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PROLOGUE

This book is a dialogue between academia and politics. My life has traveled paths between both. After a decade dedicated to law, first as a student and later as a human rights lawyer during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990), my life turned to political science and active politics with a single fixation: the consolidation of democracy and respect for human rights in Chile and in Latin America.

I belong to a political generation marked by two vital dates: September 11, 1973, with the military coup that interrupted one of the oldest democracies in Latin America, and October 5, 1988, with the plebiscite that put an end to Pinochet’s dictatorship and opened up the way to democracy. Both processes—the breakdown and the transition to democracy—instilled in many of us the need to think deeply about the past, present, and future of democracy in the region.

In the 1980s, I dedicated myself to a systematic reflection on the processes of the breakdown of democracy and the initial processes of transition to democracy. I did this first as a graduate student at Princeton University, where I received a Ph.D. in political science, and later as part of an outstanding team at the Center for Latin American Studies (CIEPLAN) in Santiago, Chile, under the leadership of Alejandro Foxley.

In the 1990s and in the first decade of the 2000s, we put into action all that we had learned, suffered, and above all, longed for and dreamed
based on certain fundamental values and academic rigor. Given the past experience of great political failure, this time we felt we could not fail—for our own sake and for the tremendous expectations placed on the processes of democratization by the people of Latin America. Victims of so much deception and frustration throughout history, they maintained hope for a future of economic and social progress, where the dignity and rights of all people would be respected.

I was appointed director of political relations at the Secretariat General of the Presidency (1990–1994), under the leadership of Edgardo Boeninger, in the transitional government to democracy headed by Patricio Aylwin. It was like getting a second Ph.D., this time in political action, within a transition to democracy that I consider to have been successful. Subsequently, I was elected as member of the National Congress for two consecutive terms (1994–1998 and 1998–2002) coinciding with the government of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle (1994–2000). From 2004 to 2006 I served as minister of foreign affairs under President Ricardo Lagos, and in 2009 I was elected senator for an eight-year term from 2010 to 2018. In 2010, I was also elected president of the Christian Democratic Party through 2012.

I emphasize my political trajectory because this book goes beyond the academic. Without forgoing the rigor and systematic analyses that stem from my academic formation, I wanted to leave space for experience itself, both personal and collective, in order to attain a fuller understanding of politics and democracy in Latin America.

The following reflections attempt to give an account of the abundant available literature about democracy in the region, especially in recent decades, organizing it in a systematic manner, but with the support of a political trajectory that follows other paths. I believe that this combination of academic perspective and real-world experience enhances the understanding of political and economic development in this part of the world.

My own life, both political and academic, and the lives of others of my generation bear witness to the dilemmas that we faced between the waves of democracy and authoritarianism in the past decades, both in Chile and throughout Latin America. It is no accident that most political leaders in Chile today are between the ages of fifty-three and fifty-seven:
at the time of the 1973 military coup we were between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. The political tragedy that we lived, from the breakdown of democracies in the late 1960s and early 1970s through the transitions to democracy that began in the late 1970s, inspired in us, more than in any other generation, a determined commitment to systematic reflection.

After I completed my law degree at the University of Chile in 1978, when Pinochet’s dictatorship was in full swing, I had the chance to enter one of the best law firms in the country. I decided, given my beliefs and the political context in which we were living, that I could not follow the path of practicing freely as a lawyer while human rights were being violated in Chile. I became a lawyer for the Vicaría de la Solidaridad (the Vicariate of Solidarity) under the determined, clear-sighted, and prophetic leadership of Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez. It was the post–Vatican II Catholic Church, committed to the dignity and rights of the human person. I lost all my cases as a human rights lawyer (1979–1982), but I felt deeply fulfilled as a person. Above all, I came to understand that respect for human rights constitutes the moral foundation of democracy.

