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State, Coalition, and Regime in Latin America:
Concepts, Causes, and Case Studies

By

Sebastián Lucas Mazzuca

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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By
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Abstract

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Over the course of the last decades of the twentieth century, Latin America has experienced massive institutional change. Democracy has become the dominant political regime. Change, however, has been restricted at the level of *access* to power. Patrimonial and hegemonic forms of *exercise* of power persist. Patrimonialism and hegemonic rule are birthmarks of most Latin American countries, but they have adapted to the new democratic context and gained strength from recent economic processes. This dissertation traces, from different angles, the sources of patrimonial persistence and hegemonic consolidation. State structures and coalitional dynamics, not culture or formal rules, have played a crucial role.

The distinction between access to power and exercise of power is central to the analysis. It is used to reconceptualize the discussion of regimes and states in Latin America, with the goal of overcoming important analytic problems in the field. To explain the transformations of regimes and states, this study advances a model of “institutional refraction,” which in turn is a synthesis of two major strands of macro-comparative analysis, neo-Marxism and neo-Weberianism. These concepts and distinctions are explored in two case studies. An analysis of Colombia in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries examines the interaction between regime and state in a context where a fundamental change in the electoral regime serves to stabilize the state’s control of violence within the national territory. The second case study focuses on South American politics since the year 2000. Here the refraction model, along with the distinction between access and exercise, shed new light on how an unprecedented export boom has facilitated a move to the left throughout the region, and has also reinforced hegemonic forms of rule in some—but *not* all—countries.

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Preface

Political freedoms are the greatest achievement of contemporary Latin America. In the aftermath of a massive wave of political transformations that spanned the last two decades of the twentieth century, democracy became the modal political regime in the region. Yet political regimes are only a part of the overarching political structure of a country. Other large structures, including the state and the administration, coexist with the political regime. In these other areas, progress has been much slower. With few exceptions, states in Latin America remain chronically weak, and public offices are besieged by corruption and clientelism—the syndrome that Max Weber called patrimonialism.

Both in academic and public discourse, state weakness, corruption, and clientelism in Latin America are routinely viewed as questions of “democratic quality.” They are seen as characteristic problems of post-transitional settings. It has become customary to characterize Latin America as having “low-quality democracies.” Despite its political appeal, this characterization has failed to provide rigorous description, and has not been productive for developing viable explanations. Stretching of the concept of democracy to characterize political structures other than the regime has led to conflating analytic domains—state versus regime, and regime versus administration—that should be treated as distinct. Better description and explanation are achieved by treating questions of “quality” not as issues of failed democratization, but rather of failed state-formation and failed bureaucratization. Also, problems of quality are by no means just “post-transitional” issues. Patrimonialism and state weakness in Latin America are much older than recent democratization, and the sources must be traced further back in history. They are rooted in eras that remain unexplored by democratization scholars.

This dissertation¹ addresses conceptual and comparative challenges raised by problems of institutional quality in contemporary Latin America. The first half of this analysis seeks to refine key concepts and reexamine available theories of institutional change. To highlight the change of focus in “post-transitional” analyses of Latin American politics, this study begins by introducing the distinction between institutions of *access* to political power and institutions of *exercise* of power. It argues that contemporary problems of institutional quality in Latin America are best understood as phenomena affecting the exercise of power rather than the access. Correspondingly, the best explanations derive from theories of bureaucratization rather than democratization.

The discussion then turns to theories of regime change that have emerged in the field of comparative-historical analysis. Specifically, neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian approaches, which are usually presented as opposite poles in the debate, actually share a common understanding of regime change as a redistribution of institutional power within the national political arena; this redistribution is caused by global shifts in the balance of *de facto* power. These power shifts in turn reflect major shocks in the technology of production or coercion that occur in the process of capitalist development and state formation. The chapter shows how this theoretical commonality sets neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian approaches apart from other theories that emphasize “macrofoundations” of regime change; it also emphasizes their complementarity with accounts based on “microfoundations.”

¹ The four chapters are adapted, respectively, from Mazzuca (2010a, 2010b); Mazzuca and Robinson (2009); and Mazzuca (2012).

The second half of the analysis centers on case studies, which serve to exemplify a number of these distinctions and arguments. The first case study examines state formation in Colombia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The approach adopted here contrasts sharply with explanations that emphasize the impact of the international economy, and the analysis inverts the neo-Weberian conception of the relation between state-formation and regime change. It shows how a change in electoral rules—i.e., the electoral regime—brought to an end many decades of military challenges to a stable political order, thereby achieving a defining attribute of a viable state. Thus, in Colombia the *regime* shaped the evolution of the *state*.

