Introduction

Culture is often dismissed as no more than the exotic mask of universal rationality. Less often, but with equal certitude, culture is treated as a master force capable of subordinating even the impulse and logic of self-interest. Neither extreme is theoretically or empirically justifiable, especially when dealing with the relationship between politics and culture. This book seeks an analytically sustainable middle ground. In so doing, it heeds calls for an approach to the study of politics that integrates elements of rationalist, structural, and cultural theories.[1] Two broad arguments emerge.

The first is that because politics is about the definition, pursuit, and distribution of justifiable power, polities are at base regimes of encompassing arbitration, and as such they are crucially shaped by political culture. I define a regime of encompassing arbitration as interrelated norms, practices, and processes – formal and informal – for the airing, dismissal, and resolution of momentous public disputes among subjects/citizens and between subjects/citizens and the state. Thus, the allocation of rights to vocality, the assignation of merit and responsibility, the nature of what is public, the willingness of contenders to submit to binding decisions, the regnant standards of fairness, and the mechanisms of enforcement are all features of arbitration regimes. But the emblematic features of such regimes are also their most delicate functions, namely the legitimation of their own authority and, most obviously, the elevation and displacement of arbiters.

Legitimation and the elevation and displacement of arbiters are the emblems of regimes because they represent a judgment about what constitutes authority and who is entitled or qualified to wield it. These reflexive functions

[1] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, "Toward an Integrated Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution," in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159.

of arbitration regimes become absolutely critical when the need for a super-arbiter arises, as during a crisis of succession.[2]

From this perspective, the rise and fall of polities through history as well as the fray of the immediate moment entwine the pursuit of interests with visions of justice and notions of the possible. Politics, in other words, is thoroughly robust. Even "the despotism of the leaders," Robert Michels once wrote about parties, "does not arise solely from a vulgar lust of power or from uncontrolled egoism, but is often the outcome of a profound and sincere conviction of their own value and of the services which they have rendered to the common cause."[3]

Political culture influences the legitimation of regimes and the elevation and displacement of arbiters in the same way that it influences the construction and effectiveness of encompassing arbitration. In highly stylized fashion, the claim here is as follows. Political culture shapes actors' understanding of what is fair and feasible – it shapes their normative realism. Actors are realistic because in the pursuit of their agendas, they seek a reasonable grip on the possibility of things – on the causal chains that presumably hold reality together across time and space.[4] Their realism is normative because difficult though it may be to quantify normative imperatives, any seasoned actor knows that in politics, as in other domains of life, people look for compelling reasons to select one alternative over another when facing a difficult choice.[5] In the struggles and settlements over vital issues such as the assignation of responsibility and merit, the crafting of standards of fairness, and the allocation of rights to vocality, no reason can be more powerful than one that appeals simultaneously to actors' selfishness, sense of justice, and notions of the possible.

The force of this manifold appeal, in fact, helps determine how, when, and why we bargain, struggle, capitulate, or create new options and reset our limits for transformative collective action. Or stated more broadly, it is partly because of political culture that we live in the worlds that we inherit but are still capable

[2] Short of a crisis, consolidated regimes of encompassing arbitration settle all manner of conflicting claims more or less simultaneously. The representative model of democratic arbitration, for example, relies on the principle of election to settle differences in claims to authoritative roles, and it relies on the derivative prerogatives of elected officials to reach substantive settlements. The profound dilemmas and ambiguities that emerge from time to time are typically the concern of judicial courts, whose deliberations are the most easily recognizable form of arbitration but not its *ultima ratio*.

[3] Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, 2nd paperback ed. (New York: Free Press, 1968), 222.

[4] Actors' realism, to the extent that it implies a concern with causality and interests, resembles the theory that seeks to explain phenomena in the field of international relations. For the theory of international relations, see Alexander Wendt and Ian Shapiro, "The Misunderstood Promise," in Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed., *Contemporary Empirical Political Theory* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 169–71.

