

The Challenges of Creating Democracies in the Americas

Alex Roberto Hybel

The Challenges of Creating Democracies in the Americas

The United States, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela,
Costa Rica, and Guatemala

With Zander Weisman Mintz and Elise Hope Dunn

palgrave
macmillan

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Marina del Rey, CA, USA

ISBN 978-3-030-21232-2 ISBN 978-3-030-21233-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21233-9>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*For my wife Jan
and
my mother-in-law Barbara*

PREFACE

This book may be my last one. The approach of my 74th birthday, accompanied by the invasion of an unexpected and often destructive disease, engendered a new awareness about my mortality. Regardless of whether I will have the energy and drive to initiate and complete a book that I have been planning for several years, I consider myself a very fortunate individual.

My move to the United States in 1965 opened doors to a future I could never have imagined. After spending 19 turbulent years in Argentina, a long stint in Vietnam in the late 1960s as an Army reporter and photographer, and the attainment of US citizenship, I finally found my passion. My mother said it best in 1983 when she stated, “Who would have dreamed that you, who barely made it through high school, cared about little but swimming in the Rio de la Plata, and skipped classes regularly to go to the movies, would eventually get a Ph.D. from Stanford University.” I don’t have a clue as to what made that transformation possible, but I am very grateful that it happened.

This project would have never been completed without the hard work and tremendous patience of two of my Connecticut College students. Zander Weisman Mintz spent months collecting data and writing about Venezuela’s and Colombia’s distinct political experiences. Elise Hope Dunn carried out the same task in her analysis of Mexico. Zander also contributed to the analysis of the Mexican case at a later stage.

I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful criticisms and suggestions. I am also thankful to Connecticut College for granting me multiple sabbaticals and providing the necessary financial support via my endowed chair.

As in the past, I am indebted to my mother-in-law, Barbara Peurifoy, for her willingness to edit countless drafts and in the process teach me how to write in English. Her kindness, thoughtfulness, and intelligence continue to motivate me. But when all is said and done, nothing that I have written for the past 30-plus years would have been published had I not had Jan's constant support and love.

Final responsibility for the structure and content of every chapter in this book and for whatever errors may remain is mine alone.

Marina del Rey, California
2019

Alex Roberto Hybel

CONTENTS

1	Introduction: The Nature of the Problem	1
	<i>Alex Roberto Hybel</i>	
2	Theories of State Creation and Democratization	17
	<i>Alex Roberto Hybel</i>	
3	The Challenges of State Creation and Democratization in the United States	55
	<i>Alex Roberto Hybel</i>	
4	The Challenges of State Creation and Democratization in Mexico	91
	<i>Alex Roberto Hybel, Elise Hope Dunn and Zander Weisman Mintz</i>	
5	The Challenges of State Creation and Democratization in Colombia and Venezuela	137
	<i>Zander Weisman Mintz and Alex Roberto Hybel</i>	

6	State Creation and Democratization in Costa Rica and Guatemala	209
	<i>Alex Roberto Hybel</i>	
7	An Exploratory Theory of State Creation and Democratization: The United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Guatemala	247
	<i>Alex Roberto Hybel</i>	
	Index	261