In contrast to the focus on internal political dynamics in Colombia, the second case study examines the consolidation of the hegemonic exercise of power in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, beginning in the late 1990s at the time of a major export boom. This analysis contrasts sharply with the internal emphasis in the analysis of Colombia, focusing instead on contrasting national responses in the exercise of power in face of a major shock in the international price of commodities.

Against this backdrop, the remainder of this preface spells out more fully the steps in the analysis, thereby providing a more complete and detailed overview of the four chapters. Chapter 1 develops and extends the distinction between access to power and exercise of power to clarify the boundaries and connections among state, regime, democracy, and bureaucracy. Although rooted in classical social theory, these concepts—as reframed here—open a new perspective on problems of institutional quality in contemporary Latin America, including corruption, clientelism, abuse of executive decree authority, and weak checks and balances. The chapter argues that abuses of power affecting institutional quality are best characterized not as aspects of authoritarianism and deficiencies in democratization, but as reflecting—in Weberian terms—patrimonialism and failure of bureaucratization. Moreover, struggles over the exercise of power involve causes, mechanisms, and actors that can be quite distinct from those at play in conflicts over access to power. The distinction between access and exercise improves our understanding of the failure of democratization to curb clientelism and foster other improvements of institutional quality. It also yields new insights into the prospects for democratic stability under patrimonial administrations.

Chapter 2 disentangles explanations of regime change. The origins of democracy and authoritarianism have been the subject of perennial debate between followers of Marx and Weber. However, even these antagonistic positions have two theoretical underpinnings in common. They share a conceptual framework centered, first, on the notion of physical power and second, on a “refraction model” of institutional change. According to the refraction model, neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians (in contrast to modernization and cultural theories) share the view that national political regimes are distinctive *local adaptations* to international transformations in the distribution of physical power. Country-specific conditions refract a common shock, setting in motion processes of coalition formation that in turn send countries along diverging routes of political regime. Disputes between neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians are largely false debates driven by confusion about the outcome being explained. Even the minimalist definition of democracy is a complex, multidimensional concept, including the institutional components of political competition and popular inclusion. Instead of conflicting hypotheses about an aggregate outcome, neo-Marxists and neo-Weberian explanations are actually independent explanations of separate dimensions of democracy.

Chapter 3, based on extensive use of primary sources, examines a historical case of internal pacification, a central dimension of state-formation, by means of a specific form of power-sharing between rival parties. A peaceful political order emerged in Colombia in the first years of the twentieth century after decades of political violence. The cause of pacification was a reform of the electoral regime. In 1905, after the Thousand Days' War, Colombia's two parties agreed to switch from majoritarian rule to the "incomplete vote," a formula that guaranteed the losing party a fixed proportion of the seats in the legislatures. Electoral reform was a strategic concession by the Conservative government to the Liberal opposition. In exchange for permanent representation, Liberals abandoned military attempts to gain access to political power. In 1929, the incomplete vote was replaced by a standard form of proportional representation—another concession by the Conservative government. The new concession, however, was not made under the threat of military action by the Liberals; rather, it reflected the institutional power that Liberalism had been able to accumulate since the first concession. A concluding section places this case in a much wider comparative perspective.

Finally, Chapter 4 explores the impact of an unprecedented economic shock on the *exercise* of power in contemporary South America. The price boom of natural resources in the early 2000s has been an economic blessing for all countries in the region, though for some it has been a political curse. In Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina, the boom prompted the rise of rentier populism, a new type of political coalition based on the incorporation of the informal sector and funded by commodity export rents. This contributed to the consolidation of hegemonic, plebiscitary regimes, constituting an important variant of the much-discussed "left turn" in the region. Drawing on natural resource rents to mobilize popular sectors, these regimes exhibit extensive vertical accountability, i.e. repeated popular plebiscites over presidential mandates. Yet they lack—and indeed defy—horizontal controls such as oversight by legislatures and courts. On the other hand, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay followed a contrasting path. In these countries, a different constellation of political and economic forces includes a distinct configuration of party systems and financial markets. These features made possible a response to the commodity boom that resulted in institutional strengthening and a sharply contrasting version of the left turn.