[5] For the concept of compelling reasons, see Eldar Shafir, Itamar Simonson, and Amos Tversky, "Reason-Based Choice," *Cognition: International Journal of Cognitive Science* 49, nos. 1–2 (October/November 1993): 11–36.

of making the worlds that we imagine. This broad assertion brings us to the question: What precisely is political culture? Almost four decades ago, Gabriel A. Almond and Sydney Verba provided a definition of political culture which, even as it came under increasingly intense challenges, remained influential. Relying on the view that *culture* is a set of "psychological orientations toward social objects," Almond and Verba defined *political* culture as a population's "internalized cognitions, feelings, and evaluations" of the political system.[6]

Taking into account subsequent reformulations of culture in general and political culture in particular (see Chapter 1), this book's second argument, however, is that political culture is best defined as a system for normative scheming embedded in a field of imaginable possibilities. The premise here is that political actors must traffic between their interior and external worlds because they are concerned not only with practical outcomes but also with the relational feasibility of their goals and the appropriateness of their means. This crossdimensional character of actors' operations, like the compound nature of their concerns, is an extension of the imperatives they face as self-interested, rational beings who, *a fortiori*, operate in a universe of relationships.[7]

So how do actors negotiate this complex of imperatives? Thucydides gave one possible answer long ago when he observed that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." But if he was right, how do we explain the variations in inclusiveness, efficacy, resilience, and legitimacy of particular regimes, both strong and weak? And what are we to make of the informal adaptations that in the practice of politics so often reshape formal frameworks?

The most straightforward answer to these queries is that arbitration regimes themselves provide the rules and processes for adjudicating among imperatives. This response, however, ultimately raises deeper questions.[8] For example, what accounts for different notions of appropriateness, and for the different types of arbitration regimes we find throughout history and across nations? Chiefs, sultans, kings, and emperors, after all, have proven more ubiquitous and, in the broad sweep of history, more enduring arbiters than firmly established party-states and liberal democracies.[9] Studies that are particularly concerned with democratic-capitalist development, as this book is, must contend with the

[6] Gabriel A. Almond and Sydney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Boston: Little Brown, 1965), 13–14.

[7] Gary Miller, "The Impact of Economics on Contemporary Political Science," *Journal of Economic Literature* 35, no. 3 (September 1997): 1178.

[8] The rule of law, for example, is generally seen as an obvious extension of effective democratic arbitration. But the rule of law itself must rely on a final arbiter; and deciding, typically in moments of crisis, who is to be this arbiter can be a contentious process even in firmly established democracies. This ambiguity helps explains why American constitutional scholars continue to probe the meaning and applicability of judicial primacy.

[9] For an excellent analysis of the democratic model, see Larry Diamond, "Three Paradoxes of Democracy," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 97–107.

underlying riddle of arbitration regimes. They must confront the question of how they arise, consolidate, transform, and collapse.

Redefining Political Culture

By redefining political culture as a system of normative scheming embedded in a field of imaginable possibilities, we can begin to trace and link the microfoundations and macrodynamics that hold the key to this puzzle. As with the arguments outlined previously, this one, too, is elaborated in Chapter 1. A schematic discussion, however, may be useful at this point.

Max Weber once said that a group has a "distinctiveness" all its own.[10] In this book, this distinctiveness is tantamount to a collective identity; it is the group's intersubjective understanding of its own defining virtues and practical competence. It is in the context of normative realism, grounded in a collectivity's identity, that political actors behave as normative schemers, calibrating a more or less tenable balance between their own self-seeking behavior and the collectively acceptable and relationally feasible. Through normative scheming, in other words, political actors try as best they can to conciliate the pressure of self-regard with the "distinctive" norms and capabilities that stem from their group's identity.

From this perspective, a group's understanding of its own practical competence is identity-based because political actors craft past struggles, victories, and defeats into a putatively evidentiary record of their possession and use of common moral, intellectual, military, and technological resources. It is from this ongoing relationship between identity-based narratives and politics that common visions of fate and possibility emerge.