I left the vicariate not because of the bad results I obtained in the court cases, which reflected a judiciary complicit, either deliberately or through negligence, in the crimes of Pinochet’s dictatorship. Rather, I left to pursue a new passion in life. I wanted to study the factors that had led to the democratic breakdowns in Chile and in Latin America. I wanted to understand. It seemed to me that none of this had occurred merely by chance or was simply a product of the greed and evil deeds of the United States and the militaries, which frequently took the blame for the processes of democratic breakdown and the coups d’état that were part of the authoritarian wave set off in Brazil in 1964.

After dedicating nearly a decade to law, I began doctoral work at Princeton University. I read a great deal and systematically studied political theory, comparative politics, and international relations. I never imagined that I would become a practitioner in these fields as a political advisor, congressman, senator, minister of foreign affairs, and party president. The synthesis between theory and practice has always been a source of peculiar fascination to me. Politics without ideas or, conversely, ideas not grounded in the broad scene of politics, are only half-fulfilled realities that fail to mutually enrich each other.
Upon my return to Chile, I had the privilege of joining a team of researchers from CIEPLAN, which throughout the years has been a center of learning for many of us in the fields of politics, economics, and public policy. Much could be said about the field and the contributions of think tanks in the recent history of the region. The systematic study of reality they pursue enriched our research and its contribution to the public sphere, both in Chile and in Latin America. When I left my research work to serve in the Concertación, a center-left coalition that governed between 1990 and 2010, I found that many of Chile’s achievements during that time—which undoubtedly have their deficiencies, errors, and shortcomings as well—have roots in the academic and intellectual formation offered by institutions such as CIEPLAN. Our experience there left us little space for improvisation and a lot of space for the development of ideas, as well as professional and systematic work in the sphere of public policy.

The rest of the story I have already explained. Now, by rewriting this prologue and publishing this book in English with some minor changes (it was originally edited and published in Chile in 2009 by Uqbar Publications and CIEPLAN), I hope to contribute to the ever-present challenge of consolidating a stable and respectable democracy in Latin America.

After twenty years of Concertación leadership, the public willed that we hand over power to the opposition following the election of a right-wing government in January 2010. I did so, with the power invested in me as senator and as president of the Christian Democratic Party, with the same intention I have had all these years: to serve the nation in search of the common good by doing whatever can and should be done, whether in my own government or that of the opposition, in politics or in academia.

This book contains a sort of synthesis, in a systematic and detailed analysis, of my reflections during the decades I have spent as a politician and academic witnessing the ups and downs of democracy in Latin America.

The basic content of this book is inspired by the course that I gave as a visiting professor and Laporte Distinguished Fellow at the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS) and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs during the 2007–2008...
academic year. After losing contact with political science for more than fifteen years, I had the opportunity to read a great deal of academic material in a short period of time, which helped me to systematize my reflections on the theme that I address in this book. I wish to express special thanks to Jeremy Adelman, Deborah Yashar, and Katherine Newman, who welcomed me and made possible my stay at Princeton for the academic year. Special thanks to my students in the aforementioned course, as well as in my freshman seminar, Chile: From Revolution to Reform and Beyond. I cannot express enough my endless gratitude—my own, and that of Cecilia and our children—to the very dear friends that we made at Princeton, such as Albert and Sarah Hirschman (may both rest in peace), Paul Sigmund, Arcadio Díaz-Quinones, Alma Concepción, Nancy Bermeo, and Peter Johnson. As a student, professor, and visiting researcher, I always found at Princeton a stimulating environment in both the human and intellectual spheres. If there is something of which the United States can feel legitimately proud, it is its exceptional system of universities, which I was first able to access in the 1980s thanks to the Fulbright Commission and the Ford Foundation.

By the same token, I also wish to mention the great contributions to my life and my process of academic and intellectual formation made by the University of Notre Dame and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, created by the visionary Father Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C. From my first term as a visiting fellow in 1987, in the depths of the volatile transition to democracy in Latin America, until today, I have found the intellectual environment very stimulating. It has helped me to formulate, reformulate, and question many of the ideas addressed here. My special gratitude goes out to professors Timothy Scully, C.S.C., and Scott Mainwaring, two great friends. I have had the privilege, on various occasions, of serving on the advisory boards of the Kellogg Institute and the Program in Latin American Studies at Princeton (in the case of the latter, until the present day), benefiting from numerous conversations with a diverse group of academics from the United States and Latin America.

