When do countries democratize? What facilitates the survival of authoritarian regimes? What determines the occurrence of revolutions, often leading to left-wing dictatorships, such as the Soviet regime? Although a large literature has developed since Aristotle through contemporary political science to answer these questions, we still lack a convincing understanding of the process of political development. Employing analytical tools borrowed from game theory, Carles Boix offers a complete theory of political transitions, in which political regimes ultimately hinge on the nature of economic assets, their distribution among individuals, and the balance of power among different social groups. Supported by detailed historical work and extensive statistical analysis that goes back to the mid-nineteenth century, this book shows, among many other things, why democracy triumphed in nineteenth-century agrarian Norway, Switzerland and the Northeastern United States yet failed in countries with a powerful landowning class. It accounts for the spread of democracy in the developed world while clarifying why authoritarianism prevails in wealthy oil nations and explains the distribution of revolutionary outbursts and regime shifts in the world in the last two centuries. To round off its exploration of the nature of political regimes, the book offers as well an assessment of the distributive and governance consequences of democracies and dictatorships.

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A l’Alícia
“…more than reason.” (Much Ado about Nothing, V, 4)
Democracy and Redistribution

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