

Acknowledgments

It began as a quickly scribbled graph. It was not a new or unusual graph, let alone a pretty one. I had seen it hundreds of times before, only this time it looked different. But it could not yet become a book. I needed first to understand what was special about it, determine whether it merited a book, write it and then publish it. In retrospect, I am happy I did not appreciate at that time how hard each of these steps would be and how long they would take. Such knowledge would have overwhelmed entirely the brief elation of that moment, a moment that has already receded four years into the past. That original instant was followed by others, thus becoming a sizeable segment of my life; its brief loneliness gave way to the presence of many people that helped me as that sheet from a notepad was joined by more pages and, ultimately, by two covers.

Before anything else, I needed to make sure that those marks populating my notepad were not utter nonsense. Daniel Diermeier, Sven Feldmann and Roger Myerson offered the necessary reassurance at a moment when the wrong doses of curt-ness could have proven fatal. Given how sketchy my reasoning was at that point, it is remarkable that they could overlook its ostensible flaws long enough to see something worthy in it. Roger Myerson even brought the tracing procedure to my attention, a piece of advice whose value grew tremendously over time. Already believing that my views on the problem of multiple equilibria could find support in game theory, I wondered if political scientists would agree with the implications I wanted to draw from them. Carles Boix, John Brehm, Daniel Gingerich, Jeff Grynawiski, Stephen Haber, Gretchen Helmke,

Jim Johnson, Stathis Kalyvas, Jack Knight, Scott Mainwaring, Joan Serra, Susan Stokes, Mariela Szwarcberg and Alex Wendt were subjected to my first, not wholly persuasive, attempts. In fact, I first imagined this book while driving alone, somewhere in Rhode Island, after a conference with some of them. In my search for a solid mathematical foundation, I tested Ethan Anderes's patience until he finally disabused me of the hopes I had placed on an earlier attempt at formalization. Although he expressed it just as an afterthought, Michael Stein made what turned out to be an incredibly prescient mathematical remark.

Then came the false starts. Steven Brams and Peter Stone made very thoughtful comments on a first attempt at a paper-length exposition of my ideas. Robert Bates and Randall Calvert read what proved to be the first in a very long chain of iterations of manuscripts and offered great insight and support. Several audiences witnessed my grappling with some of the issues involved in this book, with varying degrees of success and, fortunately, kept their promise of giving me a hard time. I should thank seminar participants at CIDE (Mexico), Duke University, Harvard University, ITAM (Mexico), Northwestern University, Notre Dame University, Rochester University, Stanford University, Tulane University, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Spain), Universidad Externado de Colombia, University of Chicago, the IV Conference on Collective Intentionality in Siena (Italy) and the Inaugural Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Lecture in the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. The journal *Rationality and Society*, in whose pages I embarked upon the search for this book's voice, was also a very valuable part of this stage.

In spite of their changing physical form, books remain the tool with which our ideas defy oblivion, hopefully for long enough to reappear in other people's notepads. In my case, this is where Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and James Reische came in. They believed in this manuscript and led the great editorial crew of the University of Michigan Press to turn it into a published outcome.

The Department of Politics at the University of Virginia has been more than a wonderful institutional home to finish

this project; it has also been the place where I have met engaging colleagues and friends, purveyors of both intellectual light and personal warmth. From his chairmanship, Sid Milkis went out of his way to make sure that I had the right environment to focus on this book. Dale Copeland, George Klosko, John Maclaren, Carol Mershon, Len Schoppa and Herman Schwartz have led me to think and rethink my ideas, making me a happier author, albeit a more hesitant one. In the lonely crowd of academia, you can consider yourself lucky if you find someone who is half as encouraging, half as probing and half as congenial as David Waldner has been to me. Melissa Ptacek helped to clean up the manuscript by going through it with all sorts of brushes and with amazing attention to detail. This book is guilty of having distracted from more worthy tasks the minds of two bright young scholars that gave it serious scrutiny: Cristian Ponce de León and Ernesto Cárdenas. Among many other things, the latter found the needle of a misplaced subscript in a haystack of equations. To technical readers, this should say it all. Non-technical readers should understand that the metaphor falls short: you can find a needle if it pricks you by chance.

Through a brilliant twist of fate, I began typing these acknowledgments in a beautiful office with one of the best possible views of Bogotá, the city where I grew up. I can hardly think of a more appropriate way to wrap up an itinerary that began precisely in these same streets, many years ago. With its generosity, the Universidad Externado de Colombia, through the gentle but determined leadership of Mauricio Pérez, keeps reminding me of all the wonderful people, ideas and things that populate that part of my life governed by the accident of birth. While a strong believer in rational choice, I acknowledge the wisdom of chance: there is something profoundly good about a milieu that offers you friends, mentors and peers such as Marcelo Bucheli, Jorge Iván González, Gabriel Misas and Manuel Ramírez. Probably the single most decisive juncture of the itinerary that led to this book was made possible by the Banco de la República de Colombia when it overwhelmed me with a generous scholarship. Whatever the

merits of this book, a country that, in the middle of trying times, through one of its foremost institutions, privileges to such an extent an ordinary citizen solely because it trusts his intellectual abilities deserves a future brighter than its present.

Authors make books, but books also make authors. The most vivid discoveries of this book are nowhere to be found in its pages. I kept them to myself in the form of lasting memories. In an apt symbol of this process my family's three generations were, literally, standing next to me during the darkest hour, right after hanging up from a fateful phone call. It is now time for me to part company from this book, to let it stand for itself. Some readers might put it down, some critics might destroy it. It may lead a tough life and come to know some of the hardship it caused me for four years. Anyway, to me it will always be the same unruly mix of hopes, exhilaration, frustrations, absent-minded breakfasts and, especially, the gift of having shared it all with Claudia, my wife, and Alejandra, my daughter.