In sum, over the course of the last decades of the twentieth century, Latin America experienced massive institutional change. Democracy became the dominant political regime. Change, however, has been confined at the level of access to power. Patrimonial and hegemonic forms of exercise of power persist. Patrimonialism and hegemonic rule are birthmarks of most Latin American countries, but they have adapted to the new democratic context and gained strength from recent economic processes. The pages that follow trace the sources of patrimonial persistence in the hope that a deeper understanding will help to identify avenues for change.

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Chapter 1

Access to Power versus Exercise of Power: Reconceptualizing Regime, State, and the Quality of Democracy

Most new democracies are “low quality” democracies. Such is the unanimous diagnosis of the current generation of studies on comparative democratization. Corruption, government by executive decree, clientelism, and ineffective checks and balances are listed as the most prominent individual symptoms of the alleged deficit in democratic quality.¹ In Latin America, several new democracies seem to have the full syndrome. According to the diagnosis, democratic quality is a scarce commodity in the region, confined to small countries like Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay.² Most governments in Latin America are the genuine product of free and inclusive elections, but few resist the temptation of abusing the political power that the electoral process has granted them. Parties in power change, but corruption scandals continue; networks of political patronage grow larger and more resilient, involving complex exchanges of favors among national leaders, local politicians, economic potentates, poor constituencies, and sometimes even criminal organizations. The officials in charge of the institutions that should monitor abuses have neither the will nor the capacity to sanction them. The legacy of the Third Wave of global democratization in Latin America is a regional cluster of political regimes in which governments are formed by democratic means, but presidents, governors, legislatures, and judges foster or protect the semi-legal exploitation of public office for private gain.

The symptoms are indisputable,³ but is the diagnosis of “low democratic quality” correct? An indication that the diagnosis might be flawed is suggested by the fact that, a decade after the diagnosis was made, the causes underlying the symptoms are still unknown. Could a change of diagnosis for the same symptoms facilitate the generation of viable explanations? The very premise of the current diagnosis is that problems in the so-called “quality of democracy” (QOD) are deficiencies in the democratization process. In fact, both scholarly and policy analysts have embraced the QOD as the central motivation and topic of a third generation of democratization studies. The focus on QOD is seen as succeeding the first generation centered on “transitions”—the collapse of dictatorships and the rise of democratic regimes; and the second generation concerned with “consolidation”—i.e., the likelihood that a newly democratic regime will survive into the

¹ Some of the key contributions to the literature include Linz and Stepan (1997), O’Donnell, Vargas Cullell, and Iazzetta (2004), Diamond and Morlino (2005), and Beetham et al. (2008).

² For a recent account of this stylized fact see the ranking of democratic quality in Levine and Molina (2007: 21).

³ Literature on clientelism in Latin America has experienced a recent explosion. For excellent measures in Argentina and Chile, see Calvo and Murillo (2010). For a systematic look at the use of presidential decrees in the Andean countries, see Munck (2010). The pioneering study of presidential decrees is Ferreira Rubio and Goretti (1995).

foreseeable future. According to the premise of the diagnosis, then, transition, consolidation, and enhancement of QOD all belong to the same macro-process: democratization.⁴

The most general problem of the current diagnosis is that the issues entailed in QOD are too different from those of transition and consolidation to be conceived as part of the same family of political phenomena, or as a component of the same macro-process, that is, democratization. Crucially, whereas democratization in its original meaning of transition and consolidation involved changes in the form of *access* to political power, clientelism and government by decree are forms of *exercise* of power. In effect, transition is the replacement of one institutional form of access to power with another one (for instance, coups with elections, or manufactured elections with clean ones), and consolidation is the minimization of the risk of change to a different form of access, especially the risk of reversal to the prior form.

On the other hand, clientelism, corruption, and other manipulations of political power for private gain are manifestations of what Max Weber called “patrimonialism,” a form of exercise of power that can coexist in a country with both authoritarian and democratic regimes of access to power. Hidden behind the conceptual lenses of the QOD approach, a radical change of political domain in the study of Latin American politics has occurred, one that requires more Weberian than Schumpeterian conceptualizations of institutional transformation.⁵ The problems that have motivated the QOD approach share with social inequality and economic backwardness the podium for normative and political importance in Latin America. To propose solutions, however, a clearer sense of the causes is required.