Also from this perspective, norms are neither pure artifacts of self-interested rationalization, nor are they reducible either to individual or collective optimization.[11] If anything, because rational actors defend, manipulate, and reshape collective norms, they acquire proprietary stakes in their formation. Thus, by drawing on the "evidence" of collective competence for their individual ends, and by constantly engaging with collective norms, rational, self-seeking members of a group, as if directed by a Lockean hand, mix their creativity and labor with their group's distinctiveness. This is why even the most unabashed manipulators of norms are also cultural proprietors capable of normative outrage. Among other things, this means that while group distinctiveness is malleable, so-called cultural entrepreneurs are not themselves beyond the reach of the culture they manipulate.

The practice of normative scheming thus reunites that which can only be divorced in theory. It reunites, in Albert Hirschman's words, "the passions and

[10] See Peter Breiner, "The Political Logic of Economics and the Economic Logic of Modernity in Max Weber," *Political Theory* 23, no. 1 (February 1995): 25–47.

[11] This argument is best developed by Jon Elster, *The Cement of Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 125.

the interests." This reunification means taking seriously the general observation that while parsimonious theoretical models may ignore, "greed, hatred, and envy, as well as morality and self-sacrifice," they are not "absent in the world."[12] And it means recognizing the simple fact that properly socialized individuals are expected to distinguish between "honest self-interest" and "opportunism."[13]

The distinction itself between honest self-interest and opportunism, undoubtedly, can be an object of contention. In pre-Columbian Mexico, for example, the Mexica people criticized the Pochtecas – a tribe of professional long-distance merchants – as "greedy" and "covetous." But the Mexica political authorities intervened in the matter, celebrating the Pochtecas as "caravans of bearers" who "made the Mexican state great."[14]

This ancient story about selfish appetites, collective judgments, and arbitration powers repeats itself a thousand times. In pursuit of our interests, we seek a throne, a spouse's allegiance, a plot of land. But our quests often evoke contradictory passions because thrones, marital fidelity, and material resources are more than the stuff of security and power. They are also collective normative statements that specify the requisite merits and duties of those who claim or possess them. Hence Hamlet's outrage at his uncle's usurpation of kingly authority and his anguish over his mother's incestuous transgressions. Hence the need for socialist revolutionaries to launch moralist campaigns before seizing private banks and landed estates. And hence the careful attention paid by capital, labor, and even politicians to the legitimating mechanisms of market economies.

Implicit in this view of the world is not only the robustness of politics and the centrality of arbitration to regime definition, but also the importance of expressive articulation. The mechanics of normative scheming, for instance, lead even seemingly "unreasonable" leaders to justify to themselves and to others their quest for power, as well as its possession and uses. Moreover, in order to lead, leaders must externalize and amplify – they must broadly communicate and defend – their own compelling reasons. This is especially true at points when reason-based choice making involves alternative political and developmental paths.

The communication and defense of compelling reasons, as I show in this book, take place with close reference to actors' collective field of imaginable possibilities. This field, it must be clarified at once, is not necessarily the turf of "reasonable" interlocutors as conceived by liberal theorists.[15] It is simply

[12] Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," *World Politics* 40, no. 3 (April 1998): 344.

[13] Elster, *The Cement of Society*, 263–4.

[14] Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 8.

[15] For John Stuart Mill, for example, the *absence* of communication among even the most opinionated contenders impoverishes all the parties involved. See Diana C. Mutz, "Crosscutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice," *American Political Science Review* (henceforth *APSR*) 96, no. 1 (March 2002): 111.

the intersubjective domain for rhetorically organized assertions and contestations of the doable and the desirable. It is here that political vocality and normative realism meet; and so it is here that arbitration regimes find their primary grounding.

Rhetorical Politics: Revelation and Observation

The book's central arguments about political culture and its impact on regimes of encompassing arbitration flow directly from the integrative approach mentioned at the start. As in rational choice, normative scheming entails strategic action by goal-oriented, self-seeking actors.[16] But in accordance with key insights from structuralism, strategic action in both cooperation and conflict is embedded in a normative structure that is held together by actors' "moral grammar."[17] Finally, the concept of a collective field of imaginable possibilities builds on culturalists' concern with the construction, communication, and transformation of intersubjective meaning.