I wrote a first draft about some of the ideas contained in this book following an invitation by professors Mainwaring and Scully to deliver a speech at CIEPLAN in Santiago in a late 2005 seminar, Democratic
Governability in Latin America. At that time, I was serving as minister of foreign affairs. The presentation was later published in *Foreign Affairs en Español* under the title “Democracia en América Latina” (Walker 2006). Subsequently, Mainwaring and Scully edited the book *Democratic Governance in Latin America*, published in 2009 by Stanford University Press, containing a second paper that I wrote with Patricio Navia, entitled “Political Institutions, Populism, and Democracy in Latin America.” During my stay at Princeton I published a third paper, “Democracy and Populism in Latin America,” as a working paper for the Kellogg Institute for International Studies (Walker 2008). A version of this paper appeared in *Dissent* in autumn of 2008 as “The Three Lefts of Latin America.” Finally, I published the paper “Democracia de Instituciones” in *A medio camino: Nuevos desafíos de la democracia y del desarrollo en América Latina* (CIEPLAN/Uqbar Editores, 2009), edited by Fernando H. Cardoso and Alejandro Foxley. This paper was also published in *Estudios Públicos* (Walker 2009) under the title “Por una democracia de instituciones para América Latina.” With the exception of this last paper, which appears with a few minor changes as the final chapter of this book, these papers have served as groundwork for a work I have conceived not as a compilation of previously published papers, but rather as an entirely new product. The papers and the reflections contained in this book have had a place in *A New Economic and Social Agenda for Latin America*, a project led by CIEPLAN and the Fernando H. Cardoso Institute from 2006 to 2008, and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECI), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). My special gratitude goes out to these five institutions.

Truth be told, my original idea was to write a textbook. This became a necessity when, as I was giving the Democracy in Latin America course at Princeton, I could not find a satisfactory book in English or Spanish. The number of books and papers published in English and Spanish about democracy in Latin America is endless. I could not, however, find a comprehensive text directed to both experts and the broader public. Ever since then, I had thought about writing a text like this one. This is the reason for the abundant references found throughout these pages, many of which I have provided as counterpoint to some of the principal academic
contributions on the theme in question, which come from a wide variety of authors, primarily from the United States.

Along the way, what I had initially envisioned as a textbook began to form part of the central argument of this book, in the form of an essay. At a time when political science is transforming itself into a subset of mathematics and applied statistics, I felt it important to recover history, without which there is no true political science. Likewise, it is important to recover the genre of the essay, characteristic of Latin America, even within the context of a systematic approach with the academic rigor required by the subject I address here.

Central to my thinking while writing this book was an interesting talk by Professor Frances Hagopian at the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, in which she warned about a double danger in the field of political science: of hyper-specialized focus (risk of narrowing), which involves a marked inability to speak beyond a narrow circle of experts, and of the exact opposite (the risk of generalizations), a focus which, generally, we Latin Americans have used and abused. The genre of the essay, so prevalent in Latin America, often falls prey to this second danger. Nevertheless, given the present trend toward hyperspecialization in political science based on models and statistics, it seems to me that a focus that breaks free of dependent and independent variables, correlations, and regressions, such as the one contained in this book, allows the work to be read outside of a small circle of experts.

In fact, this is an objective that I deliberately pursue. I have attempted to make complex subjects and the sophisticated theories that have arisen around them more familiar to a broader audience. As I indicated before, I have serious reservations about the current trends in political science, with their constant and almost obsessive attempts to measure everything. I am reminded of Machiavelli’s classic statement, in the preface to book two of The Discourses, that “human affairs are ever in a state of flux.” Thus, we must take into account the complexity and dynamism of historical processes. Political science without history is political science without content. As a former student of Sheldon Wolin, I turn often to classical authors such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Tocqueville, who helped me to understand the true nature of the political phenomenon.
I wrote the prologue to the Spanish version of this book while once again at CIEPLAN. As Alejandro Foxley said after the end of his term as minister of foreign affairs in Chile (2006–2009), returning to CIEPLAN is like “coming home.” At CIEPLAN we began our reflection about Chile and Latin America, and there we shall continue with what we have labeled “the new stage”: a stage focused more on Latin America than on Chile, focused on that desire shared over so many years to make political democracy, economic growth, and social equity compatible in the new age of globalization, with its shadows and its lights and, above all, its enormous possibilities.

