Introduction

The Origins of Democracy in South America

For most of the nineteenth century, Colombia, like the rest of South America, was under authoritarian rule. Colombian leaders manipulated elections to maintain their hold on power, and at times governed with an iron hand. Opposition parties rebelled repeatedly, but these revolts only brought further repression. The nadir came with the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902) in which an estimated 100,000 people perished. In the wake of the war, however, the political situation gradually improved. Opposition revolts came to an end, and in 1910 Colombia enacted important reforms that paved the way for the establishment of relatively free and fair elections.

Similar transformations took place in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay at about the same time. In each of these countries, opposition parties abandoned the armed struggle during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, and governments enacted democratic reforms. To be sure, none of the four countries became full democracies during this period since they did not extend the franchise to all adults, nor end all electoral chicanery. Nevertheless, in all four countries, competitive and relatively free and fair elections became increasingly the norm, as did respect for civil liberties.

In other countries in the region, however, governments continued to manipulate elections during the early twentieth century to ensure that they or their allies remained in power. In some of these countries, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay, the opposition continued to seek power through armed rebellions and in some cases overthrew the government. In other countries, such as Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela, the opposition revolts of the nineteenth century largely came to an end but without a transition to democracy.

What explains these remarkably different regime outcomes in the early twentieth century? Why did some South American countries democratize during this period, while others remained under authoritarian rule? And why

did some countries stabilize politically, whereas others continued to experience frequent outsider revolts and overthrows of their governments?

There is, perhaps, no question more central to political science than the origins of democracy, but we still lack a persuasive theory about what led democracy to emerge in South America. This lacuna is surprising, given that South America was a democratic pioneer in many respects. After independence, most South American countries enacted constitutions that established representative institutions and laid out significant civil and political rights for the citizenry. The region's governments held elections regularly throughout the nineteenth century, and in some cases, they allowed nearly universal male suffrage at a time when the United States and most European countries imposed significant restrictions on the franchise. Nevertheless, South America's nineteenth-century governments typically looked better on paper than in practice. Presidents often trampled on constitutional rights and bypassed or manipulated the legislature. Voter turnout was generally low, and elections were almost never free and fair since governments intervened regularly to ensure that their preferred candidates won. It was not until the early twentieth century that the region enjoyed lengthy and meaningful experiences with democracy.

The rise of democratic regimes in South America is puzzling from the perspective of traditional theories of democratization. As we shall see, the first wave of democratization in South America did not centrally involve the working classes or the bourgeoisie, which some prominent theories have identified as the main proponents of democracy. Nor did democratization occur exclusively among the most developed countries of the region, as modernization theory would predict.

This book argues that two main actors – the military and political parties – brought about democratization in South America during the early twentieth century. These were not the only actors that played a role in the emergence of democracy in these countries, but they were by far the most important. The professionalization of the military at the turn of the century made democracy feasible by providing the state with a monopoly on violence for the first time, thus bringing an end to the opposition revolts that had plagued the region during the nineteenth century. Once the opposition could no longer seize power by force, it began to focus on the electoral path to power and pushed for democratic reforms to level the playing field. Nevertheless, reforms typically passed only in countries where relatively strong opposition parties arose and where the ruling party split. In the wake of such splits, ruling party dissidents often allied with the opposition to push through democratic reforms.

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

The military has traditionally been viewed as an obstacle to democracy in Latin America and around the world, and for good reason. Militaries in Latin America and elsewhere have often overthrown elected presidents, suspended

constitutions, and violated the human and civil rights of the citizenry. Thus, one might expect that the strength of the military would be inversely related to the likelihood of democratization. Indeed, a prominent branch of the theoretical literature has suggested that authoritarian governments are more likely to democratize when the military cannot easily suppress the opposition or when the costs of doing so are too high.

Nevertheless, strong militaries may also enhance the prospects for democracy. Where the military is weak, opposition groups will be tempted to carry out violent uprisings to seize power or achieve other aims. These uprisings subvert the rule of law, undermine political stability, and typically lead to state repression, all of which will deepen authoritarian rule. By contrast, if the military is strong, the opposition will have incentives to avoid armed uprisings on the grounds that such revolts would presumably have large costs and be unlikely to succeed. Instead, the opposition may pursue a peaceful, more democratic path to power.

