

## Acknowledgments

This book has been ten years in the making. It began as a study of the struggle for democratic consolidation in Latin America during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Early on, however, I realized that the countries with the strongest democracies in the region today (e.g., Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay) were also among the first Latin American countries to establish democracy. Thus, to understand why some countries had strong democracies today, it seemed important to examine what led to the emergence of democracy in the early twentieth century. And to understand why democracy arose in some countries in the early twentieth century, it became necessary to explore why nineteenth-century efforts to establish democracy had failed. Thus, through historical regress, I embarked upon a study of the struggle for democracy in the region from independence until 1930.

To make the study more feasible, I decided early on to limit it to South America alone. Nevertheless, it has still seemed an overwhelming task at times. If a graduate student had proposed carrying out a dissertation on ten countries over 100 years of history, I would have summarily thrown them out of my office. But one of the advantages of having tenure is that I cannot be easily thrown out of my office. Tenure makes these ambitious projects possible.

My location at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) also made this book feasible. We are blessed to have the finest Latin American library in the country: the Nettie Lee Benson Collection. Over the last ten years, I have checked out so many library books on this topic that I have come to refer to my office as the Benson Annex. I am also thankful to have had access to the congressional libraries in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay, which are beautiful and fructiferous places to carry out archival research.

UT Austin provided me with a variety of other essential resources, and I hope this book represents some return on its investment in me. The College of the Liberal Arts awarded me two semester-long research leaves, which were

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This study builds on the fantastic work that historians and social scientists have done on democracy, elections, parties, and the military in Latin America before 1930. These scholars are too numerous to name here, but their work is cited extensively throughout this manuscript.

I was lucky to be a Visiting Research Fellow at the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame during the fall of 2019 where I wrote first drafts

of some of the chapters of this book. I benefitted enormously from Kellogg's top-notch facilities, helpful staff, and terrific Latin Americanist faculty and students. There may be no better place to get work done than the Kellogg Institute where my apartment was located fifty feet from my office!

I presented parts of this book at Harvard University, Tulane University, the University of Chicago, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as at annual meetings of the American Political Science Association and the Latin American Studies Association. I am grateful to those who attended these talks for their thoughtful questions and comments.

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I had my first exposure to democratization studies as a graduate student at Stanford University during the 1990s where I was fortunate to take classes on the topic from some of the leading figures in the field, including Terry Karl, Larry Diamond, and Philippe Schmitter, all of whom subsequently served on my dissertation committee. As an undergraduate at Yale University in the 1980s, I also had the opportunity to take a class from the late great James Scott, whose support proved crucial for my subsequent decision to do a PhD in political science. I am thankful to these eminent scholars for planting the seeds that I am still harvesting today.

I also owe a debt to the good people of Pilas de Bejuco, Costa Rica where I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 1990s. Long before I was aware of Winston Churchill's dictum, I learned from my community development work in Costa Rica that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.

My greatest debts are to my family. My parents encouraged my intellectual interests from a young age and have served as role models for me throughout my life. My mother, who is in her eighties, also served as an (unpaid) research assistant for this project, editing the entire manuscript, photographing archival records, coding data on elections, and transcribing consular dispatches. Other members of my family provided emotional support. My children, Nico and Bela, have been a great joy and distraction from the day they set foot on this planet. My wife, Paloma Díaz, has been a source of fun, support, love, and inspiration since that fateful day that we met at *carnaval* in Brazil thirty-two years ago. I am so thankful to have her in my life, and I dedicate this book to her.