The distinction between access and exercise reveals why the third generation of democratization studies has failed to provide causal explanations of post-transition political patterns. Changes in the structures of exercise of power are normally driven by a vector of forces that is not comparable to that which produces changes in the institutions of access to power. Therefore, the search for causes of variations in the institutions of exercise may yield no results if it is carried out in the domain of the factors that have traditionally favored democratization. Such factors encourage changes along the access dimension, but they are not necessarily relevant for changes along the exercise dimension. Similarly, political actors involved in the struggles around the forms of exercise may differ from those involved in conflicts around access. In fact, in most Latin American countries, the main defenders and beneficiaries of democratic transitions—mass parties and the “political class”—are in general inimical to changes in the form of exercise. If the dynamics of the institutions of access and the dynamics of the institutions of exercise require different explanatory logics, then it might be more productive to conceptualize them as separate processes than to subsume them as components of the same macro-process, that is, as integral parts of democratization.

The specification of access and exercise not only uncovers a problem of causal assessment, it also suggests a solution. Democratization is the change from authoritarianism to democracy along the access dimension. Conversely, to characterize changes along the exercise dimension, the polar opposite of patrimonialism is *bureaucracy*; accordingly, transitions away from patrimonialism can be conceptualized in terms of a process of bureaucratization rather than democratization. Therefore, the symptoms that have motivated the diagnosis of low QOD and deficient democratization in Latin

⁴ The three-generation structure is a stylized description of the democratization literature as a collective enterprise. Individual authors may not be part of all of them. A central author for the first generation, Guillermo O’Donnell (1996) has been critical of the second one.

⁵ Schumpeter (1947: 269–273) is conventionally seen as the original source of the minimalist, or procedural definition of democracy, which was later refined by Dahl (1971: 3–6). Weber (1978: chapters 10–13) is the source of all insights about the characterization of the exercise of power in this article.

America can be reinterpreted as symptoms of patrimonialism and deficient bureaucratization. This alternative diagnosis opens valuable explanatory perspectives; as demonstrated in this chapter, it focuses attention on a new set of political groups and causal processes.

The first section of the chapter systematizes the conceptual approach of the third generation of democratization studies (or QOD agenda) and reviews its central analytical tool: the expanded definition of democracy. The second section identifies three problems of causal analysis induced by the expanded definition of democracy, and analyzes how they have interfered with the development of convincing explanations of the phenomena that have motivated the QOD agenda. The third section introduces an alternative conceptual approach, based on the distinction between access to power and exercise of power. It also argues for the use of separate sets of concepts for the characterization of the institutions of access and exercise: authoritarianism versus democracy for the forms of access, and patrimonialism versus bureaucracy for the forms of exercise. The fourth section compares the conceptual approach underlying the QOD agenda and the access-exercise (A-E) theoretical framework. The fifth section applies the A-E framework to the solution of the problems of causal assessment generated by the QOD approach. The sixth section examines the potential of the A-E framework by testing its applicability to available data on democracy and patrimonialism, as well as its ability for building theory relevant for the explanation of broad trajectories of macro-political structures in Latin American countries. The final section summarizes the advantages of the A-E framework in terms of enhanced precision and theoretical relevance for understanding macro-political structures and processes like state, regime, administration, democratization, and bureaucratization.

Quality of Democracy: The Third Generation of Democratization Studies

Some of the “new” democracies in Latin America are already more than twenty-five years old, and almost as old is the concern about the institutional quality of the political regimes resulting from the transitions in the 1980s. Symptoms of low quality do not come as a surprise, but the scholarly community is still looking for a set of concepts that can systematically *describe* them. The lack of appropriate concepts has interfered with the more important, but logically posterior, task of *explaining* them.

Describing problems of institutional quality is a true challenge. So far, the search for new conceptual tools has been based on the presumption that quality deficits are problems of democratization, originating a third generation of democratization studies centered on issues beyond transition and consolidation. This search has created two potentially contradictory lines of reasoning. According to the first line, new regimes in Latin America do qualify as democracies—such is the outcome of the break involved in the exit from the authoritarian past. According to the second line, the democratization process in the region has been *deficient* in one sense or another, including the persistence, if not growth, of extraordinary levels of political corruption and clientelism, the uneven application of basic constitutional principles across regions and social groups, and the weakness of the organizations that should monitor the behavior of powerful politicians, especially those in charge of the executive power. The third generation of democratization studies has advanced a distinctive claim: although Latin American countries have completed the transition to democracy, they are not fully democratized.⁶

⁶ O'Donnell (1993) is to my knowledge the first author who explicitly made this provocative claim.

