Democracy’s checkered past and uncertain future in the developing world still puzzle and fascinate. In Latin America, attempts to construct resilient democracies have been as pervasive as reversals have been cruel. *Political Culture and Institutional Development in Costa Rica and Nicaragua* – based on a wealth of original historical documents and contemporary interviews with prominent political actors – analyzes five centuries of political history in these paradigmatic cases of outstanding democratic success and abysmal failure. It shows that while factors highlighted by standard explanations matter, it is political culture that configures economic development, institutional choices, and political pacts in ways that directly affect both democracy’s chances and its quality. But this book argues for a fundamental revision of the concept itself. The book claims that political culture, far from being a static repository of values, is a dynamic combination of rational and normative imperatives that define actors’ views of the permissible, shape their sense of realism, structure political struggles, and legitimate the resulting distribution of power.

Consuelo Cruz is Associate Professor of Political Science at Tufts University. Previously, she taught at Columbia University, where she also served for a year as director of the Institute for Latin American and Iberian Studies. Cruz received her Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has published in *Comparative Politics, World Politics*, the *Journal of Democracy, Political Science Quarterly*, and *Latin American Research Review*, and in edited volumes.
Political Culture and Institutional Development in Costa Rica and Nicaragua

World Making in the Tropics

CONSUELO CRUZ
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For my mother,  
Consuelo Sequeira Ximénez,  
daughter of Julio and Adela.
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Abbreviations

Periodicals

APSR  American Political Science Review
ASGHG  Anales de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala [Annals of Guatemala’s Society of Geography and History]
AHRN  Archivo Histórico de la República de Nicaragua [Historical Archive of the Republic of Nicaragua]
HAHR  Hispanic American Historical Review
LARR  Latin American Research Review
RAGHCR  Revista de la Academia de Geografía e Historia de Costa Rica [Journal of Costa Rica’s Academy of Geography and History]
RAGHN  Revista de la Academia de Geografía e Historia de Nicaragua [Journal of Nicaragua’s Academy of Geography and History]
RCPC  Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centroamericano [Conservative Journal of Central American Thought]

Costa Rica: Political Institutions, Movements, and Parties

AD  Acción Democrática [Democratic Action]
CCTRN  Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores Rerum Novarum [Confederation of Costa Rican Rerum Novarum Workers]
CGT  Confederación General de Trabajadores [General Confederation of Workers]
CTCR  Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica [Confederation of Workers of Costa Rica]
INDECAFE  Instituto de Defensa del Café [Institute for the Defense of Coffee]
PLN  Partido Liberación Nacional [National Liberation Party]
PSD  Partido Social Demócrata [Social Democratic Party]
PUN  Partido Unión Nacional [National Unity Party]
List of Abbreviations

Nicaragua: Political Institutions, Movements, and Parties

COSEP  Consejo Supremo de Empresa Privada [Supreme Council of Private Enterprise]
EPS    Ejército Popular Sandinista [Sandinista Popular Army]
FAO    Frente Amplio Opositor [Broad Opposition Front]
FSLN   Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional [Sandinista Front of National Liberation]
PLC    Partido Liberal Constitucionalista [Liberal Constitutionalist Party]
PTN    Partido Trabajador Nicaragüense [Nicaraguan Workers’ Party]
UDEL   Unión Democrática de Liberación [Democratic Union of Liberation]
UNO    Unión Nacional Opositora [National Opposition Union]
Chronology

Colonial Period

1509 First Judicial Review of an outgoing official held in the Indies
1530 Pope Clement VII crowns Charles V Holy Roman Emperor
1537 Pope declares Indians rational; capable of receiving the faith
1539 First phase of Costa Rica’s conquest fails; conquerors retreat in the face of indigenous resistance
1542 Crown promulgates the New Laws, a severe blow to Encomienda
1544 Bishop of Nicaragua begins campaign to persuade the king that the colony’s governor is tyrannical
1549 Nicaragua’s leading conquerors murder the bishop
1550–1 Polemic in Spain between Sepúlveda and Las Casas over the Indian question
1556 Charles V abdicates as Holy Roman Emperor
1561 Successful second phase of Costa Rica’s conquest commences
1564 Crown’s senior cosmographer and chronicler publishes official account of the conquest
1720 Formal abolition of Encomienda
1808 Palace coup against Charles IV, who abdicates in favor of his son, Ferdinand VII; Napoleon Bonaparte compels the Spanish royal family to abdicate in favor of his brother, Joseph; population of Madrid rebels against the French; Spanish Americans pledge fealty to Ferdinand
1809 Spanish Supreme Central Junta, in Ferdinand’s name, invites Spanish Americans to elect deputies for representation in the motherland
1811–14 Creoles mobilize against peninsular officials in the Central American cities of San Salvador, León, and Granada
1812 Promulgation of the Spanish Constitution; inauguration of Ordinary Parliament
1814 Ferdinand returns to Spain; abrogates the 1812 Constitution
1820 Spanish liberals force Ferdinand to restore constitutional rule
1821 Colonel Agustín de Iturbide declares Mexico’s “separation” from Spain; Mexican Congress proclaims him emperor of Mexico; Emperor Iturbide pursues annexation of Central America (previously organized under the captain generalcy of Guatemala)

