firing their employees, and an audit by citizens of the public debt. The party also rallied against globalization and the European Union.

Drawing from Latin American left-wing populist movements, especially Hugo Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution," Ouziel describes how Podemos ushered in a new way of reaching and relating to voters in Spain. Emotion as much as rationality was key to the party's approach to voters. "When was the last time you voted with hope?" asked the party's slogan for the 2014 European parliamentary elections. Podemos' mobilization and organizational strategies also included the extensive use of new media. Pablo Iglesias, Podemos' leader, a former political science professor at Madrid's Complutense University, hosted an internet talk show called *La Tuerka* (The Screw), which he used for attacking business and political elites in a manner reminiscent of Chávez's television show *Aló Presidente.*

Although Podemos has fallen short of predictions that saw the party capturing the central government in Madrid and remaking Spain from top to bottom, the party remains relevant. At the moment, it is a partner in the intraleft coalition that has governed Spain since 2019, headed by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, or PSOE. As part of this coalition, Podemos has pushed the PSOE toward a more progressive stance on social issues and for more public spending as a means for accelerating Spain's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as important is that Podemos has aided in keeping left-wing governance alive in Spain at the time when left-wing parties of virtually all political stripes have struggled to retain their political viability across Europe.

Last, but not least, is 15M's intellectual legacy, which is Ouziel's main concern in the book. Indeed, the book is pitched as something of a prescription for how to cure ailing democracies. Ouziel is nothing but effusive about 15M's intellectual legacy:

> 15M does not simply show us that another world is possible. It reveals how another world is actual. It does this through an exemplary performance or a multitude of practices of civic engagement. Mastering their nonviolent, horizontal, and dialogical conduct, individuals being 15M become exemplars of the civic ideal, an ideal that cannot be specified through principles is exemplified through performance. (p. 37)

Ouziel goes on to add that: "In the kind of democracy practiced by 15M, citizens are co-subjects and co-authors in relationships of power. Through their civic practices, civil and civic citizens working from within the 15M reveal their ability to be free within and against their society's rules of governance" (p. 39).

Ouziel's analysis of 15M has many virtues, such as clear writing, extensive historical background, and deep reflections about the current state of democracy, especially the idea that activism by ordinary citizens can reinvigorate democratic politics. The book also provides a welcome addition to the scholarship on contemporary Spanish politics, given the traditional focus that scholars have granted to elite maneuvering over grassroots activism. This all said, the book disappoints on several fronts. Ouziel provides ample criticism of 15M, such as the corruption and sex scandals that have diminished the political standing of Podemos in recent years, but he glosses over the party's confrontational tactics and unwillingness to compromise. Following the April 2019 general elections, Podemos' demand for equal distribution of power scuttled a coalition government with the PSOE, even though the PSOE was the undisputed winner of the elections. The impasse forced a snap election in November of that same year; that second election delivered a diminished plurality for the PSOE and Podemos. At that point, rather than risking a third election that could in theory hand the government to a coalition of right and far-right parties, Podemos accepted the PSOE's terms for a coalition government. It was in 2019 that Vox, Spain's far-right party, entered the Spanish Parliament. Vox is famous for its rants against immigrants, feminists, LGBTQ people, and regional separatists. Podemos' intransigence prompted former PSOE Prime Minister Felipe González to call the party "a bunch of regressive utopians."

My biggest issue, however, is Ouziel's low regard for Spain's political system, best shown by the dubious claim that: "The separation between dictatorship and democracy in this southern European state has never been fully attained; the line has always been blurred" (p. 145). Such statements show a distressing tendency by some scholars and political observers to measure Spanish democracy by its biggest shortcomings rather than by its most notable achievements. While the roots of 15M are found in the stagnation of the current political system, it is also the case that it is the strength of the political system in a country with a very short history as a democracy that allows movements like 15M to succeed in pushing the boundaries of democratic politics.

