

*No Farewell to Arms? Military Disengagement from Politics in Africa and Latin America.* By CLAUDE E. WELCH, JR. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 224. Cloth. \$33.50.

Beginning with the 1962 publication of John J. Johnson's path-breaking volume on *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*, the intrusion of armed forces in the political arenas of the Third World has attracted the attention and scholarly efforts of a growing number of academics. The reverse phenomenon—disengagement—has gone almost unnoticed, however. Moreover, whether centering on involvement or disengagement, the role of Third World armies has rarely been dealt with systematically in cross-continental perspective.

*No Farewell to Arms?* breaks new ground on both counts, and it does so with the meticulousness and sharpness of insights that one has come to expect of the author, one of the foremost students of military politics in tropical Africa. The subtitle captures the essence of the book's novelty: this is the only serious comparative analysis to date of the processes of military disengagement in Africa and Latin America. The central argument, articulated around the distinction between "the initial decision to disengage and the processes of long-term military disengagement" (p. 21), is couched in the form of the following six hypotheses: (1) shared perceptions among civilian and military personnel of an appropriate role (i.e., professional and nonpolitical) are a precondition for disengagement; (2) anticipation of acceptable financial rewards by the military will decisively affect their decision to disengage; (3) physical movements of troops to border areas are a major facilitating factor in the process of disengagement; (4) recognition by the military that a return to the barracks will result in a substantial lowering of civil strife will likewise facilitate disengagement, but only if followed by "long periods of domestic tranquility" (p. 23); (5) negative economic trends may serve as a short-term inducement for the military to disengage from politics, but their decision to stay away from politics on a long-term basis will ultimately depend on the ability of the civilian elite to promote a lasting improvement of the economy; and (6) the decision to return to the barracks is largely conditioned, both in the initial phase and in the long run, by the emergence of a transitional leader drawn "from the armed forces whose position and background encourage obedience and respect" (p. 24).

The foregoing capsule summary of the author's key hypotheses cannot convey the qualifications and nuances that he brings to his argument; nor does it reflect the richness of his empirical base. From the six case studies investigated in his book (Bolivia and Ghana, Nigeria and Peru, Colombia and the Ivory Coast) a body of evidence emerges which largely corroborates his working hypotheses. Not the least of the merits of this book, however, is that it alerts the reader to those situations which more or less deviate from the initial framework of analysis. Besides breaking new and original theoretical ground, this slim volume is an invaluable source of data on those countries of Africa and Latin America where the

military have played, and may indeed continue to play, a critical role in shaping their nations' political destinies. No one interested in Third World armies can afford to ignore this seminal addition to the field of military studies.

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*The Mexican Republic: The First Decade, 1823–1832.* By STANLEY GREEN. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987. Plates. Maps. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 314. Cloth. \$31.95.

Stanley Green's *The Mexican Republic* is part of the rediscovery of the early postindependence period in Mexican history. Once neglected by historians who dismissed it as a laughable *opéra bouffe* (in Lesley Byrd Simpson's phrase), the early republic has recently become the focus of serious attention from scholars who realize that it was the pivotal time when many characteristics of the later nineteenth century were forged.

Green has not attempted to produce a new interpretation of the period; instead he has written a narrative history of the first decade, melding nineteenth-century accounts with modern monographs and his own sampling of archival records to provide an updated "panoramic view" of Mexico from A to Z. He places considerable emphasis on the A (Lucas Alamán) and the Z (Lorenzo de Zavala), the two figures he considers representative of opposing tendencies in political thought. In between are descriptions of major cities, regional economies, the class system, social customs, education, the press, government and ecclesiastical structures, and—the bulk of the work—the complicated political events of the decade.

The result is uneven, a book that includes a little bit of everything, but is not clearly aimed at either a scholarly or a general audience. Green has pulled together many interesting facts about a fascinating period. He is at his best when citing colorful tidbits from Alamán's letters, British Foreign Office records, and the files of the Mexican Department of Public Education. Thumbnail sketches of leading politicians, accompanied by illustrations, are also welcome. But the narrative, though nicely written, is not gripping enough for the general reader; it assumes some background on Mexican history and often loses its thread in detail. There is little new for the specialist either, and the sketchiness of the presentation can be misleading. Although most of the book is sensibly argued, it is occasionally marred by oversimplifications, errors, and a tendency to follow partisan nineteenth-century sources. For example, the author attributes the problems of the Mexican polity to its citizens' "folk culture" (p. 188), without considering alternative explanations proposed by recent scholars. He incorrectly states that divorce was possible (p. 57). And he accepts at face value the old *escocés* charge that *yorkino* politicians came from plebeian backgrounds (p. 94), even though his own evidence on Zavala contradicts this view.