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Latin America's Multicultural Movements: The Struggle Between Communitarianism, Autonomy, and Human Rights by Todd A. Eisenstadt, Michael S. Danielson, Moisés Jaime Bailón Corres, and Carlos Sorroza Polo

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As a candidate for the presidency of Mexico in 2000, Vicente Fox remarked that he could resolve the indigenous-based Zapatista uprising in the southern state of Chiapas in fifteen minutes. And why not? Many of the rebels' grievances revolved around commonsensical demands to recognize the country's pluralistic nature and respect the right of indigenous communities to govern their own affairs. As President, however, Fox met a more difficult reality. Negotiations failed, and the Zapatistas recently celebrated twenty years of rebellion. Particularly since the 1970s and 1980s, indigenous movements throughout Latin America have struggled for greater autonomy for their communities and the right to use traditional practices in local decision-making. Experience has shown that movements like that of the Zapatistas, though stunningly successful in turning the spotlight toward indigenous interests, often fail in the substance of their aims, and that even when indigenous rights are recognized, they raise special difficulties for new democracies.

These problems motivate *Latin America's Multicultural Movements*, an edited volume with contributions from a variety of notable scholars of Latin America. Debates over multiculturalism often focus on its justifications and merits, but this title concerns itself with the practical effects of indigenous rights movements and policies. It treats questions concerning why multicultural movements succeed or fail in their goals, and how those goals compete with other values held in democracies. Through case studies from southern Mexico (though not the Zapatistas), Ecuador, and Bolivia, the book explores the movements for multicultural rights—the active accommodation of rights held by minority groups as opposed to those held by individuals—and the complexity in what appears on the surface to be a straightforward demand for communal rights and respect for traditional practices. The book illuminates the challenges multicultural movements face both in achieving recognition for and implementation of multicultural indigenous rights, and most importantly the challenges such group rights pose to individual rights.

The book begins by asking why such apparently commonsensical reforms would meet resistance to implementation in an age of democracy and decentralization, when public sentiment often seems sympathetic toward indigenous rights. Even where multicultural rights are encoded in legal and constitutional structures, such reforms have often been largely symbolic, and indigenous movements have in many ways failed to achieve the autonomy they have sought. The Bolivian case perhaps best captures this outwardly paradoxical trend; in this majority-indigenous state an indigenous president—the first in Bolivian history—oversaw the creation of a new constitution recognizing the “plurinational and multicultural” character of the country. In spite of the charter's significant departure from the past and extensive treatment of indigenous communities, the authors of chapters on Bolivia demonstrate that the agenda of indigenous activists was frustrated from the start from without by opposition parties and from within by division among indigenous representatives to the constitutional convention. Even in such a seemingly favorable context, the process ended only in a qualified and diluted autonomy for indigenous communities.

In success yet new dilemmas emerge that pose more serious difficulties for defenders of multiculturalism. As its subtitle suggests, the book is framed by an overarching tension between

the group rights and self-determination sought by indigenous movements on the one hand and the liberal individual rights guaranteed in modern democracies and only relatively recently won in many Latin American countries on the other. How far should autonomy be allowed when traditional practices include the exclusion of women from voting, or corporal punishment? Whose business is it when local bosses, appealing to autonomy and local custom, manipulate autonomous communities and create authoritarian enclaves within a national democracy?

Ultimately, these questions are not answered; we are left with a further complication of the subject rather than clarification. Keeping with their empirical approach, the authors document these real world conflicts in values rather than attempt to resolve them, and the editors conclude with a call for more robust academic exploration of the inherent tensions between multiculturalism and liberal rights. Given its purpose, this is not a failure of the book. However, those unavoidable questions of values do raise larger problems of the normative character that the book largely eschews. The authors' undergirding assumption (in places stated and others implied) is that multiculturalism, though problematic in practice, is a praiseworthy goal and necessary corrective for centuries of exclusion and marginalization of indigenous peoples. This largely unexamined assumption lays the groundwork for the central dilemma of the volume, but those who challenge the value of multiculturalism will not be persuaded that a dilemma arises at all. This is not to imply that the authors and editors are simply cheerleaders for multiculturalism or that the volume uncritically romanticizes indigenous communities. They are not and do not. However, the reader interested in an extensive critical examination of the precepts of multiculturalism, whether friendly or unfriendly, must look elsewhere.

This book would be a valuable addition to the library of specialists in Latin American and multicultural studies, but the authors have not departed from the regrettably uninviting academic style that will not appeal to those outside that relatively small and committed readership.

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