Authoritarian Police in Democracy

In countries around the world, from the United States to the Philippines to Chile, police forces are at the center of social unrest and debates about democracy and rule of law. This book examines the persistence of authoritarian policing in Latin America to explain why police violence and malfeasance remain pervasive decades after democratization. It also examines the conditions under which reform can occur. Drawing on rich comparative analysis and evidence from Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia, the book opens up the "black box" of police bureaucracies to show how police forces exert power and cultivate relationships with politicians, as well as how social inequality impedes change. González shows that authoritarian policing persists not in spite of democracy but in part because of democratic processes and public demand. When societal preferences over the distribution of security and coercion are fragmented along existing social cleavages, politicians possess few incentives to enact reform.

Yanilda María González is Assistant Professor of Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School. She holds a PhD in Politics and Social Policy from Princeton University and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School.

Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics

Other Books in the Series

Christopher Adolph, *Bankers, Bureaucrats, and Central Bank Politics: The Myth of Neutrality*
Michael Albertus, *Autocracy and Redistribution: The Politics of Land Reform*
Santiago Anria, *When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective*
Ben W. Ansell, *From the Ballot to the Blackboard: The Redistributive Political Economy of Education*
Ben W. Ansell and Johannes Lindvall, *Inward Conquest: The Political Origins of Modern Public Services*
Ben W. Ansell and David J. Samuels, *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*
Adam Michael Auerbach, *Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Goods Provision in India's Urban Slums*
Ana Arjona, *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*
Leonardo R. Arriola, *Multi-Ethnic Coalitions in Africa: Business Financing of Opposition Election Campaigns*
David Austen-Smith, Jeffry A. Frieden, Miriam A. Golden, Karl Ove Moene, and Adam Przeworski, eds., *Selected Works of Michael Wallerstein: The Political Economy of Inequality, Unions, and Social Democracy*
S. Erdem Aytaç and Susan C. Stokes *Why Bother? Rethinking Participation in Elections and Protests*
Andy Baker, *The Market and the Masses in Latin America: Policy Reform and Consumption in Liberalizing Economies*

Continued after the Index

Authoritarian Police in Democracy

Contested Security in Latin America

YANILDA MARÍA GONZÁLEZ
Harvard Kennedy School

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108830393
DOI: 10.1017/9781108907330

First published 2021

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
NAMES: González, Yanilda Mariá, author.
TITLE: Authoritarian Police in Democracy : contested security in Latin America / Yanilda Mariá González.
DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020024237 (print) | LCCN 2020024238 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108830393 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108907330 (ebook)
SUBJECTS: LCSH: Police – Latin America. | Police misconduct – Latin America. | Democracy – Latin America. | Violent crime – Latin America. | Internal security – Latin America. | Latin America – Politics and government.
CLASSIFICATION: LCC HV8160.5.A2 G66 2021 (print) | LCC HV8160.5.A2 (ebook) | DDC 363.2098–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020024237
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020024238

ISBN 978-1-108-83039-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-82074-5 Paperback

Contents

Figures

Tables

Acknowledgments

Many of us who study the police have likely come across a phrase written by veteran police scholar David Bayley: "A scholar who studies the police must be willing to do extensive fieldwork in unprepossessing surroundings, to brave bureaucratic intransigence, and to become politically suspect and socially déclassé." Over the course of two-and -a-half years of field research for this project, I can attest to the particular challenges of studying the police, from the discomfort of officers candidly recounting their own abuses and of ordinary citizens gleefully celebrating torture and police killings to concerns for one's own safety. But this work has also shed light on the urgency of studying the police in order to understand how police constitute the palpable gap between formal democratic rights and lived experience.

The tensions between policing and democracy have long been evident to me. As an immigrant child growing up in New York City during the 1990s, my sisters and I watched the local news religiously (we didn't have cable), which seemed to be equally inundated with, on the one hand, a racialized discourse of panic over out-of-control crime and, on the other, stories of similarly racialized police violence, from the Central Park Five to Abner Louima, Nicholas Heyward Jr, and Amadou Diallo. The 9/11 attacks and their aftermath were similarly instructive. At the age of nineteen I began working at the New York Civil Liberties Union on a grassroots campaign focused on public education and mobilization around the threat of post-9/11 anti-terrorism policies to civil rights and civil liberties. Through this work I encountered many New Yorkers who defended racial and religious profiling, surveillance, and detentions without due process, insisting that the threat of terrorism necessitated

that we restrict some rights in the name of security. A few years later, I encountered similar contradictions upon arriving in Argentina as a Fulbright fellow in 2006 – the thirty-year anniversary of the military coup that gave rise to Argentina's infamously repressive dictatorship. In my interviews and everyday contexts I spoke with many Argentines who reminisced fondly about the dictatorship period, reasoning that at least back then crime wasn't a problem and they felt safe. Others commemorated the victims of state violence under the dictatorship and celebrated hard-won gains in human rights under democracy, while saying little about rampant police violence and its many victims under democracy.

