

these personal accounts into a broader context of violence and the display of brutality. It is here where important linkages are drawn with the racist and hyperviolent security forces in Brazil, a link that perhaps could have been inserted in earlier parts of the book. In conclusion, this book is a thought-provoking and well-executed piece of scholarship that sheds light on the multifaceted world of private security in Rio de Janeiro. It challenges readers to re-evaluate their preconceptions about security, inequality and the role of marginalised individuals in shaping the social fabric of urban environments.

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**Jonathan D. Rosen and Hanna S. Kassab (eds.),
*Corruption in the Americas***

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K. Sebastian León

Rutgers University

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In *Corruption in the Americas*, nine authors provide concise and accessible coverage of select issues of corruption across six Central and South American countries. The book is organised into eight chapters, including the editors' introduction, with easily digestible examples from six countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. The chapters are united by a similar theme: organised crime in each nation-state negatively impacts institutions of governance and perceptions of state legitimacy, with corruption affecting state policy, military, police and other public institutions.

Jonathan Rosen and Hanna Kassab's introductory chapter opens with the acknowledgement that 'Latin American countries have witnessed seemingly endless corruption scandals' and pairs a select example from El Salvador to Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) data. The authors emphasise the Odebrecht scandal as a representative case that 'reveals the systemic corruption present in Latin America' (p. 2). This 2014–16 scandal centred around a multinational construction conglomerate (Odebrecht), which was identified as having engaged in systemic bribery and corruption in at least ten countries throughout Latin America. The authors then address the importance of studying *and* paying practical attention (e.g., policy investments) to issues of corruption for understanding political theory, trust in governmental institutions and state legitimacy. The authors also provide a brief, albeit technocratic, description of correlations between

perceptions of corruption and conventional social science measures (e.g. age, sex, income, education, skin colour, political affiliation).

Brandford R. McGuinn's chapter assesses some of the conceptual dilemmas and timeless definitional nuances that make corruption so difficult to study, and yet so embedded across human history. McGuinn argues for a typology (or set of paradigms) for conceptualising corruption. Importantly, he centres the delicate balance between normative forms of functional corruption (e.g. the grease that moves the wheels of industrialisation, or even modernity itself), and the corrosive impacts of widespread corruption on political legitimacy and even democracy (pp. 27–8). Inclusion of classical sociological theory and Western political theories of corruption and societal conflict are particularly welcome, given the likely target audience of this text (e.g. students in the United States specifically, and English-speaking global North settings more broadly). For example, Weberian bureaucracy, Marxian conflict theory and contemporaries like Zephyr Teachout all make an appearance, providing theoretically dense yet concise examples of how corruption has been conceptualised and contested over time.

Chapter 2 provides descriptive coverage of select changes in Mexico's executive branch, and the evolution of policies ostensibly intended to address corruption. Roberto Zepeda and Rosen feature their prior work on the troubled relationship between Mexico's executive branch and political economies of corruption and violence (see p. 53 note 3). In Chapter 3, Adriana Beltrán documents how the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) contributed to the resignation and (now) successful prosecution of former president Otto Pérez Molina and Vice President Roxana Baldetti on corruption-related charges (p. 59). Importantly, Beltrán makes the point that corruption was not limited to one administration, and the chapter discusses how the CICIG's investigations 'revealed the nature of power in the country, and how networks of powerful and influential individuals have colluded to co-opt all branches of state power to use public institutions for their own interest and impunity' (p. 60).

In Chapter 4, Fernando Cepeda Ulloa provides a rather eclectic description of topics that may (or may not) relate to corruption in Colombia. One example includes a 'crisis of the traditional value system' whereby 'the diminished influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the school system has eroded the traditional values in Colombian society' (p. 86). This chapter appears less of a study of corruption in Colombia, and more of a person-specific and idiosyncratic frustration. The structure of this chapter is one where assertions are made without supporting evidence, or where selective and incomplete examples are briefly cited to make a sweeping claim, like 'Colombia should be admired as its judged prefer death to bribes' (p. 98).

In Chapter 5, Cynthia McClintock covers corruption in Peru in the twenty-first century, documenting a 'tsunami of scandals' and prosecutions (p. 103). Chapter 6, by Marten Brien, anchors the reader in Bolivia, and begins with a refreshing first-hand account of their early fieldwork. Though not framed as an auto-ethnography proper, Brien discusses their own relationship to graft and bribery in mundane encounters with Bolivian authorities, and then zooms out to discuss the broader criminogenic and corrosive features of how money changes hands across public and private settings in Bolivia. This is among the most compelling and accessible chapters.

The book concludes with Chapter 7 on organised crime in Brazil. Michael Jerome Wolff acknowledges the impossibility of thoroughly covering a country this large and politically complex. Mirroring a common theme across the book, Wolff focuses on the 'deepening symbiosis between state institutions and organized crime' (p. 137) and police death squads in cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, along with criminal organisations like the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC). The chapter, and the text, concludes with important context: though all organised crime is local, and the details of political-criminal dynamics are location-specific (p. 149), there is increased convergence and homogenisation that reflects parallel trends and processes across the country and, as the editors would argue, across the Americas.

Strengths of the text include the transnational and cross-institutional collaboration represented by the authors. Writers range not only in geography, but in institutional type, career stage and professional experience. The text is arguably most useful to undergraduates studying international relations or applied security studies, or to those seeking a partial primer on contemporary issues affecting these six countries through a foreign policy or international development framework.

Subject matter experts may be disappointed to find that this text does not critically engage with the geopolitical dimensions and historical precursors to institutional corruption in these sites. This is no fault of the authors. There is only so much that can be covered in eight chapters that average just under 14 pages each (excluding references). Though the text is framed as a collection of case studies, the totality of the book is more of a convenience sampling of noteworthy events that have received extensive coverage in news media and journalistic reporting. As a collective, the authors argue that the examples they reference are representative of broader trends in the Americas. Yet it is a comparative text without comparative analysis, whereby readers are left to wonder why the United States or Caribbean nation states were excluded.

Most frustrating for this reader is the absence of US foreign policy or the history of geopolitical events and conflicts in which the US government had an active role. There is no context for how things came to be this way, nor is there the appropriate disclaimer about the limitations of making attributions to entire countries. The heavy reliance on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index data neglects the limits of such data, including how corruption is defined downward in a way that frames highly industrialised countries (e.g. the global North) as aspirational reference points, and less developed countries as having institutional and civic deficits (or, in the case of Chapter 4, problematic arguments about moral or cultural deficits). This is a presumptuous framework and ignores the robust efforts of global North multinational corporations and sympathetic global North governments in shaping geographies of corruption as we recognise them today. Readers are left without knowing how Odebrecht compares to other corporate scandals with behemoths like Airbus, BAE Systems, Ericsson, Rolls Royce, Royal Dutch Shell, Halliburton or Lockheed Martin. In short, the history and contemporary machinations of US and European interests are not only 'off the hook' but passive at best, and prescriptive saviours at worst. However, the text offers a useful starting point and chapter-specific reference list for orienting readers to events that have been more thoroughly studied and contextualised elsewhere.