Finally, I am grateful for the comments that several academic colleagues offered on the initial drafts of these chapters. Special thanks to Ivan Jaksic (chapter 1), Oscar Muñoz (chapters 2 and 4), Scott Mainwaring (chapter 3), and Patricio Meller (chapter 7) for their very helpful suggestions. The eighth and final chapter, the only one that was previously published, received the comments and contributions of Edgardo Boeninger (RIP), Maria Hermínia Tavares, Scott Mainwaring, Fernando Luiz Abrucio, Marcus André Melo, and Cristóbal Aninat. I am also grateful to political scientist Sergio Toro for his very pertinent comments and suggestions on the final draft of the book, and to Eugenio Tironi and Francisco Saffie for their comments on the prologue and introduction. None of them bear any responsibility for the content of this book.
INTRODUCTION

It is a paradox of our region and time period that, while Latin America experiences the most widespread presence of democracy in its history, there remains a general perception that these democracies are fragile. There is talk of a democratic “deficit,” or the problem of democratic governability in Latin America.

Between 2005 and 2010 there were eighteen presidential elections in the region\(^1\)—that is, in every country in Latin America except Cuba, which remains the sole dictatorship in all the thirty-four countries of the Americas, understood as stretching from Canada in the north to Patagonia in the south. These elections are examples of electoral democracy, which entails the realization of free, transparent, and competitive elections. This sort of democracy, one aspect of the minimalist or procedural concept of democracy found in the tradition of Joseph Schumpeter (1942) and Robert Dahl (1971), is emerging most substantively

\(^1\) Bolivia (December 2005), Peru (April and June 2006), Mexico (July 2006), Nicaragua (November 2006), Venezuela (December 2006), Guatemala (September and November 2007), Argentina (October 2007), Paraguay (April 2008), El Salvador (March 2009), the Dominican Republic (May 2008), Ecuador (April 2009), Panama (May 2009), Uruguay (October 2009), Honduras (November 2009), Chile (December 2009 and January 2010), Costa Rica (February 2010), Colombia (May and June 2010), and Brazil (October 2010).
in the region. The following elements are part of a procedural definition of democracy in this tradition: the existence of open and competitive elections—without fraud, coercion, or proscriptions—that determine who establishes public policy and permits the possibility of alternation of power; universal suffrage for adults; and the guarantee of certain traditional civil rights, such as freedom of expression, the right to organize, and due process (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997b, 14). Others include as a defining feature of democracy the successful subordination of the military to the legitimately established authorities.

Although I am not entirely satisfied with this concept and will elaborate later on the type of democracy that is desirable, this “third wave” of democratization (Huntington 1991) is a significant advance from the earlier, authoritarian wave that began with the coups d’état in Brazil (1964), Peru (1968), Uruguay (1973), Chile (1973), and Argentina (1976). Huntington’s famous book distinguishes between the long wave of democratization between 1828 and 1926, the short wave between 1943 and 1962, and the present (third) wave, beginning in 1974. Let us recall that at the end of the 1970s, only three countries in Latin America were holding free, transparent, and competitive elections: Colombia, Venezuela, and Costa Rica.

The eighteen presidential elections between 2005 and 2010 were accompanied by a great political and electoral mobilization, perhaps the first of its kind in the history of Latin America (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005). There have also been qualitative advances in democratization. In South America, for the first time in history, a union leader (Luis Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil), two women (Michelle Bachelet in Chile and Cristina Fernández in Argentina), and an indigenous leader (Evo Morales in Bolivia) have been elected president of their countries. Meanwhile, Haiti celebrated what might be the most democratic presidential and parliamentary elections in its history in 2006.