These early experiences taught me invaluable lessons about the interdependence of and tensions between security and democracy that I sought to explore in this book. Security is a basic human right, without which the enjoyment of other rights and democratic citizenship become impossible. But security is not merely a public good: it is a site of contestation about the distribution of protection and repression, and the nature of that distribution can pose fundamental challenges for democracy. This book is an effort to grapple with this tension and elucidate some of its causes – and will hopefully contribute to debates about its solutions.

I am deeply indebted to Deborah Yashar, who provided much meaningful support and guidance throughout my academic career and the development of this project and who had an immeasurable impact on my identity as a scholar and educator. I'm also thankful for the support and guidance of Mark Beissinger and Evan Lieberman, whose early encouragement to focus on the politics of policing was essential for this project and for developing my own approach to political science.

During graduate school, I had the privilege of being part of the Drugs, Security, and Democracy Program (Social Science Research Council/Open Society Foundations), which not only provided generous funding for my dissertation fieldwork but also enabled me to take part in an amazing interdisciplinary network of scholars focused on violence, drugs, and security in Latin America. I cannot say enough praise about the DSD network and about the incredible scholars who constitute it, from whom I've learned so much, including Angelica Duran-Martinez, Lina Britto, Ana Villarreal, Ana Arjona, Benjamin Lessing, Jose Miguel Cruz, Eduardo Moncada, and Desmond Arias. Similarly, my time as a postdoctoral democracy fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic

Governance and Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School was a formative and transformative experience, where conversations with Archon Fung, Quinton Mayne, Candelaria Garay, and other democracy fellows profoundly shaped my thinking about policing and democracy.

This book benefited immensely from conversations with a range of scholars whose work I deeply admire, including Daniel Brinks, Beatriz Magaloni, Lisa Miller, Richard Snyder, and Vesla Weaver, who generously provided careful feedback on different sections and versions of this book. Other conversations were more informal but no less impactful. I often look back to a conversation at a coffee shop in São Paulo with Daniel Brinks and Tianna Paschel about identity, police, and democracy during the start of my fieldwork that continues to shape my thinking a decade later.

In addition to the generous mentorship from senior scholars, I'm also grateful for various spaces of peer mentorship. Throughout graduate school and since, Sarah El-Kazaz and Sharece Thrower have been friends and scholarly interlocutors, without whom I would not have been able to navigate generals, thesis prospectus, fieldwork, thesis writing, and the job market. I've also been incredibly fortunate to be part of writing groups with Emily Clough, Sheena Greitens, Alisha Holland, Kyle Jaros, Lauren McCarthy, Brian Palmer-Rubin, Suzanne Scoggins, and Nicholas Smith, who read countless pages of this book and greatly helped to improve its ideas and analysis. Conversations with wonderful friends and colleagues including Janice Gallagher, Lindsay Mayka, and Jessica Rich also helped strengthen this book and the field research that informs it.

I am indebted to the research assistants whose hard work, interest, and commitment helped make this book a lot better: Ignacio Claut, Santiago Battezzati, Carol Schlitter, Tatiana Machulis, Thaisa Ferreira, Jaime Landínez Aceros, Celina Doria, and Anne Ruelle.

I would like to thank the dozens of community leaders, human rights activists, researchers, police officers, and government officials in Buenos Aires City and Province, São Paulo, and Bogotá who welcomed me into their homes and places of work, took time out of their days to show me around their communities, invited me to their meetings and events, and shared their stories and experiences with me. I hope that in this work I was able to do justice to the lessons you taught me. I am especially grateful for the guidance of Débora Maria da Silva, whose words begin this book and whose life, struggle, and vision exemplify the challenges at its heart.

My deepest gratitude goes to my parents and their vision and hope for a better life. Before I learned English, my father translated my third-grade math word problems after a sixteen-hour workday so that I could do my homework. Their many years of sacrifice and struggle has made all things possible. Finally, I thank Juwendo Denis for helping me get this book past the finish line.