

President's Report

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The democratic competition that has lately become an auspicious routine in Latin America has encouraged many scholars to draw a new picture of the continent's changing, complex political life. Beyond the democratic consensus that conveys convergence around the proper rules of political competition, frequent and fair elections are bringing to power very different parties and coalitions, some from the left and others from the right. The task of disclosing the nature and meaning of this process in each country is vast and challenging, and has been mobilizing scholars, North and South. A number of comparative research projects have recently tried to make sense of the "pink tide" that brought left-wing coalitions to the government of several Latin American countries in the first decade of this century. What are the continuities and ruptures with past left-wing movements in the region? How do they relate to democratic values, institutions and practices?

The successes of right-wing parties pose the same analytical challenges. How do these parties relate to previous authoritarian traditions? How do they operate under democratic institutions? And beyond the left-right divide, what is the place—if any—for the different forms of populism that are so ingrained in the Latin American political tradition? Is populism withering away or can it be perpetually revived in the region?

To address some of these questions we have invited Jorge Lanzaro, a knowledgeable political scientist, to organize the dossier we publish in *Debates*. Articles from Lanzaro, Flavia Freidenberg, Juan Pablo Luna and Cristóbal Rovira tackle those issues from different angles. Lanzaro's introduction to the dossier underlines some interesting points raised by the authors. As a whole, they add new subtleties to our understanding of the Americas' rich democratic experience.

On the Profession pays tribute to two colleagues and long time LASA members, Luciano Tomassini and Frank Bonilla, who have left us, unfortunately, too soon. Their work in opening new research fields, training people, building institutions and bridging the work of northern and southern scholars has been invaluable for the development of the Latin American Studies, as Jorge Heine and Susanne Jonas show in their informative and moving pieces.

Finally, we publish a personal testimony of our Dominican colleague Emelio Betances, whose intellectual trajectory also reflects an intense North-South academic exchange. These three essays present a very interesting set of observations about the ways collaboration between Latin Americans and North Americans can develop and also about the role of intellectual leadership in promoting such collaboration. ■