Postcolonial Period
1821 Annexation debates unleash struggles throughout most of the isthmus
1821 Costa Rican notables craft Interim Social Pact, popularly known as Pacto de Concordia, thus keeping isthmian turmoil at bay
1823 Collapse of the Mexican Empire
1823 Costa Rican cities of Cartago and San José wage battle over seat of the capital; the latter prevails but is conciliatory
1823 Establishment of the Republic of Central America, a union of states from Guatemala to Costa Rica
1824 Civil war erupts in Nicaragua
1825 Costa Rica institutes its first agrarian reform and begins state-sponsored development of the coffee economy

Costa Rica
1835–7 First term of President Braulio Carrillo
1838 Coup returns Carrillo to power
1842 Overthrow of Carrillo
1850 Coffee boom

Nicaragua
1853 Legitimist (Conservative) Fruto Chamorro elected president; upholds “paternal” model; Democrats (Liberals) counter with a “fraternal” alternative
1854 Civil war between Conservatives and Liberals
1855 Liberals contract William Walker to defeat Conservatives

Costa Rica and Nicaragua
1856 Costa Rica’s president, Juan Rafael Mora Porras, declares war on Walker; an assortment of isthmian forces unite against the American
1857 Walker surrenders
1859 Domestic rivals and the military overthrow and execute Mora Porras
Chronology

Costa Rica

1870–82  Rule of General Tomás Guardia
1882  Beginning of Costa Rica’s Liberal Republic, which endures until 1948
1913  Costa Rica’s landmark Electoral Law
1917  New Costa Rican Constitution enshrines a series of social guarantees
1933  INDECAFE established
1940  Think-tank Center for the Study of National Problems established
1942  President Calderón’s government forges coalition with the Communist Party and the Catholic Church
1943  The political party Acción Demócratica and the Center for the Study of National Problems merge
1948  Costa Rican Civil War (also referred to as the Revolution of 1948)
1948  José Figueres Ferrer establishes revolutionary governing junta, abrogates the 1871 Constitution, closes Congress, suspends freedom of the press, and bans communists from the political arena
1951  Founding of Figueres Ferrer’s political party, Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN)
1953  Figueres Ferrer elected president
1958  PLN splits; opposition candidate Mario Echendi elected president; PLN and the splinter Partido Independiente retain congressional majority
1962  PLN regains the presidency, retains control of the legislature
1966  PLN retains legislative majority but is narrowly defeated in the presidential race by Unificacion Nacional; José Joaquín Trejos elected president
1970  Figueres Ferrer elected president again; PLN increases its majority in Congress
1974  PLN loses its congressional majority; its presidential candidate, Daniel Oduber, wins the presidency; first time that PLN wins successive presidential contests
1978  PLN loses both the presidency and congressional majority
1982  PLN regains both branches of government
1983  Political elites agree to remove legal impediments previously blocking opposition parties from fusing into a single, competitive entity; marks a departure from a multiparty to a two-party system of electoral competition
1986  PLN wins the presidency and attains congressional majority
2002  Strong third contender emerges in electoral contest
Chronology

Nicaragua

1893  Conservatives and Liberals combine to overthrow the Conservative Republic; General José Santos Zelaya leads subsequent Liberal Revolution to victory and sponsors a new Constitution; rules for sixteen years

1909  General Zelaya sails into exile

1912  Taft administration sends in marines

1925  United States withdraws marines

1926  Liberals launch Constitutionalist War

1927  Liberal General Agusto César Sandino begins guerrilla war against marines and former comrades

1932  Hoover administration withdraws marines after supervision of elections

1932  Liberal General Anastasio Somoza García becomes chief of the National Guard

1934  National Guard murders Sandino

1937  Somoza García assumes presidency; begins construction of democracia ordenada

1947  Rebellion against Somoza García

1954  Second rebellion

1956  Assassination of Somoza García; eldest son Luís Somoza Debayle inherits power

1956–67  Luís Somoza rules either directly or by proxy

1959  Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) founded

1967  Luís Somoza dies of massive heart attack; younger brother Anastasio inherits power

1967–79  Anastasio rules either directly or by proxy

1960s–1970s  Expansion of agroexport

1972  Earthquake devastates the capital city Managua

1974  Private sector, through Consejo Superior de Empresa Privada (COSEP), openly condemns regime

1978  Group of Twelve (political arm of FSLN) formed

1978  Assassination of opposition journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal

1978  Broad anti-Somoza coalition, Frente Amplio Opositor (FAO), formed

1978–9  Popular insurrection; FSLN-led armed uprising

1979  Somoza Debayle is overthrown and goes into exile; FSLN seizes power

1979  Government junta (FSLN)

1982–3  Armed opposition to FSLN regime, the Resistencia Nacional (Contra), begins attracting peasants

1987  FSLN regime sponsors and codifies new Constitution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, defeats FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega in supervised elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Antonio Lacayo, Chamorro’s son-in-law and chief decision maker, acknowledges the Sandinista army as the country’s constitutional armed forces in a private discussion with General Humberto Ortega; transition team, with support of the cardinal, reaches Toncontín Accord with Contra military leaders. The Accord stipulates the reduction of the FSLN army and the Contras’ demobilization</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>FSLN suffers acrimonious split; “orthodox” and “renovator” camps emerge</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Constitutional crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Liberal mayor of Managua, Arnoldo Alemán, defeats FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega at the polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Alemán’s former vice-president defeats Ortega at the polls</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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