market openness and integration into a global economy; and on the other, a process of state formation that has some level of autonomy from the dominant classes. The configurational variable is a reorganization of class forces resulting from the development of the formation of a capitalist class. The outcome includes the presence of a robust civil society, the best case scenario being one in which landlords are weakened while the working and middle classes are strengthened. The conjunctural factor consists of a critical juncture, a point in time at which organized actors—specifically social movements left of center parties and coalition with substantial policy-based support—propel societies down certain paths on which they then become path dependent.

Social democracy is a key concept in the argument, and although the authors do not provide a uniform clear definition of what it is, some general characteristics of the cases can be teased out. All four cases are exceptional in their regions in terms of higher quality of life

without necessarily having higher p/capita incomes than their neighbors. Indicators of this include higher life expectancy, greater access to primary health care, nearly universal access to primary school and high rates of adult literacy, and lower rates of poverty (pg. 9-12). From the 1990's to present Costa Rica, Mauritius, and Chile have been able to successfully compete and achieve economic growth in a globalized economy (while Kerala manages to survive without significant recession). Kerala, Costa Rica and Mauritius have been able to do so while simultaneously expanding social rights and maintaining robust civil societies. Chile has been less successful in this regard, though significant advances have been made in combating extreme poverty and social spending has increased.

The authors further define three types of periphery social democracy differentiated in their conceptions of equity, democracy, and the role of the state. *Radical* social democracies, exemplified by Kerala since the 1960's and West Bengal 1977 through the early 1990's, are cases in which inequality is understood as structural and redistributive measures are implemented. In *classic* social democracies, there is a broad-based consensus that differentials in wealth permit economic dynamism which benefits everyone. Therefore, equity is provided through a universal and comprehensive state as it has been in Costa Rica 1950-1980 and Mauritius since the 1970's. Finally, *third way* social democracies, which I argue are the most problematic to call social democracies, are cases where rather than aim for redistribution or universal rights, the role of the state is to help citizens gain the capacities through which to be self-sufficient in the market. In this model, inequity is perceived as a temporary market failure that can be solved with appropriate one-time interventions. Development is driven primarily by elite traditional parties, which do not mobilize or broadly consult with citizens. In terms of international trade, the role of the state is not *laissez faire*, with extensive intervention providing support for export industries. This type is exemplified by Chile post 1990 and Uruguay between 1985 and 2004.

The label of *periphery social democracy* is difficult to pinpoint in the text, at times looking a lot like the neoliberal success stories extolled by the international financial institutions during the 1990's and at others like a poor cousin of the European welfare states. By defining a precondition of social democracy as early market incorporation and the formation of a capitalist class, and an outcome of social democracy as market-growth in the current global context, it might seem we are merely telling market success stories. It is particularly unclear why Chile is a social democracy narrative given the stability of a model where only minimal level of social rights and market protection are guaranteed. On the other side of the spectrum, if we consider only the cases of Kerala and Costa Rica as depicted in the book, we will find a social democratic definition resembling welfare states of core countries both in ideological and structural content.

The presented argument is multi-causal and consists of broad categories. It is not a list of threshold numbers or specific ingredients. It can be understood more as a mode of analysis, using in depth case studies to compare and contrast structural, configurational and conjunctural elements that combine to result in similar outcomes in each case. However, the application of this analytical framework to the cases leaves room for improvement. Elements that fall under both the configurational and conjunctural categories seem at times opposed to each other and it is quite difficult to find commonalities between the

things that fall in these categories. For example, the critical juncture in Kerala is defined by the 1967 election of the Communist Party of India (CPI) that has set Kerala on path that has consistently supported welfare expansion and protection of subordinate classes (pg. 81), and is diametrically opposed to the critical juncture in Chile defined by the military dictatorship and their ability to install and insure the maintenance of a neoliberal regime with reduced social provision creating a very different path dependence (pg. 164). Furthermore, the book is missing a discussion of how these causal variables interact to produce the similar outcome of periphery social democracy.

However, in spite of these difficulties, the authors provide conclusions that I am sure will be crucial starting points for future analysis. To begin with, while social democracy in the core is based on discrete stages, industrialization, democratization, and the universalization of social citizenship; sequencing in the periphery might take on a different order with overlapping stages (pg. 19-20). Secondly, while the basic premise for social democracy in core countries is that they are based on a class compromise, the authors point out that given that social democracy in the periphery might not be spearheaded by a labor aristocracy, and given the larger number and diversity of actors involved, these compromises might be more fragile in a periphery context (pg 21). Contrary to theories on limited resources, the authors argue that the unequal distribution of social protection in periphery countries are situations deeply rooted in politics. Consistent with the general optimistic tone of the book, they highlight that the political practices that serve as obstacles to programmatic policies such clientelism and populism are not static arrangements (pg.38-49). In relation to globalization, the authors conclude that the complementarities between social democracy and globalization are larger in the developed world (pg 213). Furthermore, some policy options will be perceived as a direct threat to powerful foreign interests that function as constraints to the policy options periphery states have. In spite of the disadvantageous conditions in the global economy, they posit that democracy and the development state may reinforce each other in a virtuous cycle in the periphery (pg 6).

In conclusion, the most significant aspect of this book is that it provides a systematic account of certain cases searching for the existence common causal variables. By presenting an analytical model, it creates an exciting new field for future research on periphery countries. It also provides substantial advances in pointing out the differences of social democracy in core and periphery countries. This permits us to move beyond the traditional welfare literature which is too limited by assumptions and in scope to be applied in non-core contexts. . The chapter on Chile provides an insightful revision of Chile's history and *Concertación* policies which should be a definite read for scholars of the region interested in development, globalization, and social policy and used as a starting point for new research on the topic.

