

*Liberalismo autoritario: Las contradicciones del sistema político mexicano* (Authoritarian liberalism: The contradictions of the Mexican political system). By Lorenzo Meyer. (Mexico City: Oceano de México, 1995. 282 pp. Paper, ISBN 968-6321-24-1.) In Spanish.

The histories of Mexico and the United States converged in the middle 1990s in ways that combined both promise and problems. The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) seemed to offer the promise of economic benefits for both countries, but the Zapatista revolt of early 1994 in southern Mexico, the assassination of the dominant party's presidential nominee a few months later, and the collapse of much of the Mexican economy in early 1995 indicated the precarious nature of Mexico's political and economic systems and its uneven relationship with the United States.

Lorenzo Meyer, an internationally respected Mexican historian with many books and articles to his credit on Mexican–United States relations, wrote penetrating commentary in the Mexican press over the crucial years from 1993 to 1995. This volume brings together forty-two of these essays, which contain considerable skepticism about NAFTA and about the policies of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994), who tended to push his nation closer to the United States. For example, the author challenges the assertions of the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington that Mexico is in the process of moving toward not only the United States economy but also United States culture and values. One of Meyer's most impressive and perhaps most controversial essays delineates his views on the deeply rooted differences between the two countries.

Meyer makes clear his view that Mexico's "authoritarian liberalism" is far removed from the liberalism of United States political culture. Meyer's judgments are buttressed by his knowledge of the political traditions of the United States as well as those of Mexico. Several of these essays contain sharp critiques of Mexico's political practices—especially the presidential selection process, which allows "technocrats" to reach the top. These individuals are neither politicians nor intellectuals, but rather experts in self-promotion and survival within the heav-

ily insulated walls of government bureaucracy. In Meyer's estimation, Benito Juárez, Francisco Madero, and Lázaro Cárdenas would have found little opportunity to rise to positions of leadership in this contorted, labyrinthine system.

In spite of the dominance of the PRI (the Party of the Institutional Revolution) and recent Mexican presidents, Meyer sees growing signs that the power structure of the last seventy years is beginning to lose its grip. The Zapatista revolt was a military failure, but it sparked a political debate that effectively questioned recent government policies. Meyer persuasively points out symptoms of what may be the beginning of the decline of the Mexican presidency. He also discusses the difficulties that could arise as other sources of power such as international banks and other financial institutions, large corporations, drug dealers, and restive bureaucrats gain more influence in the political arena. The enduring value of this volume is that it contains these and other sharply focused, forcefully stated judgments by a leading Mexican commentator on a crucial period in his nation's history.

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*At a Century's Ending: Reflections, 1982–1995.* By George F. Kennan. (New York: Norton, 1996. 351 pp. \$27.50, ISBN 0-393-03882-3.)

Longevity has certain rewards, and George F. Kennan is not a stranger to them. The one-time diplomat and policy maker turned historian and foreign policy critic has not allowed his advanced years to slow his eloquent pen. Instead, he has effectively exploited his status as learned elder and foreign policy sage to continue his efforts to influence both elite and public opinion and thereby to exercise both an indirect influence over American foreign policy and a lasting impact on perceptions of the Cold War.

The volume under review brings together a collection of his published articles, op-ed essays, addresses, book reviews, forewords, and letters prepared over the last decade and a half. Written during the final stage of the Cold War and in the years following the collapse of the