To gain analytical purchase on these moving parts, the book focuses on the observable strategies and practices of political actors as normative schemers, and on their equally observable influence on formal and informal arbitration. Thus, the book pays special attention to the rhetorical plays that make the "motives of competing parties intelligible, audiences available, expressions reciprocal, norms translatable, and silences noticeable."[18]

This emphasis on rhetorical politics enriches our analytical capacity on several counts. Most notably, because rhetoric is both about conflict and the search for commonly justifiable action,[19] it highlights not only the key points of contention and consensus that arise within a polity, but also the sources of contestation, the grounding of authority, and the nature of entitlements. Understanding

[16] Some rational choice theorists in political science have discarded the assumption of self-interest while retaining the element of consistency. Perhaps it ought to be the reverse. Self-interest, as Kristen Renwick Monroe points out, *is* a "good starting place for theories about how people act." See her essay "Human Nature, Identity, and the Search for a General Theory of Politics," in Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed., *Contemporary Empirical Political Theory* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 282. The same cannot be said for consistency. As Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman have shown, "people systematically violate the [rationality] requirements of consistency and coherence" when faced with decision problems. More interestingly still, these violations are closely related to the "decision frames" that actors adopt, which in turn are "controlled partially by the formulation of the problem and partly by the norms, habits, and personal characteristics of the decision-maker." Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science* 211, no. 4481 (January 1981): 453–8.

[17] This concept belongs to Axel Honneth. See Joel Anderson, translator's introduction to Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Polity Press, Cambridge, UK: 1995), xix.

[18] Thomas Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 1, 9.

[19] For a discussion on this dual aspect of rhetoric, see Arabella Lyon's commentary on Eugene Garver's *Rhetoric: An Art of Character* in Lyon's *Intentions: Negotiated, Contested, and Ignored* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1998), 14.

these sources better prepares us to investigate the more obvious particulars of arbitration. Who, for example, is in a position to render enforceable judgments, and why is that the case? And what are the requisites for vocality? In effect, who has access to the politics of contestation and accommodation, and why?

Beyond yielding these analytical advantages, a focus on rhetorical politics also provides us with interpretative insights about the intrinsically significant role of rhetorical politics. First and foremost, rhetorical politics tell us a great deal about the construction of actors' normative realism. Realist narratives, for example, make a strong claim to neutrality, and derive their authority from rendering history "as it really occurred" and the world "as it is."[20] A common understanding of political reality – the essential stuff of rhetorical strategies – is typically embedded in this kind of narrative. Rhetorical strategies, in turn, contain clues about the identity-based normative judgments that impinge on self-seeking agendas, precisely because they frequently hinge on the construction, manipulation, and reformulation of internally consistent arguments along the following line of reasoning: If this is who *we* are, then this is what we stand for, and this is what we are capable of; if this is who *they* are, then this is what they stand for, and this is what they are capable of.

In the most dramatic contestations of normative realism, sufficient upheaval may ensue to give rise to new arbiters – formal and informal. Disruption, however, can also entrench existing arbiters and can force novel combinations of old and new. In any event, close examination of rhetorical politics enables us to decipher the nature and distribution of responsibility and merit, and the calculations and preoccupations behind the formal and informal rulings that ultimately settle disputes and ratify agreements.[21]

In all of this, finally, the analyst need not be concerned with the sincerity of the actor(s), but rather with the blunt question: Are their actions consistent with their words? In the crudest terms, do they adhere, do they deliver? Other actors, of course, may be concerned with sincerity. Indeed, the politics of trust and mistrust hinge on the degree to which sincerity is an issue. And this second issue is also a matter of concern for the analyst. But the two – actual sincerity and perceived sincerity – are analytically distinguishable. This distinction, as we shall see, makes all the difference for our focus on rhetorical politics.

[20] See Patricia Seed, "Failing to Marvel: Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word," in *Latin American Research Review* (henceforth *LARR*) 26, no. 1 (1991): 10–11.

