

Abstract

This paper focuses on the nexus between state infrastructural power and legitimacy. A comparative case study of nationalism in mid-20th century Mexico and Argentina provides the basis for theorising the impact of state infrastructural power on transformations of official national ideology. Both countries experienced a transition from liberal to popular nationalism. Yet, the extent to which popular nationalism became a regular product of state organisations varied between the two cases, depending on the timing of state development. The temporal congruence between the expansion of state infrastructural power and ideological change, as exemplified by Mexico under Cárdenas, facilitated the full institutionalisation of the new official ideology, whereas a disjuncture between state development and ideological change, as exemplified by Argentina under Perón, inhibited such a comprehensive transformation of nationalism.

Keywords: Mexico, Argentina, nationalism, institutionalisation, education, schooling, state formation, state capacity, teachers

Matthias vom Hau is a Lewis-Gluckman Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Brooks World Poverty Institute, The University of Manchester.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by an IDRF fellowship from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). A previous version was presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Chicago. I would like to thank Matthew Lange, Daniel Schensul, Dan Slater, Daniel Ziblatt for helpful comments. I also greatly benefited from the continued intellectual exchange with Hillel Soifer.