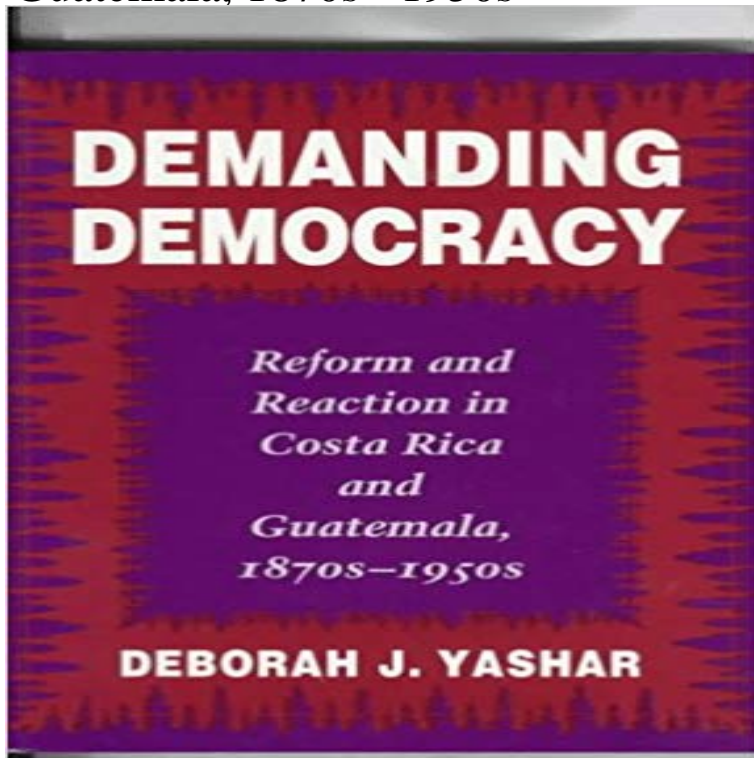


# Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reaction in Costa Rica and Guatemala, 1870s - 1950s



This book examines the origins of democracy and authoritarianism using a novel coalitional approach to examine two questions: What are the conditions under which actors found democracy? What are the conditions conducive to its endurance? The book explores these questions by analyzing the cases of Costa Rica and Guatemala. Costa Rica is the longest-standing and arguably the most stable democracy in Latin America, while Guatemala has among the longest and most brutal records of authoritarian rule in Latin America. The authors' fresh reinterpretation of these two cases demonstrates that prior to the 1950s, the two countries followed broadly similar patterns of political change and development, including seven decades of Liberal authoritarian rule beginning in the 1870s, just under a decade of democratic reforms in the 1940s, and brief but consequential counterreform movements that overthrew the democratic regimes at mid-twentieth century. Why did Costa Rica emerge with an enduring political democracy and Guatemala with authoritarian rule following these broadly similar historical trajectories? *Demanding Democracy* argues that the democratizing coalitions' success in Costa Rica and its failure in Guatemala rested upon its capacity to redistribute elite property early on and to exercise effective political control of the countryside. The book's distinct theoretical approach integrates an analysis of the conditions fostering democracy with those conducive to its endurance. In doing so, it bridges arguments that focus on democratic transitions and those that focus on their consolidation. Moreover, it moves beyond debates about the role of structure and agency in these processes by focusing on the interaction between historical institutions that favor authoritarian rule and the political coalitions that work to remake those institutions in ways consonant with

democracy.

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