

Alfred C. Stepan

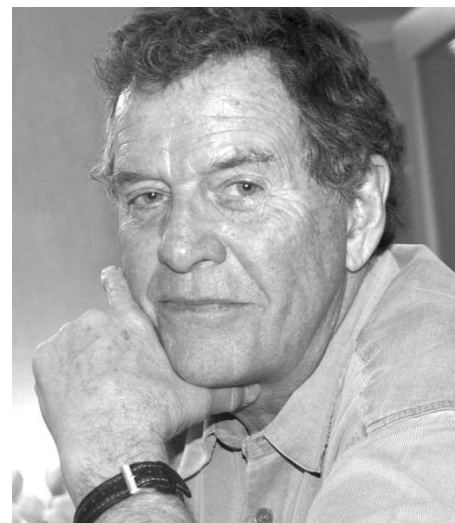
Recipient of the Kalman Silvert Award for 2009

Alfred Stepan is the Wallace S. Sayre Professor of Government at the School of International and Public Affairs and the Department of Political Science at Columbia University. He is also the Founder and Director of the Center for the Study of Democracy, Tolerance and Religion at Columbia, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the British Academy, an Honorary Fellow of St Antony's College at Oxford University, and a holder of the Ordem do Rio Branco, Commendador, awarded by the Brazilian Government in 2002. He received his B.A. from the University of Notre Dame, a B.A. and M.A. from Balliol College, Oxford, in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in Political Science.

His many books and articles have made him a leading figure among scholars studying Latin American politics as well as those studying comparative politics more broadly. His first book, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton University Press, 1971) was followed by *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton 1978). His collaboration with Juan Linz, who was his professor at Columbia and then a colleague at Yale, has lasted into the present and produced the path breaking volumes *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Johns Hopkins 1978) and *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Johns Hopkins, 1996)—now translated into about a dozen languages including Farsi, Chinese, Croatian and Basa-Indonesian. Their latest opus, *Democracy and Multinational Societies: India and Other Politics* (with Yogendra Yadav), is forthcoming with Johns Hopkins University Press. At the same time, Stepan continued to write on Brazilian politics and the role of the military in politics more

generally, authoring *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988) and editing *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation* (Oxford University Press, 1989). As the titles suggest, the conditions supporting the establishment and preservation of democracy as a form of government securing peaceful resolution of conflicts and coexistence of different ethnic groups and religions have been the intellectual puzzle driving the research. Beginning with *The State and Society*, Stepan's work has profoundly shaped the agenda of scholars interested in the nature of the state and the role of political institutions proper in shaping regime forms and in the role of the military in politics.

Before going to Columbia University in 1999, Stepan taught at Yale (1970-83) where he chaired the Council on Latin American Studies (1972-1981, except when on leave); he served as Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia (1983-1991) and as first Rector and President of the Central European University and Member of the Board of Directors of the Soros Open Society Foundation (1993-96); and he was the Gladstone Professor of Government and Fellow at All Souls College, University of Oxford (1996-1999). He has been the recipient of numerous fellowships and research grants from organizations such as the Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Guggenheim Foundation, and the Social Science Research Council. He has lectured at more than 150 institutions in approximately 30 countries around the globe. He has lent his seemingly boundless energy to many professional and public service projects. Among them are the Annenberg/ WGBH 10-hour TV Series entitled "Americas," which took some seven years to complete, won two awards, and remains a great teaching tool for classes on Latin America. He served for a dozen years



on the National Executive Committee of the human rights organization Americas Watch (1982-1994). In 1981-1982 he was a member of Rev. Theodore Hesburgh's advisory group to design the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame, and later he served for a dozen years on the Advisory Board of the Institute.

Among the many important roles Stepan has played, the role of mentor figures prominently. He has served on no fewer than forty Ph.D. dissertation committees, well more than half related to Latin America. His message to his students has been consistent: "You are writing this dissertation not for yourself and the committee—you are writing a book!" Indeed, at least twenty-five of the dissertations have been published as books, and more are on the way to publication. Colleagues and students, both present and former, from Latin America, the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, have always played central roles as intellectual partners for Stepan—members of his invisible colleges that span continents and decades. His enthusiasm for the study of politics, and his conviction that knowledge can have important practical implications have inspired generations of scholars.