South American countries followed this latter path to democracy. During the nineteenth century, South American militaries were quite weak, which led the opposition to seek power via force quite frequently. Many of these revolts toppled elected governments, which undermined constitutional rule. Moreover, even when the opposition failed to take power, the rebellions undermined the prospects for democracy by subverting the rule of law and provoking government repression. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, South American countries experienced an export boom, which provided them with the resources to strengthen and professionalize their militaries. Not all South American countries invested heavily in their armed forces during this period: The smaller, poorer countries, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay, had fewer resources and were slower to professionalize their militaries. Nevertheless, most South American countries expanded the size of their armies, imported sophisticated weaponry, hired foreign military missions, adopted meritocratic standards for recruitment and promotion, and overhauled military training. These reforms gave the military the capacity to easily suppress rebellions, providing South American governments with a monopoly on violence for the first time. As a result, the opposition in these countries increasingly eschewed revolts and began to focus on the electoral path to power.

Political parties played an equally important role in the emergence of democracy in South America. Scholars have long recognized that political parties may shape the likelihood of democratization, but they have tended to focus on ruling parties. As this study shows, however, ruling parties have strong incentives to oppose democratic reform since such reforms will typically undermine their hold on power. By contrast, opposition parties will tend to support democratic reform, especially if they cannot take power by force. Opposition parties support democratic reforms because such measures will typically level the electoral playing field and increase the likelihood that opposition parties can win

elections. The establishment of the secret ballot, for example, makes it more difficult for the government to monitor and sanction people who vote for the opposition. The elimination of suffrage restrictions, meanwhile, often undermines the government's control of elections by diminishing the electoral weight of state employees and by making it more difficult to disqualify opposition supporters.

Strong opposition parties are particularly conducive to democratization. Powerful opposition parties tend to have greater representation in the legislature, which is crucial to proposing and enacting democratic reforms. They can also more easily carry out protests to put pressure on the government to enact reforms. In addition, strong opposition parties can oversee the implementation of reforms more effectively – they have followers and affiliated organizations throughout the country that can monitor the elections and protest infractions. As Enrique Santos, a Colombian Liberal leader, noted in 1915: "fraud became more difficult in the face of an organized opposition party" (cited in Posada-Carbó 1996a, 11).

But what leads to the emergence of strong opposition parties? During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, strong parties tended to arise in South American countries where the population was concentrated in a relatively small area with no major geographical obstacles dividing it. This made it easier for politicians and party leaders to build national organizations and communicate with the vast majority of the electorate. In addition, strong parties were more likely to emerge in countries that had intense and relatively balanced religious or territorial cleavages – that is, where neither side of a cleavage clearly dominated the other. This was the case in Uruguay, which was divided between residents of the capital and the provinces, and in Colombia and Chile, where conservative supporters of the Catholic Church and liberal critics of the Church were both strong. Intense and balanced cleavages generally gave birth to strong parties on both sides of the main cleavage, which was good for democracy because at least one of the strong parties was typically in the opposition.

Nevertheless, even strong opposition parties typically lacked the votes in the legislature to enact democratic reforms without support from some members of the ruling party. Democratization therefore occurred only when there was a split within the ruling party that led a faction of the governing party to side with the opposition. Ruling party dissidents often supported democratic reform for the same reason that members of opposition parties did – democratic reform leveled the electoral playing field and gave the dissidents a chance to prevail in elections.

Thus, three factors – the professionalization of the military, the rise of strong opposition parties, and splits within the ruling party – led to the initial emergence of democracy in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay. Military professionalization increased the *incentives* for the opposition to abandon the armed struggle and pursue democratic reform. The rise of strong

parties boosted the *capacity* of the opposition to enact and enforce democratic reforms. And ruling party splits created the *opportunity* for the opposition and ruling party dissidents to push through reforms.[1]

The combination of these three variables generated very different regime outcomes across the South American countries during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Where the military remained weak and nonprofessional, the predominant outcome was unstable authoritarianism. Under these conditions, opposition groups frequently resorted to armed uprisings, which undermined constitutional rule, engendered political instability, and led to authoritarian clampdowns. This was the most common regime type in South America during the nineteenth century because of the weakness of the region's militaries. A few South American countries, namely Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay, also remained unstable authoritarian regimes in the early twentieth century in part because they were slow to strengthen their armed forces.