To reconcile these two potentially conflicting characterizations, authors adhering to the democratization paradigm use, explicitly or implicitly, a “dual benchmark” for the assessment and classification of politico-institutional structures in Latin America. A broad consensus exists around Robert Dahl’s definition of polyarchy as the first benchmark of democracy, which includes free elections, universal suffrage and the set of civil and political liberties required to ensure a fair competition for positions in government, e.g., free press and associational rights (Dahl 1971: 3–6). This benchmark has allowed the first generation of democratization studies to distinguish countries that completed the transition from those that did not. The second benchmark, by contrast, is mainly implicit and varies from one study to the other, but, in order to construct it, all authors within the democratization paradigm resort to the same conceptual strategy: the addition of a few selected attributes to Dahl’s definition of polyarchy in order to create an expanded concept of democracy.⁷ The expanded definition, in turn, can help differentiate “high-quality” regimes in Latin America on the basis of the degree to which the extra attributes are present (in some studies, “high quality democracy” is an ideal model without explicit empirical references, whereas in other studies it is seen as exemplified by the advanced countries of Western Europe and North America).

The democratization paradigm—as well as the associated double benchmark, the QOD agenda and the expanded, post-Schumpeterian definition of democracy—has achieved true hegemony among students of contemporary regime dynamics in Latin America. Authors within this paradigm regularly engage in intense disputes about what specific attributes should be added to Dahl’s definition in order to create the second benchmark. Nevertheless, a more important agreement implicitly underlies all works on the topic: Latin American countries still have a long way to travel in terms of democratization, and since most of them now meet the first benchmark, some form of expanded definition of democracy is required to assess the failures and potential future achievements along that trajectory. The expanded definition of democracy is, then, the key analytical tool of the third generation of democratization studies.

One of the most sophisticated versions of the expanded definition was advanced by Guillermo O’Donnell. The contrast between the minimalist definition of democracy and the expanded one corresponds, in O’Donnell’s work, to the distinction between *democratic regime* and *democratic state*.⁸ Whereas democratic regime is equivalent to Dahl’s polyarchy, democratic state is the sum of the attributes included in a democratic regime, plus at least two extra attributes: “horizontal accountability” and “formal institutionalization.” Horizontal accountability means effective checks and balances in the tradition of Montesquieu and Madison. O’Donnell’s re-labeling is meant to highlight a contrast with “vertical accountability”—the form of control over public authorities that is distinctive of the minimalist definition of democracy—or democratic regime, for it is exerted from below by the public when empowered with the ability to punish the government by choosing opposition candidates. Horizontal accountability is control exerted “from the side” by other branches of government. “Delegative democracy,” one of the founding concepts of the third generation of democratization studies, is a form of government that combines effective vertical accountability and weak horizontal accountability—it qualifies as a democratic regime but not as a democratic state (O’Donnell 1994, 1999a). “Formal institutionalization,” the other attribute of a

⁷ Collier and Levitsky (1997: 445–448) analyze this strategy and provide examples from the literature. Additional examples of the double benchmark include Linz and Stepan (1996), Diamond and Morlino (2005), and Levine and Molina (2007).

⁸ O’Donnell (1993: 1360) introduces the idea of a democratic state, which he elaborates later by considering individual attributes of the notion, like “formal institutions” (1996), “horizontal accountability” (1994, 1999a), and the “rule of law” (1999b).

democratic state, means the elimination of political practices that—like clientelism, nepotism, or corruption—involve abuses of political power that result in discriminatory treatment of the population excluded from the networks of favors. O’Donnell characterizes such abuses as “informal” institutions because in general they are incompatible with the written constitution and other legal codes that proclaim universal standards (1996). Since the density of informal institutions varies across regions within the continent, O’Donnell coined the expression “brown areas” (as opposed to “blue” ones) to refer to regions in which informal institutions are especially dominant.⁹

To recapitulate, the premise that deficits of institutional quality are problems of democratization has led the third generation of democratization studies to adopt an expanded definition of democracy. The current scholarship on democratization focuses on the countries that have completed the transition (i.e., that meet the minimalist definition), and differentiates them in terms of levels of QOD based on the degree to which the additional attributes of the expanded definition are present. The distinction between democratic regime and democratic state is an example of the more generic contrast between the minimalist and the expanded definition of democracy. This distinction provides two benchmarks—a lower one and a higher one—to assess achievements and failures of democratization.

Three Problems in the QOD Agenda

Scholarly definitions, like the expanded definition of democracy, are analytical tools crafted to achieve research goals. Therefore, they can only be judged in terms of their effectiveness in achieving such goals. In comparative politics, the immediate goal of definitions of macro-processes or macro-structures is to describe variations across countries or regions, which is achieved by assessing the degree to which individual cases meet the definition. However, the ultimate goal of definitions in comparative politics is to facilitate the explanation of variations. Does the expanded definition of democracy facilitate the explanation of deficits in institutional quality?

