



Democratic Accountability in Latin America (Oxford Studies in Democratization)

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This volume on democratic accountability addresses one of the burning issues on the agenda of policy makers and citizens in contemporary Latin America: how democratic leaders in Latin America can improve accountability while simultaneously promoting governmental effectiveness. Written by well-known scholars from both Latin America and the United States, the volume enhances understanding of these key themes, which are central to the future of democracy in Latin America. - ;This volume on democratic accountability addresses one of the burning issues on the agenda of policy makers and citizens in contemporary Latin America. In much of Latin America, disenchantment and cynicism have set in regarding the quality of elected governments raising the prospect of a new round of democratic erosion and breakdowns. One of the important emerging challenges for improving the quality of democracy revolves around how to build more effective mechanisms of

accountability. A widespread perception prevails in much of the region that government officials are not sufficiently subject to routinized controls by oversight agencies. Corruption, lack of oversight, impunity of state actors, and improper use of public resources are major problems in most countries of the region. Dealing with these issues is paramount to restoring and deepening democratic legitimacy.

The fundamental question in this volume is how democratic leaders in Latin America can improve accountability while simultaneously promoting governmental effectiveness. These issues have acquired urgency in contemporary Latin America because of heightened public concern about corruption and improper governmental actions on the one hand, yet on the other, uncertainty about the potential tradeoff between tightened accountability of officials and effective policy results.

The volume enhances understanding of three key issues. First, it enriches understanding of the state of non-electoral forms of democratic accountability in contemporary Latin America. What are some of the major shortcoming in democratic accountability? How can they be addressed? What are some major innovations in the efforts to enhance democratic accountability?

A second contribution of the volume is conceptual. Accountability is a key concept in the social sciences, yet its meaning varies widely from one author to the next. The authors in this volume, especially in the first four chapters, explicitly debate how best to define and delimit the concept.

Finally the volume also furthers understanding of the interactions between various mechanism and institutions of accountability. Many of the authors address how electoral accountability (the accountability of elected officials to the voters) interact with the forms of accountability in which state agencies oversee and sanction public officials. The volume provides extensive treatment of this important but hitherto under-explored interaction. -

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