This progress, however, comes with a series of questions regarding the solidity of these processes in the context of the great heterogeneity of Latin America. The best evidence of the difficulties of consolidating a stable democracy (in clear contrast with the strength of electoral democracy) is that in the third wave of democratization, fifteen democrati-
cally elected presidents have not completed their constitutional terms. To put it in journalistic terms, this paradox is well stated in the title of the article “América Latina: Democrática e ingobernable” in the Chilean magazine *Siete+7* (November 29, 2002). It alludes, on one hand, to the region’s healthy record of electoral democracy and, on the other, to its serious deficiencies in terms of governability. That contrast surfaces throughout this book, which is an analysis of the achievements and shortcomings of democracy in Latin America. The following reflections attempt to contribute to the necessary, urgent, and permanent task of exploring both the possibilities and the difficulties of establishing a stable democracy in Latin America within the context of acceptable conditions for good governance. The thesis of this book is that, throughout the past century, Latin American history has been marked by the search for responses or alternatives to the crisis of oligarchic rule, with the notable difficulty of replacing the oligarchic order with a democratic one. The most common response in Latin America to the oligarchic crisis and the subsequent waves of democratization and authoritarianism has been populism. We are still in this process of “de-oligarchization,” demonstrated by the rise of neopopulism in our very recent history. Liberalism has been marginal, more typical of the elites than of the popular masses and more akin to authoritarianism than to democracy. The latter has had its ups and downs, materializing in a confused and inconsistent manner, more an aspiration than a reality.

Indeed, both before and after the transition to independence, there existed an oligarchic order in the economic, social, and cultural spheres, taking on different political forms, in both colonial and postcolonial times. It was an order that was elitist, hierarchical, and, as it turned out,

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exclusionary, but it was an order, after all. After its collapse at the beginning of the twentieth century, in what we have labeled the crisis of oligarchic rule, disorder rather than a new political order ensued—the latter understood as an alliance between the middle and the popular classes—with serious institutionalization problems. It sometimes resembled democracy, but often resembled authoritarianism, at times with republican and revolutionary features, depending on when and where it took place.

This oligarchic crisis happened irregularly over time. In some cases, it took place prematurely and radically, as it did in the Mexican Revolution in 1910. In other cases, it occurred rather late, as in Central America, Peru, and Bolivia in the 1950s and 1960s. In general, and especially in South America, the oligarchic crisis transpired during the 1920s and 1930s. In the search for replies or alternatives to this crisis, revolutionary traditions arose, such as those of Mexico in 1910, Bolivia in 1952, Cuba in 1959, and Nicaragua in 1979. Diverse forms of authoritarianism also appeared, including some traditional authoritarian regimes (Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, François Duvalier in Haiti, Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, Marcos Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela, and Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in Colombia, not to mention the authoritarian regimes of the nineteenth century). The region also had some populist authoritarian presidents (Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, to mention two emblematic examples), and some took the form of “bureaucratic-authoritarian” regimes, such as the military regimes of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay) in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Democracy scarcely appeared. Chile, Uruguay, and Costa Rica have long democratic traditions, although Chile and Uruguay did fall into authoritarianism in the 1970s. Colombia and Venezuela also had democracies, though with many “buts” and reservations to be accounted for. Finally, the democracies inaugurated in the “pacts” in the late 1950s after the dictatorships of Rojas Pinilla in Colombia and Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela evolved into two-party, elitist, exclusionary democracies. The case of Colombia led Alexander Wilde (1982) to describe it in the title of his book as Conversaciones de caballeros. What is certain is that populism did exist in Latin America, or at least a certain “national and popular” model, as it has also been called. One of its prin-
cipal characteristics has been and, as I shall argue, continues to be its marked ambiguity toward representative democracy and its institutions.