Where the military became strong but opposition parties remained weak, the predominant outcome was stable authoritarianism. The strengthening of the armed forces discouraged the opposition from carrying out armed revolts, but the weakness of opposition parties meant that they had little possibility of enacting democratic reforms or challenging the government in elections. Several South American countries, including Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela, became stable authoritarian regimes during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century once they professionalized their militaries. These regimes were not completely stable, however. Although they generally faced few challenges from the opposition, they sometimes experienced military coups in part because the opposition had incentives to call on the military to intervene since it had little prospect of toppling the government by other means.

Where both the military and opposition parties were strong, the regime outcome depended largely on the degree of unity of the ruling party. If the ruling party was united, the countries tended to remain authoritarian regimes since the opposition did not typically have the strength to enact democratic reforms on its own. However, if the ruling party split, democratization was likely to occur since the ruling party dissidents would join forces with the opposition to push through democratizing measures. This is what occurred in Chile in the late nineteenth century and Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay in the early twentieth century.

As the Conclusion discusses, the emergence of democracy in some South American countries in the early twentieth century had important long-term consequences. The democratic reforms that the pioneer countries enacted in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century largely remained in force in the decades that followed. Countries that expanded the franchise or established the secret ballot typically maintained these measures in subsequent years

[1] I thank Jana Morgan for suggesting this way to summarize my argument.

and, in many cases, they took steps to strengthen the reforms or ensure their enforcement.[2]

The democratic reforms endured in part because they were enshrined in legislation and constitutions, but more importantly because they created vested interests. The beneficiaries of suffrage expansion, for example, opposed efforts to strip them of the right to vote. Legislators who were elected under new electoral rules, such as proportional representation, often resisted efforts to change those rules. Equally important, democratic norms developed over time in the citizenry of these countries as well as in the international community, which made it more difficult to overturn these democratic institutions.

The same variables that helped bring about democratization in the early twentieth century continued to have a mostly positive impact on South American democracies after 1929. Strong militaries, for example, continued to provide South American governments with a monopoly on violence and increased the likelihood that the opposition remained committed to the electoral path to power. As a result, in the mid-twentieth century, South American countries with strong armies had fewer opposition revolts than countries that were slow to strengthen and professionalize their militaries, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay. South American countries with strong militaries were still susceptible to military coups, but countries with strong parties tended to have fewer coups than countries with weak parties post-1929. Strong parties enabled the opposition to effectively compete with and sometimes even defeat the ruling party in elections. Thus, they had fewer incentives to call on the military to intervene. Strong opposition parties were also in a better position to ensure the implementation of democratic reforms, to promote further democratic measures, and to resist efforts by the president to concentrate power.

With the exception of Argentina, the South American countries that established democracy in the first decades of the twentieth century enjoyed more years of democracy after 1929 than did the other South American countries.[3] Nevertheless, the stability of democracy among the democratic pioneers after 1929 should not be exaggerated. All the pioneer countries (as well as the democratic laggards) experienced military interventions after 1929 and, in some instances, the military held on to power for a long time. Post-1929 political developments, such as coups, in South America were shaped by a variety of factors, not just the strength of parties and militaries. International factors, including the worldwide depression of the 1930s and the Cold War,

[2] South American countries also enacted other types of democratic reforms during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, establishing presidential term limits and direct presidential elections. The enactment of these latter reforms did not play a key role in the first wave of democratization in South America, but they strengthened the quality of democracy in the region in the long run.