Human Rights as Human Independence: A Philosophical and Legal Interpretation. By Julio Montero. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. 200p. $45.00 cloth.
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Since their emergence as a specialized field of knowledge, human rights have been studied in either narrowly empirical or exclusively normative terms. In legalistic and historical inquiries, the focus tends to be limited to the enumeration, documentation, or general evolution of human rights norms, laws, institutions, and practices. Normative accounts, in contrast, tend to view practical considerations as second-order concerns stemming from

moral-philosophical issues at the very foundation of human rights. This evident bifurcation of knowledge presents contemporary human rights scholars with an especially difficult conundrum: is it possible to develop theories of human rights that are both normative and sufficiently attuned to the empirical realities of rights practices across human societies? In *Human Rights as Human Independence: A Philosophical and Legal Interpretation*, the scholar-practitioner Julio Montero answers in the affirmative by employing a modified "practice-dependent" method he calls "constructive interpretation." This approach enables the human rights theorist to act as an interpreter of "practice-*dependent* facts and practice-*in*dependent principles" (p. 14, emphasis in original) that invariably bear on and bring to sharp focus the legitimacy of human rights practices.

Developing a theory of human rights using constructive interpretation requires a clear explanation of where and how foundational principles and context-specific political considerations mutually constitute and exclude each other. Montero takes up this challenge by setting out four interpretative criteria—"fidelity," "practical orientation," "value," and "normative justification"—that any plausible theory of human rights must satisfy. Essentially, any proposed theory must reasonably cover human rights practices as they exist in the real world, demonstrate their moral value as international norms and practice across time and place, and provide a justificatory basis for moral obligations placed on political institutions and practices. Together, these interpretative criteria ensure that human rights theories are both guided by their practical applications in the world as it is, yet also grounded in moral principles that aim to improve the human condition.

Montero's own attempt at achieving such an equilibrium is provided through what he calls "the independence account," which combines two distinct but complementary arguments about human rights: that they (1) "set the standards of legitimacy for *sovereign political authorities*"; and (2) "derive from a more fundamental moral entitlement we enjoy just in virtue of our humanity: *the natural right to independence*" (p. 21, emphasis in original). Over the course of five chapters, Montero situates his independence account within broader historical debates in philosophy and politics (chap. 2); delineates the conceptual bounds of the natural right to independence in relation to the development of political institutions (chap. 3); considers the implications of his account for understanding the operation of human rights in international society (chap. 4); examines the obligations and entitlements of individuals when rights are violated and institutional protections fail (chap. 5); and concludes with a discussion of specific rights-based cases—human rights to abortion, same-sex marriage, and democratic institutions—under the independence account and offers general proposals for reforming global human rights frameworks.

One way to understand Montero's interpretive account is to see it as an effort to reframe the normative basis of traditional social contract theories in reference to human rights. Whereas in traditional accounts the object of political theorizing is to establish the grounds for legitimate political authority, in Montero's account political legitimacy is itself but one requirement toward the fulfillment of a morally prior objective, human rights. As he notes, "in virtue of the unique kind of authority they exert over human persons, sovereign agents bear special moral responsibilities toward them. The normative function of human rights is to articulate the content of such responsibilities and signal the particular sort of moral wrong that sovereign authorities incur when they fail to live up to them" (pp. 47–48). It may reasonably be asked if this account is in fact not that different from existing liberal political theories of legitimacy, wherein constitutional limits on the coercive powers of the state are justified precisely in reference to guarantees of basic rights and freedoms of citizens. Montero's explication of the "natural right to independence"—that is, "[t]he right to enjoy an *equal* sphere of personal agency within which individuals can form and pursue their own plans protected from the arbitrary choice of others" (p. 50, emphasis in original)—prompts the same question. Indeed, the Kantian principle at work here, which states that individuals ought to be treated as ends in themselves and not as means to other ends, is at the very core of liberal political conceptions that place a high premium on rights as the ultimate source of political legitimacy.

But as Montero rightly notes, standard liberal conceptions of legitimacy (such as John Rawls's) tend to confine moral principles such as equal respect for persons to existing constitutional systems or liberal societies that afford their citizens the political protections to assert their rights in terms meaningful to them (if not always justified to others). He argues that an independence-oriented conception of human rights would differ from standard liberal accounts in its "more modest" assertion of four abstract human rights—freedom, equality, political participation, and minimal social justice—at the international level, and according to a different set of justificatory principles commensurate with international law and a set of global and personal duties (which he lays out in chaps. 4 and 5, respectively). All the same, the essentially liberal *substance* of these provisions cannot be denied: the protection of individual independence against arbitrary state coercion in accordance with agreed-upon international rules, treaties, and legal commitments, and enforceable through justified international action and cooperation. The conception of independence articulated here, and the (inter)national implications stemming from it, require adherence to liberal and liberal*izing* principles through and through. Indeed, the modest grounds on which Montero distinguishes his account from those of more ostensibly demanding liberal conceptions are the very basis

