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The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela

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McCoy, Jennifer L., and David J. Myers, eds. *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2004. 342pp. \$49.95

By far one of the more interesting and challenging issues facing U.S. national decision makers today is what to do about Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez and his Bolivarian revolution. Since Chavez came to power Venezuela has shifted from a staunch friend to a strident antagonist and become much more closely aligned with Cuba, and it now appears increasingly willing to find new markets for its oil. Given that Venezuelan crude supplies approximately 13 percent of U.S. energy needs, these are developments U.S. decision makers cannot take lightly.

The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela attempts to explain how the political landscape of Venezuela evolved to the point where a Chavez victory was possible. In this effort, the editors succeed admirably. Not only does this work boast solid scholarship and impressive research, but it stands as a superb example of what an edited volume should be but all too rarely is.

The book begins with an exploration of the history of the Punto Fijo democracy, which was essentially an agreement between Venezuelan political elites, establishing a representative democracy. In chapter 1, David Myers examines how this agreement was reached and how, over time, the terms of the agreement became codified into the Venezuelan political landscape. The result was one of the most stable and long-lived democracies in South America.

Chapters 2 through 6 deal with various elements of Venezuelan society and how it reacted to or was incorporated within the Punto Fijo regime, including how eventually the regime could no longer be maintained in the face of increasing political stress. A variety of actors, from the urban poor to the professional military to Venezuelan intellectuals, are examined. Each chapter is well written and thought provoking and complements the other portions of the book.

Among its more intriguing conclusions is that an increasingly professionalized officer corps became a key component in the success of Venezuelan democracy. With professionalization came acceptance of civil control of the military and a greatly diminished role in internal security issues. When this changed in 1989, at the request of civilian authority, the officer corps became increasingly politicized. Today, a significant percentage, if not a majority, of formerly civic functions are carried out by military officers whose primary attribute is a fierce personal loyalty to Hugo Chavez.

Chapters 9 through 11 deal with policy decisions made during the Punto Fijo years and how, gradually, the existing political parties grew unable to cope with or meet the demands of an increasingly disillusioned public. Through this examination the reader grows to understand that it was this political failure that enabled Chavez to rise to power. Furthermore, by 1998 the vast majority of Venezuelan voters welcomed Chavez, believing change preferable to maintaining the status quo.

The description of the evolution of a representative Venezuelan democracy to a democracy of direct participation is compelling and fascinating. It is so well handled that one wishes the authors

had spent as much time dissecting the Chavez regime as those that preceded it. One of the few drawbacks is that there is little attention to an examination of Hugo Chavez and his inner circle of advisors.

This book is a must-read for anyone who wishes to get beyond Chavez's rhetoric and red beret. It would enrich any South American regional studies course and has applicability for other disciplines as well. Readers who take the time to consider *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela* will emerge richer for the effort. Among those who should read it are businessmen interested in Venezuelan markets and any military officer assigned to the U.S. Southern Command.

Given the success McCoy and Myers have had in creating this book, it is only to be hoped that a companion is in the works.

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Bush, Elizabeth Kauffman. *America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2004. 221pp. \$28.94

War brings out the best as well as the worst in human nature. Freedom for Americans has always depended on the bravery and innovation of servicemen willing to endure danger and privation. Elizabeth Kauffman Bush has written a marvelous account of one such hero, her brother, Draper Kauffman—the nation's first frogman and the founder of the Navy SEALs.

Determined to follow in the footsteps of his father (Vice Admiral James

Laurence), Kauffman persevered at the Naval Academy despite his poor eyesight, which nearly prevented him from attending and initially denied him a commission in the Navy when he graduated in 1933.

Disappointed but undaunted, he accepted a position at a shipping company, U.S. Lines, in New York, where he became assistant operations manager. His two-month tenure at the company's German office in 1939 convinced him that the United States had to join with France and Great Britain to stop Hitler. When he returned home, Kauffman joined the free-lecture circuit urging early American intervention in the war, in defiance of the prevailing isolationist sentiment in the United States.

Eager to do more to defend the cause of freedom, Kauffman joined the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps, which placed itself under the direct command of the French army. He served with valor as an ambulance driver during the Battle of France in May–June 1940 before the Germans captured him. He languished several weeks in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp, dropping forty pounds before the American embassy secured his release.

After a six-week voyage from Portugal, Kauffman arrived in Great Britain at the peak of Hitler's bombing campaign. He joined the Royal Navy and became expert at the harrowing task of diffusing delayed-action German bombs and mines during the Blitz. He narrowly escaped with his own life when a mine he was working on blew up.

Kauffman returned home to recover from his wounds, and in November 1941 he finally received his commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve. His experience in