[3] As Chapter 6 discusses, Argentina suffered from frequent military coups post-1929 in part because it typically had only one strong party at any given time, which made it difficult for the opposition to take power through elections.

destabilized South American governments, as did the rise of labor and populist movements. As a result, even the democratic pioneers encountered democratic setbacks during the mid and late twentieth century.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study examines the struggle for democracy in ten South American countries from independence to 1929. I focus on South America in part because it offers crucial variation on my dependent variable. Although four South American countries (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay) democratized during this period, the remaining six countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela) did not. Examining countries in a single region also enables me to control for the large number of institutional, cultural, and historical characteristics that they have in common, using a most similar systems design (Gerring 2007; Przeworski and Teune 1970). Note that I only examine the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries of the region. The English-, French-, and Dutch-speaking nations were still colonies during this period.

The first wave of democratization in South America has been a curiously neglected topic. Some important studies have examined the rise and consolidation of democracy in the region after 1929 (Collier and Collier 1991; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992). There are also some excellent studies that examine the pre-1930 emergence of democracy in Central America (Mahoney 2001; Lehoucq and Molina 2002; Yashar 1997) and in selected South American countries (Botana 2012; Remmer 1984; Scully 1992; Collier 1999; López-Alves 2000; López 2005b; Valenzuela 1998; Castro 2012; Mazzuca and Robinson 2009; Posada-Carbó 2012; Valenzuela 1985; Vanger 2010). Historians have also produced some illuminating studies that have sought to describe the conduct of elections and politics in nineteenth-century Latin America (Annino 1995; Drake 2009; Malamud 2000b; Posada-Carbó 1996b; Posada-Carbó and Valenzuela 2012; Sabato 2018). This, however, is the first book-length study to seek to explain the first wave of democratization in South America as a whole.[4]

In doing so, I enlist both qualitative and quantitative evidence. The research for this book included the compilation of systematic data on elections, parties, revolts, and the military in South America during a period covering more than 100 years, from independence to 1929. I relied on the burgeoning Spanish, English, and Portuguese literature on this period to compile databases and analyze the processes of military professionalization, party development, and democratization. I also used a variety of archival sources,

[4] López-Alves (2000) examines state-building and regime formation in five South American countries but ends his study in 1900 before most South American countries enacted the key democratic reforms.

including census data, presidential messages, texts of legislative debates on reforms, contemporary journalistic accounts, and letters and memoirs of the key participants.

As part of this study, I developed two original databases: the Latin American Historical Elections Database (LAHED); and the Latin American Revolts Database (LARD).[5] LAHED, which is discussed in Chapter 2, provides comprehensive data on presidential elections in all ten South American nations between independence and 1929, including the vote totals, information on the contenders, and measures of the competitiveness and fairness of the elections. LARD, which is discussed in Chapter 3, contains data on all revolts in South America from 1830 to 1929, including information on their leaders, participants, aims, battle deaths, and outcomes. Both these databases are currently being extended to the present time and the rest of Latin America with the assistance of various collaborators.

In addition, like some pioneering recent studies on democratic emergence (cf. Mares 2015; Ziblatt 2017), this study tested some of its central arguments by carrying out statistical analyses of the determinants of legislators' support for key democratic reform measures in Argentina and Chile. This required the compilation of original data sets on legislators and their districts.[6]

At its core, however, this is a work of comparative historical analysis. According to Thelen and Mahoney (2015), comparative historical analysis is a largely inductive research approach, which stresses historical process-tracing, comparisons across countries and time, and the careful elucidation of causal mechanisms.[7] It emphasizes getting the cases right, focusing on internal rather than external validity. This approach allows for consideration of a broad range of explanatory variables, not simply those that are available in large-n data sets or that can be easily collected. This study examines both the long-term processes (e.g., opposition party development and the formation of strong militaries) and the short-term factors (e.g., ruling party splits) that led to democracy and democratic reform. In this way, it seeks to strike a balance between distal and proximate causes and minimize the problems associated with both types of explanations, such as the difficulty of identifying the direct impact of distal factors or the myopia that occurs when scholars focus merely on precipitating events (Coppedge 2012, 120–122).