The long interview in *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*, by Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) illustrates well the way in which Stepan thinks about his invisible colleges and about his passion for political science and public affairs, which he passes on to his students. In response to

President's Report

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the question how he manages to spend time in the field despite the many personal and professional obligations, he observed that "...e-mails back and forth to members of all my 'invisible colleges' make it easierFieldwork does not just happen in the field. I sometimes feel that some of my best fieldwork happens over a long dinner at my home, when someone is visiting and we have time for a four-hour conversation" (p.431). When asked about the role of normative values in his work and engagement with public affairs, he responded: "I have always chosen to work on problems that affect a lot of people. I never understood the argument that social science should be value-free....It is difficult to find a problem you care passionately about if you don't allow your values to influence your decision about what is important to study....I have always been much more interested in doing what I want by myself, rather than working for an administration. On the other hand...I have even been willing to insert myself into complex situations when I feel I have an analytic edge, and think I can also learn something, and make a useful contribution. In this sense, my fieldwork and my political involvement feed on each other....If I can contribute something because I have an idea about a particular public problem, I am willing to commit myself, as I have often done for human rights issues" (p. 437).

Professor Stepan will participate in the Silvert panel session at the XXVIII Congress of the Latin American Studies Association on Friday, June 12, 2009, in Rio de Janeiro. More details will be in the final program booklet. ■

As in so many other domains, the performance of the Bush administration with regard to Latin America can only be characterized as irresponsible. Relations with Cuba and several Andean countries deteriorated; meddling in domestic affairs of sovereign, democratic states was widespread; strategies for enhancing economic cooperation were limited to the pursuit of bilateral trade accords of dubious consequences for vulnerable sectors of the population in the region; counter-narcotics policy was carried out overwhelmingly in military terms; and by loading development assistance programs with military aid the United States abdicated its responsibility as a wealthy nation to provide aid designed to advance social welfare in highly unequal societies. The failure to enact comprehensive immigration reform adversely affected many countries in the region. Meanwhile, administration policies not directly aimed at Latin America—such as the illegal detention of putative terrorists at the U.S. military installation at Guantanamo—seriously undermined our country's reputation throughout the region as in other parts of the world. Largely as a result, U.S. influence in the region arguably reached an all time low.

The advent of a new administration in Washington opens the possibility for Hemispheric cooperation based on principles of mutual respect and reciprocity. Public opinion in Latin America is cautiously optimistic about the prospects for more equal partnerships with the United States under an Obama administration. The election of an African-American candidate to the Presidency offers a rare opportunity, moreover, to restore valorizations of American democracy that were tarnished by the Supreme Court's settlement of the contested Bush-Gore election of 2000 and the behavior of the U.S. government in the so-called War on Terror. But concrete

measures will be required in order to take advantage of this potentially watershed moment. The U.S. government could get things off to a fresh start by signaling a commitment to normalize relations with Cuba, enacting comprehensive immigration reform, and ceasing efforts by U.S. embassies and government-supported entities to influence domestic political dynamics in Latin American countries. An additional priority should be to re-orient narcotics control and development assistance programs from a military to a developmentalist paradigm.

The June 2009 LASA Congress will afford a timely space for exploring how these and other objectives can be met through concerted actions by governments and civil society organizations throughout the Americas. Leading scholars from around the world will have occasion to debate priorities and the means for achieving them. That the meeting of a still predominantly U.S.-based Association will take place in Rio de Janeiro is symbolic of the imperative for such discussions to incorporate voices from the South as well as from the North.

I hope that representatives of the new administration in Washington will look to the Association and its membership for insights, and that they will increase federal support for the international studies training that is crucial to the maintenance of scholarly expertise about Latin America and other regions of the world. The knowledge of researchers in American universities is a precious resource, and one that should not be ignored by policy-makers, as has so often been the case in the past. Whether we see a greater openness than in the past to scholarly perspectives, and a desire to expand understanding of peoples and cultures outside U.S. borders, will tell us much about whether the new administration is truly committed to inviting fresh perspectives on