Different academic theories have attempted to explain both the possibilities and limitations of democracy in Latin America. Following a systematic review of some of the principal theories, based on an analysis of the interactions of political, economic, and social factors, I maintain that it is primarily the actors, institutions, and public policies that make the difference between progress and regression in Latin American democracy. I eschew all determinism, avoiding those theories that emphasize the conditions, requisites, prerequisites, or “structural” determinants—economic, social, political, or cultural—to explain political processes such as the waves of democracy and authoritarianism in the region. I do so without failing to recognize the importance of the structural factors that underlie political phenomena, but that hardly explain the changes and transformations of (and in) political regimes. I conclude that it is “democracia de instituciones” (democracy of institutions) that is better suited to securing stable democracy in Latin America, under acceptable conditions for governability.

I write this introduction and finish writing this book in the middle of the most acute economic crisis in the last seventy years, with all the doubts, questions, and uncertainties about the future that such a crisis causes. I do so with the firm purpose of affirming the value of democracy and a longing for no more authoritarian regressions, while maintaining the realism and the necessary degree of skepticism acknowledging that, in light of our own history, there are no irreversible paths towards democracy. This book does not ignore the difficulties of consolidating democracy in the region, but expresses a clear option in favor of it. Reflecting on the history of democracy in Latin America systematically and in a comparative perspective, I affirm that democracy is not reserved to countries of a certain level of development or of certain cultural characteristics. I argue that Latin America is not condemned to authoritarianism and underdevelopment.

I argue in chapter 1 that, although the attempts to establish a representative and constitutional government stem from the processes of independence themselves, various circumstances, ideologies, and institutional arrangements worked against the establishment of stable democracy in
the region throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Actually existing liberalism, positivism, revolution, corporatism, patrimonialism, clientelism, socialism, and populism were some of the principal attempts to respond to the crisis of oligarchic rule, opening the way to a new social and political order. All of these attempts, in one way or another, revealed serious tensions and contradictions with democracy as a form of government. None of that, however, should obscure the attempts that, from early on, took place in the region after the establishment of constitutional democracy.

In chapter 2, I analyze the shift from the era of exports (1870–1920), based on outward-looking growth, to import substitution industrialization directed by the state as perhaps the most important aspect of the oligarchic crisis from the point of view of development strategies. In some ways, the process of industrialization was one aspect of the most widespread efforts for democratization in Latin America. It involved the incorporation of the newly emerging working and middle social classes and the absorption of labor, a product of the great migrations to the cities from the rural areas (urbanization). Nevertheless, it was not long before heavy criticism and self-criticism emerged around this new model of development through industrialization and inward growth. At the core of these critiques was the question of “export pessimism” and the protectionism and developmentalist nationalism characteristic of this model, which became its Achilles’ heel. The poor results of industrialization, especially the widespread reality of poverty and inequality, produced many frustrations at the social level and spurred heated intellectual debate in a climate of widespread and acute ideologization, polarization, and conflict. For some scholars (O’Donnell 1979), the breakdown of democracy in the late 1960s and early 1970s was related to the characteristics of this development strategy based on a certain type of industrialization.

In chapter 3, I reflect on some of the principal characteristics of democratic breakdowns, transitions, and consolidation in Latin America. In an attempt to systematize the abundant literature available on this topic, I explain the processes of breakdown by way of internal more than external factors, and political factors more than economic ones, arguing that there was nothing inevitable about them. I explain the analytical differences between democratic transition and consolidation and main-
tain that the recent processes of democratization in Latin America and in the world as a whole appear to toss out the majority of theories in the field of social science regarding the difficulties of establishing and consolidating democracy. Of these theories, some placed excessive emphasis on the economic and/or social requisites or prerequisites for democracy, or on certain factors related to political culture, or on the presidential form of government. All of these arguments contributed to the impression that democracy was reserved for countries with a certain degree of economic development (high) and certain types of social structures (complex ones), cultural characteristics (Protestant, tolerant, pluralist), or forms of government (parliamentary). Despite all these limitations, democracy has been more robust than the literature predicted for a region like Latin America (underdeveloped, Catholic, and presidentialist). It is this case that I will analyze—without ignoring the serious weaknesses associated with new democracies, primarily in the sphere of governability—in chapter 5.