This study relies centrally on process-tracing evidence that directly links the independent variables to the outcomes of interest. It delineates the causal process through which the independent variables brought about (or impeded) democratization in each country. For example, it does not simply show that the countries with strong opposition parties democratized, while countries with weak parties did not. It also demonstrates that strong opposition parties

[5] LARD is being developed jointly with Luis Schenoni, Guillermo Kreiman, and Paola Galano Toro.
[6] For a detailed discussion of these analyses, see Madrid (2019a; 2019b).
[7] See also Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003, 10–15).

actively promoted democratic reforms and used their legislative influence to enact them. Similarly, in exploring whether ruling party splits played a role in the democratization process in any of the countries, it does not just show that splits immediately preceded democratization in each country. It also demonstrates that the splits directly contributed to democratization since following the split, the ruling party dissidents allied with the opposition to enact democratic reforms.

The proposed causal relationships that I identify in this study are probabilistic rather than deterministic ones, however. Although strong militaries, strong opposition parties, and ruling party splits jointly increased the likelihood of democratic transitions in South America during this period, I do not claim that they were necessary or sufficient conditions for democracy. The literature has identified multiple paths to democracy, and it is quite possible that democracy in the region could have arisen in some other manner. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, the only South American countries to democratize all pursued the path discussed here, even though the precise details of the democratization process varied somewhat from country to country.

Although the empirical scope of this study is the first wave of democratization in South America, the theoretical arguments should apply to some extent to any electoral authoritarian regime that allows a degree of political contestation.[8] The arguments, however, would presumably not apply to exclusionary authoritarian regimes since opposition parties in these regimes would have few opportunities to enact democratic reforms, and strong militaries might be used to repress the opposition and impede democratization. It is also quite likely that some factors that played little role in the democratization process in South America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as international pressures, mattered more in other periods and regions. Nevertheless, I would still expect a minimal level of party and military development to be conducive to democratization in other contexts.

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Any study of democratization must deal with the complex issue of how to measure democracy and identify when it first emerged. In measuring democracy, I follow the minimalist definition advocated by Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán (2001), which requires: (1) fair and competitive elections; (2) the protection of civil and political rights; and (3) elected government control of major policy decisions and the military. I count countries with no major violations of these three criteria as democratic, even though they may have partial violations

[8] According to Schedler (2013, 2), electoral authoritarian regimes "establish the institutions of liberal democracy on paper, yet subvert them in practice through severe, widespread, and systematic manipulation."

and thus not be fully democratic.[9] I deliberately set a low bar for countries to count as democratic in part because partial violations of these criteria were widespread during this period. Thus, I refer to countries as democratic that would not count as democratic by current standards.

Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán (2001) make universal suffrage an additional requirement for countries to count as democratic after 1950, but they relax this requirement for regimes prior to 1950. Because this book focuses on the pre-1930 period in South America, I also omit this criterion. To insist upon universal suffrage as a requirement for democracy would obscure the important democratic progress that some South American countries achieved in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As we shall see, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay took important steps in the early twentieth century to establish free and fair elections and maintain civil and political liberties, which made them minimally democratic by my definition even though they retained some suffrage restrictions.[10]

The democracies that emerged in this period might be more accurately referred to as limited or partial democracies, given the continuing suffrage restrictions that they maintained. No South American country granted women the right to vote prior to 1929 and some countries that I count as democratic, such as Chile and Colombia, maintained income and/or literacy restrictions during this period. For simplicity, however, I refer to these countries as democratic even though they were clearly not full democracies. Moreover, the elite nature of these democracies should not be exaggerated. Both Argentina and Uruguay allowed virtually universal male suffrage during this period, and even though Chile and Colombia retained some literacy and/or income requirements, these restrictions became less important over time owing to growing incomes and literacy rates in these countries. By the early twentieth century, many members of the lower classes in all four countries could and did vote. Indeed, as Chapter 2 shows, voter turnout rose considerably in all four countries during the early twentieth century.

I define the emergence of democracy in South America as the first ten-year period during which no major violations of democratic criteria took place. I stipulate a ten-year period to ensure that democratic institutions and practices have taken root. By this definition, democracy arose in South America in the first decades of the twentieth century.[11] This is not to suggest that the region was entirely authoritarian in the nineteenth century. As various historians have

[9] Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán (2001) classify countries with partial violations of these criteria, such as Colombia from 1910 to 1948, as semi-democratic, but I eschew the use of this term in part because no South American regime before 1930 was fully democratic.