[21] For example, political explanations or accounts that aim either to justify or excuse the behavior of public officials – that is, accounts that aim to influence attribution of responsibility – have been shown to affect strongly American citizens' judgments of those officials. See Kathleen M. McGraw, "Managing Blame: An Experimental Test of the Effects of Political Accounts," *APSR* 85, no.4 (December 1991): 1133–57. Similarly, the "framing" of sociopolitical issues, ranging from poverty to racial inequality, by television newscasts affects the viewing public's attribution of responsibility. See S. Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

By maintaining this focus on rhetorical politics across long stretches of history, as well as on rhetorical politics at points of rupture, this book aims to accomplish three interrelated theoretical/explanatory goals. The first is to establish the endogenous sources of political-cultural continuity and transformation. The second is to identify the ways in which political-cultural dynamics shape the effectiveness, legitimacy, and changing stability of arbitration regimes. The third is to gain a more precise understanding of why some countries succeed at building both democratic regimes of arbitration and effective engines of socioeconomic progress while others fail at these major tasks. In sum, the book aims to explain how systems of normative scheming and attendant fields of imaginable possibilities help shape the development of nations.

Two Archetypical Cases

Culturalist approaches to democratic and economic development often turn on the distinction between Western and non-Western values and institutions. Civil democracy, in particular, is often seen from this perspective as determined either by countries' inheritance of such values and institutions, or by their (unlikely) capacity to Westernize their societies.[22] Eschewing this regional/civilizational dichotomization, this book tests its arguments against the radically divergent developmental experiences of two neighboring countries, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Both are small, peripheral economies, and both are former possessions of the Spanish Crown, and as such, both are Catholic, Spanish-speaking societies.

Each case is intriguing in its own way. Each case, in fact, is a developmental archetype. At the start of this new millennium, Costa Rica is the oldest democracy in Latin America, the brilliant success in whose light the failures of others can only appear more dismal. Its old regional competitors for high democratic distinction – Uruguay, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela – no longer pose a credible challenge. Between 1973 and 1984, a military dictatorship shattered Uruguay's strong democratic record; the same is true for Chile (1973–89); and for decades now, the Colombian and Venezuelan democracies have teetered on the brink of ruin.

Costa Rica also remains *the* Central American exception. While most of the isthmus plunged into political violence in the 1980s, Costa Rica's citizens not only held fast to their self-perception as an "inherently" civic people, but also held earnest discussions about how best to perfect and defend their democracy. (These discussions are all the more remarkable if we consider, for example, that voter abstention declined in Costa Rica from 32.8 percent in 1953 to 18.2 percent in 1990, while Latin America as a whole witnessed a noticeable erosion

[22] Robert W. Hefner, "On the History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Democratic Ideal," in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Democratic Civility: The History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 10–11.

in citizens' confidence in political institutions and/or an increase in voter absenteeism.[23])

Nicaragua, on the other hand, offers a sobering example of serial regime variation, having experienced in straight sequence a dynastic regime under the increasingly capricious rule of the Somoza family, a revolutionary regime under the FSLN, and since 1990, an electoral democracy which, afflicted by extreme venality and polarization, can barely begin to face its representational functions.[24]

The available explanations for these countries' sharply contrasting outcomes generally replicate the positions that have dominated broader social scientific debates about the sequencing of political and economic development. For some analysts, socioeconomic structures determine the modes of political struggle and organization – the battles, processes, and institutions that organize the pursuit of power and its distribution. For others, politics is a prior and autonomous realm in which socioeconomic structures are contested and configured. But careful exploration of the political and economic histories of Costa Rica and Nicaragua shows that there is no fixed rule as to which must come first. Rather, the sequencing of political and economic development is contingent on the establishment and efficacy of particular institutional ensembles of arbitration.

