



**Sophie Baby, Olivier Compagnon, Eduardo Gonzalez Calleja.** *Violencia y transiciones políticas a finales del siglo XX: Europa del sur - América Latina.* Madrid: Casa de Velazquez, 2009. 329 S. ISBN 978-84-96820-31-9.



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### S. Baby u.a. (Hrsg.): *Violencia y transiciones políticas*

The editors of this book have selected and put together various articles about the democratization processes that took place in Southern Europe and Latin America in the seventies and eighties. There is abundant literature about the democratization processes in these regions (O'Donnell, Huntington, Linz and Stepan to name a few) Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, Oklahoma 1992; Guillermo O'Donnell, *Counterpoints. Selected Essays on Authoritarianism and Democratization*, Notre Dame 1999; Juan J. Linz / Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore 1996. , as well as about the post-democratization period, mostly in Latin America, under neoliberalism. This book aims at contributing to the existing scholarship namely by questioning the 'pacified socio-political space' (p. xi) that apparently the democratization processes achieved by excluding violence both from state and non-state actors. In other words, the book aims to discuss the role of violence in the democratization processes by asking whether the change from an authoritarian to a democratic regime actually reduced its use in

countries where violence has been institutionalized and 'normalized'. Edelberto Torres-Rivas, *Los desafíos del desarrollo democrático en Centroamérica*, in: Joan y Josep M. Sanahuja Botella (eds.), *Centroamérica después de la crisis*, Barcelona 1998, pp. 153-197. If this is the case, it asks what mechanisms are used to reduce violence and achieve peace. If this is not the case, the book asks how existing forms of violence should be understood.

In the attempt to not fall into a mere 'collection' of articles, this book addresses the abovementioned questions within a methodological, multidisciplinary, and comparative framework that enables the understanding of violence, or not, during the transition period. According to the editors, this book sets out methodologically to analyze and compare the interactions of the different transition processes of the countries in Southern Europe and Latin America, that is, it perceives the different democratization experiences as 'connected history'. The articles are organized and structured around four main themes: a) memory of past violence by looking at the international circulation of transitional models and the

state's capacity to deal with violence in the past through the construction of memorials and implementing a justice; b) contested violence meaning revolutionary, terrorism, and reactionary groups that were present during the transition processes; c) state violence which points to the legacy of authoritarian regimes and; d) the partial or unfinished democratization processes which threaten societies with new forms of violence such as social violence or the return of political violence.

The four selected themes that structure the book summarize the main forms of violence that emerged during the transition process. The articles chosen for each theme address these forms of violence through different case studies mainly on a micro level in Southern Europe and Latin America. Thus, the first theme deals with the state's attempts to deal with past political violence by establishing truth commissions, amnesty laws (in Uruguay and Argentina) or laws that (re)establish historical memory (the case of Spain), which resemble the *Erinnerungspolitik* found in Germany. Author Anastasiadis shows that Greece differs from the rest of the case studies as it destroyed most of its archives that accounted for the repression and violence. Instead the state selected and left some documents for future reference for historians. The second theme deals with the emergence of anti-establishment groups such as subversive and terrorist groups (mainly in Spain) as well as the appearance of political violence and social movements. The third theme covers looks at the persistence of political violence during the transition process, for instance, the violent police forces in Spain (Baby) and the military in Brazil (Chirio). Persistence of this form of violence is due mainly to the previous authoritarian regimes. Finally, the last theme refers to the 'unfinished transition' processes mainly in Latin America (Colombia, Central America, Peru), where the state has been unable to establish a 'protection rack' Charles Tilly, *War and State Making as Organized Crime*, in: Peter Evans / Dietrich Rueschemeyer / Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge 1985, p. 170. , in post-conflict societies.

Despite providing empirical data in most articles, the book remains on a micro level of analysis. The articles fail to address the question(s) stated in the introduction about the persistence, or not, of violence during democratic transitions on a theoretical-conceptual level. Baby's article about the persistence of state violence (through police forces) during a democratization process comes closest to addressing these questions; the persistence of violence

in Spain under the democratization process is linked not only to the authoritarian past, but also to the emergence of terrorist groups, namely the Basque separatists groups. Nevertheless, this article and the others in this book remain on a micro level, as they are not embedded within a theoretical framework for understanding the emergence of violence under democratization processes. Furthermore, the book falls short of its main methodological aims of connecting Southern Europe and Latin America's history. The articles are not linked methodologically and theoretically, rather they are *thematically* organized around the different forms of violence that persist and/or the new ones that emerge during the transition period.

A brief literature review in the introductory chapter discussing the different theoretical-analytical perspectives for understanding democratization and violence (not only centering on Huntington) would have conceptually framed the book's central questions within a wider debate as well as provide an analytical outline. The use or prevalence of violence under democratization processes is generally linked to: the role of elites, particularly, elite pacts and/or bargaining; the opening of the political spectrum making it difficult to reconcile with new political interests and groups, and; low-income, ethnically heterogeneous countries Edward Mansfield / Jack Snyder, *Democratization and War*, in: *Foreign Affairs* 74 (1995) 3, p. 79-97; Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence. Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, New York 2000; Charles Tilly, *Mechanisms in Political Processes*, in: *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4 (2001), p. 21-41; John Schwarzmantel, *Democracy and violence. A theoretical overview*, in: *Democratization*, 17 (2010) 2, p. 217-234. . These three factors are present in most of the contributions and it would have been interesting to have discussed the rich empirical data in this light, namely whether the data contributes and/or contests these variables.

In sum, this book raises interesting questions regarding the role, persistence, or the emergence of new forms of violence during the democratization processes in Southern Europe and Latin America. Nevertheless, these questions remain unanswered. The articles require an overall theoretical framework for it to be a contribution on a conceptual level. As it stands, this book is an extensive collection of articles organized around the theme of violence, that is, its persistence as well as new forms, during democratization processes.

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