[10] I would also note that free and fair elections are important even in the absence of universal suffrage, whereas universal suffrage is of little meaning if elections are neither free nor fair.

[11] I refer to the emergence of democracy in Chile as taking place in the early twentieth century because it did not complete the required ten-year period of democratic rule until 1906 even though it held its first relatively free and fair presidential election in 1896.

TABLE I.1 *Conceptualization and measurement of key variables*

Concept	Operationalization	Sources of quantitative data
Degree of democracy	1. Free and fair elections 2. Civil and political liberties 3. Elected leaders must be in control of the military and major policy decisions	LAHED; Coppedge et al. (2023); Mainwaring and Pérez-Linán (2013)
Degree of regime stability	1. Number of major outsider revolts 2. Number of executive overthrows	LARD
Military strength	1. The number of military personnel 2. Imports of weaponry 3. Number of military schools 4. Degree of use of meritocratic criteria for promotion	Correlates of War (2020); Toronto (2017); Coppedge et al. (2020)
Party strength	1. Strength of ties to the electorate 2. Degree of party organization	Coppedge et al. (2024b)

shown, many nineteenth-century elections were competitive, and some were probably even free and fair. Nevertheless, these democratic episodes proved short lived, as Chapter 2 discusses.[12] The presidents elected in relatively free and fair elections during the nineteenth century were either overthrown shortly after coming to power or themselves undermined democracy by presiding over unfair elections or engaging in repression. Perhaps most importantly, the brief democratic episodes left no enduring institutions or norms. Indeed, the countries that had democratic episodes during this period did not become more democratic in the long term than the countries that had no such episodes.

Table I.1 provides summary information on how I conceptualize and measure the key variables in this study. (Chapters 2–4 discuss the measurement of these variables in more detail.) In coding the variables, I rely not just on the quantitative indicators in the sources identified in the table but also on qualitative assessments gleaned from the extensive historical literatures on the military, parties, and regimes in South America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which are discussed in Chapters 5–8.

I measure the stability of regimes by the degree to which they managed to avoid major outsider revolts and unconstitutional overthrows of their executives.[13] As Chapter 3 discusses, I define a major revolt as one involving at least 500 rebels. Stable regimes generally had few, if any, revolts from outside the state apparatus, and those revolts they did have tended to be relatively small. I define an executive overthrow as an instance where the president or supreme

[12] I refer to brief episodes of democracy as ephemeral democratization.

[13] Insider revolts tend to have little impact on political stability unless they succeed in overthrowing the executive.

leader of the nation is removed in an unconstitutional manner, typically by force or the threat of force. In stable regimes, executives are not overthrown or removed via unconstitutional procedures. Stable regimes typically change their leaders at regular intervals through elections, although those elections may not be free and fair. Stable regimes may even have unscheduled leadership changes owing to the death, resignation, or impeachment of their executives, provided that these leadership changes adhere to constitutional rules. Stable regimes may be authoritarian or democratic. I refer to those democracies that are prone to instability in the long run as weak democracies, and those democracies that are relatively stable in the long run as strong democracies.

As Chapter 3 indicates, I count as strong those militaries that had relatively large standing armies, possessed sophisticated weaponry, employed merit-based criteria for the recruitment and promotion of officers, and maintained multiple schools that provided training to officers. The number of military personnel is the traditional, and presumably the most important, measure of military strength, but the other indicators also shape the power capabilities of the military. More professionalized armies tend to be more powerful armies. I focus on the army rather than other branches of the military because in the nineteenth and early twentieth century armies played the most important role in the maintenance or overthrow of regimes.

As Chapter 4 discusses, I count as strong those parties that maintained extensive national organizations and widespread and lasting ties to the electorate. Strong parties had permanent organizational structures throughout much of the country. They also enjoyed the enduring support of significant portions of voters.