In chapter 4, I hold that we see a double transition in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, from authoritarianism to democracy, and from import substitution industrialization (based on protectionism and state-led growth) toward a new strategy based on external openness and trade liberalization in the new era of globalization. I analyze the characteristics of a very complex transition from one development strategy to another, whether under authoritarianism or democracy, with advances and setbacks and multiple contradictions. I argue that one cannot simply speak of a new “neoliberal era” or “neoliberal democracy,” for the process underway in the region is much richer, much more complex, diverse, and interesting, than those expressions suggest. Most recently we have observed the transition from a phase of marked ideological content (neoliberal) shown in the Washington Consensus, to a much more pragmatic stage in the 2000s, the political economy of the possible.

In chapter 5, I argue that much remains to be done to establish stable democracy in the region. Even with great advances in electoral democracy, there remains a great deficit in the quality of institutions and democratic governability. Along with emphasizing certain dilemmas that have characterized Latin American politics in the last century—peoples or oligarchies, development or dependence, reform or revolution, democracy
or dictatorship—I focus on the chiaroscuros of the present process of democratization. These include semidemocratic or hybrid situations, which account for the distance that continues to separate electoral democracy from an authentically representative democracy (a theme that I will systematically analyze in the final chapter). I examine the tensions between the neopopulism that has arisen since the mid-1990s and representative democracy and its institutions. In this analysis, I make special note of Hugo Chávez; while he is the most strident and visible figure in the region, Chávez and his regime are the exception and not the general rule.

Chapter 6 is my contribution to the heated academic debate over presidentialism and parliamentarism. Beginning with Juan Linz’s pioneering works on this subject, which became popular in the 1980s and gave rise to intense debate, I analyze the advantages and disadvantages of one form of government over another, only to conclude that there is nothing intrinsic to either presidentialism or parliamentarism that helps to explain political stability or instability in the region. In recent Latin American history a formula appears that tends to undo the apparent contradiction between presidentialism and multipartism, by way of what is known in the surrounding literature as “coalitional presidentialism.” While I develop a critical vision of presidentialism, I call for an unbiased look at the subject. I suggest that, rather than holding to dogmatic conceptions, we need to think about an “options menu” of different institutional arrangements and combinations of diverse natures, with the objective of political stability and democratic governability. Although presidentialism—like the Andes Mountains—has a strong presence in the region, we cannot discount, a priori, innovation in institutional arrangements.

In chapter 7, I explore the profound economic, social, and cultural transformations of the last two decades, regarding the rise of what I call the new social question in Latin America. This concerns those countries in which underdevelopment was the reality until the 1960s and 1970s, but which now find themselves to be middle-income countries and economies halfway between underdevelopment and development. In this context, and from the perspective of the future, the present levels of tax burden and social spending are unsustainable. In the realm of social policies, we need to shift from a traditional, static focus, with a narrow emphasis on
poverty and extreme poverty, to a new, dynamic focus including the universalization of benefits and/or social rights and accounting for the emerging middle classes in the process of development. Along with emphasizing the tremendous diversity of the region, which impedes generalizations and simplistic analyses, this chapter proposes that a focus on social cohesion is the most appropriate for facing the reality of poverty, inequality, crime, and corruption.

In the eighth and final chapter, I affirm that the democracy of institutions best responds to the new needs and challenges of economic, social, and political development in Latin America. The contrast between the eighteen democratic elections that took place between 2005 and 2010 and the fifteen governments that did not complete a constitutional term between 1985 and 2010 illustrates the chiaroscuros of political and institutional development in recent Latin American history. On one hand, electoral democracy is consolidated with free, competitive, and transparent elections and non-negligible levels of electoral participation. On the other hand, however, there is a strong democratic deficit, primarily between aspirations and reality. From the perspective of democratic governability, the great challenge for Latin America today and into the future is transitioning from electoral democracy to an authentically representative democracy, which I take as synonymous with democracy of institutions.