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on which *political* liberal views are distinguished from *comprehensive* liberal views in political theory. Dwelling more on these existing distinctions, as in the clarifying article by the political philosopher Charles Larmore (1990, *Political Theory* 18 (3): 339–60), would have enriched and made clearer the normative contours of Montero's international human-rights-centered view vis-à-vis the influential works of liberal legality and theory (by Charles Beitz, Ronald Dworkin, and Jeremy Waldron, among others) with which this book is in direct conversation.

The lack of conceptual clarity of the independence account in relation to existing standard political liberal accounts of rights is evident in the consideration of two practical rights-based public policy issues: abortion and same-sex marriage. In the (all too) brief discussion of these issues (four pages in total), Montero's interpretation and prescriptive analysis of state obligations and what is owed to individuals are virtually identical with those of standard liberal normative and practical positions (i.e., bodily autonomy and marriage equality ought to be respected by governments). Similarly, his proposals for global political reforms are very much in line with liberal-democratic tweaks and revisions to existing institutional frameworks. All the same, Montero's interpretive account does add a valuable dimension, and brings much-needed analytical clarity, to human rights theorizing. Neither a deliverance nor a chimera, human rights merely enjoin us in a struggle over our common humanity.

AMERICAN POLITICS

Local Interests: Politics, Policy, and Interest Groups in US City Governments. By Sarah F. Anzia. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022. 336p. $105.00 cloth, $35.00 paper.
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One of the most enduring questions in the study of American politics is this: Do interest groups promote democracy by representing the views of their constituents before government, or do they distort democracy because such representation is skewed in favor of those with great resources?

In her important and ambitious new book, *Local Interests*, Sarah Anzia addresses this question squarely, offering a new approach to measuring the impact of interest groups. By comparing which types of groups are successful on what types of issues, a determination can be made about the relative level of interest group influence among those organizations lobbying the government.

Anzia's focus is on local government. She argues that "research on local politics has tended to ignore interest groups, and research on interest groups has tended to ignore local government" (p. 3). She begins with an assumption, correct in my mind, that the research frameworks used to study interest groups in Washington are not well suited for studying urban politics. The smaller scale of city governments and the much-smaller universe of active interest groups, gives lobbies in these locales greater access to policy makers than is the case in Washington. The partisanship and polarization of national politics is generally not as fervent in the context of urban government.

Local Interests builds on a methodological approach focused on public policy as a dependent variable. The key is to measure change over time across different policy realms. Anzia criticizes interest group scholarship for tending to focus on a snapshot in time rather than longitudinally. As she points out, "interest group influence on policy often happens slowly, gradually, and incrementally" (p. 39). A typical snapshot study of interest group influence in Congress, Anzia notes, will not account for interest group influence that has already been exerted and manifested in whatever current policy is in place at the time the research starts. If business lobbies block an effort to strengthen clean air policies, their influence is reflected not just by what they did in this specific effort but also on what they had been doing over decades to shape the existing policy.

To capture more fully interest group influence, Anzia designed her study so that it could account for variation in interest group advocacy and impact across many different units of government. Thus, cities offer an appropriate laboratory as they vary so significantly in so many different ways. Although cities may be populated by the same basic types of advocacy groups, those organized interests will vary considerably in levels of activity, competence, and opportunities for influence. In short, cities offer a great deal to *compare.*

The primary database for *Local Interests* is Anzia's own City Interest Groups Survey, which is composed of responses from elected officials in 515 US municipalities. Her sample was stratified by size so that small cities would not predominate as they would in a completely random draw. In the ensuing analysis, Anzia is careful to test whether size is a factor in the patterns observed. Two other original surveys, one of candidates for office in cities in nine different states, and the other of interest group campaign contributions for municipal elections in Washington and South Carolina, round out the empirical investigation.

This rich database yields a rigorous and nuanced assessment of urban interest groups. Anzia focuses on businesses, municipal unions, environmental groups, and neighborhood associations. Across a range of issues she documents when and how different interest group sectors are influential. Not surprisingly, mobilization is