It is important to note that these are continuous variables, although I frequently break down the variables into dichotomous categories, such as strong or weak, stable or unstable, and democratic or authoritarian. In making these distinctions, I set a relatively low bar for what counts as strong, stable, and democratic to adapt my categories to the conditions and standards of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. What I classify as a strong party or a strong military during the nineteenth or early twentieth century would certainly not qualify as such by current standards of party or military strength. Similarly, the South American regimes that I count as stable or democratic might not be considered particularly stable or democratic today. Nevertheless, as this book shows, the differences that existed between militaries, parties, and regimes in South America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century were significant and had meaningful consequences in both the short and long term.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1, "Armies, Parties, and the Birth of Democracy," lays out the central theoretical arguments of the book. It argues that three factors played a key role in the emergence of democracy in region: the professionalization of

the military, the rise of strong opposition parties, and splits within the ruling party. It analyzes what led to the professionalization of the military and the rise of strong opposition parties and it shows how they led to varying regime outcomes in South America. This chapter also discusses why existing theories of democracy can offer only a partial explanation for the emergence of democracy in the region.

Chapter 2, "Elections and Democracy in South America before 1930," uses an original database on historical elections in South America to examine the dependent variable of this study, exploring when and where democracy first emerged in the region. Scholars traditionally portrayed nineteenth-century elections in Latin America as farces, but in recent years historians have challenged this view. This chapter shows that many South American elections in the nineteenth century involved significant participation and competition, and a few were even free and fair. Nevertheless, authoritarian rule predominated. Most elections were noncompetitive, numerous restrictions on the franchise existed, and voter turnout tended to be low in comparison to Europe and the United States. Moreover, the few democratic episodes in the nineteenth century proved to be quite brief, as the freely elected presidents were either overthrown or subverted democracy to perpetuate themselves or their allies in power. However, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, a great divide occurred. A few South American countries, namely Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay, established democratic regimes that lasted a dozen years or more. By contrast, authoritarian rule held fast or deepened in the other six countries of the region.

Chapter 3, "Military Professionalization and the Decline of Revolts in South America," argues that the professionalization of the armed forces played a key role in the emergence of democracy in the region by bringing an end to the opposition revolts that had plagued the region in the nineteenth century. It employs an original database on historical revolts in South America to trace the evolution of political violence in the region and analyze its causes and consequences. The chapter shows that revolts plagued Latin America throughout the nineteenth century, and these revolts undermined the prospects for democracy by overthrowing elected governments and provoking state repression. Most of these revolts were outsider rebellions – that is, they came from opposition groups and other forces outside the state apparatus. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, most South American countries strengthened and professionalized their armed forces with the assistance of foreign military missions. As a result, the opposition abandoned the armed struggle and began to focus on the electoral path to power, which had positive implications for democracy in the region. Nevertheless, a few countries were slow to modernize their militaries, which led to continued revolts in these countries. Moreover, insider revolts, especially military coups, continued to plague many South American countries. A series of regression analyses show that increases in military strength and professionalization are correlated with a decline in outsider revolts, but not insider revolts, during this period.

Chapter 4, "The Origins of Strong Parties in South America," examines what led to the emergence of the strong parties that played a key role in the democratization process in South America. It shows that during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, relatively strong national parties arose in Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay, and, to a lesser extent, in Argentina and Paraguay, but not in the other South American countries. The chapter argues that two main factors shaped party development during this period. First, strong parties emerged in countries that had intense but relatively balanced religious or territorial cleavages, where neither side of a cleavage clearly dominated the other. The religious cleavage, which pitted conservative supporters of the Catholic Church against liberal advocates of church–state separation, generated the strongest attachments and proved most conducive to party building, especially in Chile and Colombia where both liberals and conservatives were numerous. Territorial cleavages only generated powerful parties in Uruguay where the capital city controlled roughly similar levels of economic, political, and military resources as the provinces. In addition, strong parties tended to emerge in countries that had populations concentrated in relatively small areas without major geographic barriers. In these countries, it was easier for politicians to mount national campaigns and for party leaders to develop organizations that penetrated the entire country. These arguments are explored through comparative statistics and brief case studies of party development in all ten South American countries.