Examining the political-cultural development of the two countries from the colonial period to the present allows us to explore not only the formation of regimes of encompassing arbitration but also their relationship to political and economic development, including the issues of sequencing or timing. Once again, close examination of rhetorical politics is revealing. For example, scrutiny of political debates and associated struggles among political elites uncovers an explosive admixture of traditional and novel patterns of legitimation in postcolonial Nicaragua. First, postcolonial elites overwhelmingly agreed that the arbitration of competing claims to positions of authority ought to be organized around the principle of election. Second, their guiding vision was liberal republican, in the sense that the royal sovereign – the supreme colonial arbiter – was to be replaced by the popular sovereign. Third, however, elites'

[23] See Frances Hagopian, "Democracy and Political Representation in Latin America in the 1990s: Pause, Reorganization, or Decline?" in Felipe Aguero and Jeffrey Stark, eds., *Fault Lines of Democracy in Post-Transition Latin America* (Coral Gables, FL: North-South Center Press, University of Miami, 1998), 117, 119.

[24] The Somoza dynasty has been typically categorized as a Sultanistic regime. We will see that this categorization is only partially accurate. Sultanism is best described by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan: In Sultanism, there is a high fusion by the ruler of the private and public. The Sultanistic polity becomes the personal domain of the sultan. In this domain, there is no rule of law and there is low institutionalization. In Sultanism, there may be extensive social and economic pluralism, but almost never political pluralism, because political power is so directly related to the ruler's person. However, the essential reality in a Sultanistic regime is that all individuals, groups, and institutions are permanently subject to the unpredictable and despotic intervention of the sultan, and thus pluralism is precarious. See Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 52–3.

strict preference for electoral procedures took hold in an internal Manichean context shaped by the country's colonial experience. Fourth and finally, this blend of elections and Manicheanism yielded a system of normative scheming that ultimately diminished the value of "the people," polarized elite competition, stunted state building, and blocked economic development for almost four decades after independence. In short, an emphatic attempt to create a "pure" electoral, representative regime ushered in a dysfunctional postcolonial hybrid.

In postcolonial Costa Rica, by way of contrast, analysis of rhetorical politics shows that political elites paid no more than lip service to the principle of election. Instead, they organized their normative scheming and arbitration institutions around the criterion of substantive performance. Most notably, the legitimacy of rulers hinged not on an electoral mandate but on their demonstrable ability to deliver socioeconomic prosperity to the "inherently good" Costa Rican people while simultaneously refraining from displays of excessive ambition. Here, the faint emphasis on electoral, representative processes ushered in a functional hybrid regime.

The rhetorical politics of these countries in the twentieth century, moreover, point to a difficult but unmistakable transformation of these older patterns of legitimation. In Costa Rica, the increasing valorization of electoral politics began to catch up in the mid-1940s with the traditionally high valorization of substantive performance (measured by advances in socioeconomic development). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a functional and inextricable coexistence between the substantive criterion and the electoral principle was finally established by the interim revolutionary junta that governed the country in the wake of the 1948 Civil War. In Nicaragua, on the other hand, the electoral principle was drained of legitimating power as the Somoza and Sandinista regimes, each in its own way, sought substantive legitimation by touting economic transformation *and* political order as their justificatory logic. Both of these regimes ultimately failed, for reasons to be explored later in this book.

We can anticipate part of the answer to the question of the two countries' divergence, however, by referencing critical points of rupture in their political-cultural development. The Civil War of 1948 and subsequent junta rule in "law abiding and peaceful" Costa Rica is the most obvious example of discontinuity in that country. Less obvious but just as important is the so-called Thirty-Years Regime in "anarchic" Nicaragua (1857–93). Under this regime, an oligarchic democracy headed by the Conservative Party ruled in cooperation with Liberals, and was able to promote state building and infrastructural and economic development from a platform of relative political stability. This book is concerned with the origins and consequence of these uncharacteristic yet crucial episodes. In both instances, endogenous changes within the existing political cultures generated new imaginable possibilities.

The origins of Nicaragua's Thirty Years, also known as the Conservative Republic, can be clearly traced to elite regulation of political vocality, which in combination with a new set of supportive institutional rules provided the