This book sets forth a relatively novel theory of democratic governance, applicable to all political settings in which multiparty competition obtains. Against the prevailing decentralized theory (deriving from Madison and Montesquieu), John Gerring and Strom C. Thacker argue that good governance arises when political energies are focused toward the center. Two elements must be reconciled in order for this process of gathering together to occur: institutions must be inclusive, and they must be authoritative. The authors refer to this combination of attributes as “centripetal.”

While the theory has many potential applications, this book is concerned primarily with national-level political institutions. Among these, the authors argue that three are of fundamental importance in securing a centripetal style of democratic governance: unitary (rather than federal) sovereignty, a parliamentary (rather than presidential) executive, and a closed-list PR electoral system (rather than a single-member district or preferential-vote system). These institutions are tested against a broad range of governance outcomes.

John Gerring received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1993. He is currently Professor of Political Science at Boston University, where he teaches courses on methodology and comparative politics. His books include Party Ideologies in America, 1828–1996 (1998), Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework (2004), and Case Study Research: Principles and Practices (Cambridge University Press, 2007). His articles have appeared in American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Comparative Political Studies, International Organization, Journal of Policy History, Journal of Theoretical Politics, Party Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Polity, PS: Political Science and Politics, Social Science History, Studies in American Political Development, and World Politics. He was a Fellow of the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study (2002–03) and is the current recipient of a grant from the National Science Foundation (2007–10). He is the former editor of Qualitative Methods, the newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative and Multi-Measurement Research, and current president of the section.

Strom C. Thacker received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1996. He is currently Associate Professor of International Relations and Director of Latin American Studies at Boston University. His research and teaching focus broadly on questions of political economy, governance, and development, with a regional focus on Mexico and Latin America. His books include Big Business, the State, and Free Trade: Constructing Coalitions in Mexico (Cambridge University Press, 2000). He is currently working on a project on the politics of public health. He has published articles in American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Business and Politics, International Organization, Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs, and World Politics. He also has an ongoing interest in the politics of foreign aid and lending and the International Monetary Fund. He is a Faculty Affiliate of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University and a Fellow at the Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future at Boston University. He has been a Visiting Associate Professor of Government at Harvard University, a Susan Louise Dyer Peace Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, and a Fulbright Scholar.
A Centripetal Theory of Democratic Governance

JOHN GERRING
Boston University

STROM C. THACKER
Boston University
To Asli
J.G.
To Matthew, Caroline and William
S.C.T.
Of the many analogies that have been remarked between Law in the Physical and Law in the Moral World, none is more familiar than that derived from the Newtonian astronomy, which shows us two forces always operative in our solar system. One force draws the planets towards the sun as the centre of the system, the other disposes them to fly off from it into space. So in politics, we may call the tendency which draws men or groups of men together into one organized community and keeps them there a Centripetal force, and that which makes men, or groups, break away and disperse, a Centrifugal. A political Constitution or frame of government, as the complex totality of laws embodying the principles and rules whereby the community is organized, governed, and held together, is exposed to the action of both these forces. The centripetal force strengthens it, by inducing men (or groups of men) to maintain, and even to tighten, the bonds by which the members of the community are gathered into one organized body. The centrifugal assails it, by dragging men (or groups) apart, so that the bonds of connexion are strained, and possibly at last loosened or broken. . . . Accordingly the history of every community and every constitution may be regarded as a struggle between the action of these two forces, that which draws together and that which pushes apart, that which unites and that which dissevers.

– James Bryce (1905: 96–7)
Contents

List of Figures \hspace{1cm} page viii
List of Tables \hspace{1cm} ix
Acknowledgments \hspace{1cm} xi

1 Models of Governance \hspace{1cm} 1

PART ONE: CAUSAL MECHANISMS

2 Party Government \hspace{1cm} 27
3 Conflict Mediation \hspace{1cm} 39
4 Policy Coordination \hspace{1cm} 62

PART TWO: EMPIRICS

5 Hypotheses \hspace{1cm} 87
6 Cross-National Tests \hspace{1cm} 101
7 Assessing the Evidence \hspace{1cm} 143

PART THREE: CONCLUSIONS

8 In Defense of Grand Theory \hspace{1cm} 157
Appendix A: Defining Good Governance \hspace{1cm} 165
Appendix B: Alternative Theories Revisited \hspace{1cm} 179
Sources \hspace{1cm} 191
Author Index \hspace{1cm} 227
Subject Index \hspace{1cm} 234
Figures

1.1 Models of governance in two dimensions  page 17
1.2 Summary of the causal model  23
## Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Contrasting models of democratic governance</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Centripetalism in democratic polities, 2000</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Telephone mainlines</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Democratic volatility</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Import duties</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Growth volatility</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Infant mortality</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>Health expenditure</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>Summary of empirical tests</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Estimated effects of centripetal democratic governance</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

For comments and suggestions on portions of the manuscript we are grateful to Pablo Baramendi, Dawn Brancati, Tom Burke, Kent Eaton, Neil Englehart, Archon Fung, Chappell Lawson, Evan Lieberman, Arend Lijphart, Howard Reiter, David Samuels, Peter Spiegler, and David Waldner. For helpful answers to specific queries, or for sharing their data, we owe thanks to Victor Aguirregabiria, Andre Blais, John Carey, Tulia Falletti, Kenneth Hill, Macartan Humphreys, Mark Jones, Daniel Kaufmann, Philip Keefer, Atul Kohli, Branko Milanovic, Nicolas van de Walle, and David Weakliem. Thanks especially to Matt Shugart, whom we continually harassed for information regarding the shape of political institutions around the world. His encyclopedic knowledge was indispensable. For his ongoing support, and indefatigable patience, we are grateful to our editor at Cambridge University Press, Lew Bateman.

Portions of this book were presented at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association; the Department of Political Science, Brown University; the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics, Princeton University; the Institute for Advanced Study; the Comparative Politics Workshop, Princeton University; the Seminar on U.S. and World Affairs at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University; the Comparative Politics Workshop, Stanford University; the Workshop on the Economic Consequences of Democratic Institutions, Duke University; and the COMPASS research group, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. We thank all of the organizers of and participants in these
Acknowledgments

meetings for the opportunity to present our research and for their useful comments on it. Papers drawn from this project have been published in *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, and *Comparative Political Studies*. We thank the publishers for permission to incorporate portions of those papers into the book.

During the 2002–03 academic year, the authors were fortunate to obtain fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study (Gerring) and Stanford University’s Hoover Institution (Thacker). We are grateful to these institutions for their support, their delightful environs, and good company. Our departments at Boston University continue to provide a stimulating, supportive atmosphere for our teaching and research.

The book could not have been written without generous research funding from the Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future at Boston University. We wish, in particular, to thank Fred Pardee, David Fromkin, Maddie Goodwin, and Connie Cramer for their support of our research at the center.

We also want to express our deep gratitude to Carola Moreno and Rodrigo Alfaro, who patiently worked through countless revisions of the data analysis and provided stellar research assistance.

Finally, we thank our families for their unending support throughout the long process of writing this book.
A Centripetal Theory of Democratic Governance