Chapter 5, "The Roots of Strong Democracies," shows how the development of strong parties and professional militaries contributed to the emergence of enduring democracies in Chile and Uruguay. Both countries developed strong parties during the late nineteenth century thanks in part to the geographic concentration of the population and the existence of a relatively balanced religious cleavage in Chile and center–periphery cleavage in Uruguay. During the nineteenth century, opposition parties at times resorted to revolts, but once the military professionalized, the opposition began to focus exclusively on the electoral route to power. This occurred in the late nineteenth century in Chile but not until the early twentieth century in Uruguay. In both countries, opposition parties pushed for democratic reforms to enfranchise their supporters and level the electoral playing field. It was not until the ruling party split, however, that the opposition managed to enact major democratic reforms. This took place in Chile in 1890 and in Uruguay in 1917. In both countries, strong opposition parties played a central role, not only in the enactment of the reforms but also in their subsequent enforcement.

Chapter 6, "The Roots of Weak Democracies," examines how parties and the military shaped democracy in Argentina and Colombia. In Argentina, only one strong party arose during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the opposition Radical Civic Union (UCR). The Radicals initially sought power through armed revolts as well as elections, but the professionalization of the military at the end of the nineteenth century made armed struggle futile.

The Radicals then opted for electoral abstention, declaring they would only participate in elections if democratic reforms were enacted. A split within the ruling National Autonomist Party led to the enactment of democratic reforms in 1912, which paved the way for the Radicals to win the 1916 presidential elections. Once the Radicals took power, however, Argentina lacked a strong opposition party, which undermined democracy in the long run because the opposition could neither compete in elections nor resist efforts by the executive to concentrate power. By contrast, two strong parties arose in Colombia during the nineteenth century thanks to a relatively balanced religious cleavage, which gave birth to numerous liberals as well as conservatives. Whichever party was in the opposition took up arms frequently against the government during the nineteenth century, which led to state repression and undermined constitutional rule. The bloody Thousand Days War (1899–1902), however, pushed Colombia to take steps to professionalize its armed forces, which in turn forced the opposition to abandon the armed struggle and focus on the electoral path to power. Although the opposition initially faced an uneven playing field, a split within the ruling party in the first decade of the twentieth century led ruling party dissidents to form an alliance with the opposition Liberal Party and push through democratic reforms. In the wake of these reforms, Colombian elections became relatively free and fair. Nevertheless, the country's military never managed to acquire a monopoly on force throughout the country, which led to increasing regional violence as time went on, thereby undermining the country's democracy.

Chapter 7, "The Roots of Stable Authoritarianism," explores the reasons why Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela had relatively stable autocracies during the early twentieth century. All three countries professionalized their militaries during this period, which helped bring an end to the frequent revolts that had undermined their prospects for democracy in the nineteenth century. None of the three countries developed strong parties, however. The absence of strong parties impeded democratization in several ways. First, party weakness allowed presidents to concentrate authority and extend their hold on power in some cases. Second, and even more importantly, the weakness of opposition parties meant that the opposition had little chance of winning elections or enacting democratic reforms, particularly in the face of widespread government electoral manipulation. As a result, the opposition frequently abstained from elections, which only deepened authoritarian rule in these countries. In some instances, notably in Peru, the opposition also encouraged the military to intervene to overthrow the president, which undermined otherwise stable regimes.

Chapter 8, "The Roots of Unstable Authoritarianism," examines the failed struggle for democracy in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In contrast to the other South American countries, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay made relatively little progress in professionalizing their armies in the early twentieth century and were not able

to establish a monopoly on violence. As a result, the opposition, especially in Paraguay and Ecuador, continued to seek power via armed revolt, which undermined constitutional rule and encouraged state repression. The weakness of parties in Bolivia and Ecuador also enabled presidents to manipulate elections, resist democratic reforms, and run roughshod over the opposition.

The Conclusion summarizes the main arguments in the book and discusses to what extent the factors that shaped regimes outcomes in the early twentieth century mattered post-1929. It also discusses the broader theoretical implications of the book, analyzes to what extent the arguments work in Mexico and Central America, and lays out an agenda for future research on historical democratization.