The expanded definition of democracy has interfered with causal assessment for at least three reasons. First, it provides a weak logical basis for the formulation of hypotheses involving “internal” causal relations—i.e., relations among the attributes within the definition. Second, it introduces a bias in favor of a certain kind of “external” causal relation—i.e., relations involving variables outside the definition as causes of the elements in the definition. Finally, it excludes from analysis a number of potentially relevant empirical cases.

Internal causal relations

A premise of the expanded definition is that the additional attributes can be seen as parts of a larger institutional phenomenon: a full/deep democracy, a democratic state, or a high quality democracy, all of which are terminological variations of the same concept. However, it is more productive to view the additional attributes of the expanded definition as potential causes or effects of those included in the minimalist definition, which in turn requires that they be seen as *separate* phenomena rather than parts of the same one. It is still unknown, for instance, whether the rise of democracy, in its minimalist definition, favors a reduction of corruption, causes an expansion of corruption, or has no relation with it. To investigate the relationship, administrative transparency, the opposite of corruption, must be kept outside the definition of democracy. If, on the contrary,

⁹ For “brown areas,” which actually include not only geographical regions but also policy areas, see O’Donnell (1993).

administrative transparency were included in the definition of democracy, it would become logically impossible to conceptualize the relationship between corruption and democracy as a causal one because the attributes of the cause would overlap with those of the effect. Of course, students from the third generation could re-adapt their definitions and allow for this kind of relation by separating the attributes of the expanded definition into two distinct subsets (one subset including only the attributes of the minimalist definition, and the other subset including only the additional ones). However, that is a self-liquidating move because it is the same as acknowledging that the expanded definition of democracy does not work as a proper dependent or independent variable. The need to separate the attributes into two or more subsets for the purposes of causal analysis indicates that, rather than corresponding to a single political phenomenon, the expanded definition of democracy is better seen as a list of different phenomena, some of which are potential causes of the others.

External causal relations

The expanded definition of democracy involves redefining the process of democratization, for it advances a new benchmark that countries must meet in order to be considered full democracies. According to the expanded definition, democratization means both transition (in tandem with consolidation) and enhancement of the QOD. The analytical delineation of a macro-process like democratization involves the decision of what sub-processes should be included in it and which ones should be excluded. A basic criterion for the inclusion of a new sub-process is the existence of some kind of similarity, in terms of the underlying dynamics, with the other sub-processes in the macro-process. From an explanatory perspective, it would be justified to count a potential decline of post-transition abuses of power as part of the democratization process if either the causes or the advocates of a hypothetical enhancement of the QOD were similar to those of the original modules of the macro-process (i.e., transition and consolidation). However, the causes of a reduction of such abuses are unknown, and the little information available about the advocates of change suggests that transition to democracy and quality enhancement may actually be independent, if not opposite, processes.

A prominent fact in Latin American politics is that the champions of democratic transition and stability—which include diverse political parties, as well as their core constituencies—have strong vested interests in the preservation of patronage networks, and the continuation of other symptoms of low institutional quality. In relation to the causes, there is no reason to presume that the forces that are usually seen as favoring the replacement of coups and frauds by free and inclusive elections (economic growth, strong bourgeoisie, vibrant civil society) will also foster the end of clientelism and patronage, the development of Weberian administrations, and the strengthening of Madisonian checks and balances. By considering quality enhancement as a module of the democratization process, the QOD agenda runs the risk of suggesting the wrong causes.

Empirical basis

In practice, the expanded definition of democracy is associated with an unnecessary truncation of the universe of cases for analysis, which in turn involves a serious loss of information in the inductive search of causes. Assessments of the QOD, and the distinction between high quality cases and low quality ones, are thought to be relevant only for countries that have completed the transition to democracy. However, authoritarian regimes are also important for empirical analysis because the additional attributes from the expanded definition can be distributed among autocracies in different degrees—that is, countries under authoritarian regimes may exhibit important variations in terms of levels of corruption, patronage, and other systematic abuses of political power. Authoritarian

regimes that experience a reduction of clientelism must be inspected for changes in antecedent conditions. Such cases contain information about the conditions leading to the transformation of patterned abuses of power that is logically identical to the information provided by the so-called high quality democracies.

Cases of autocratic regimes that implemented reforms that effectively curbed corruption and other informal institutions involving manipulations of office for private gain can be found in a variety of temporal and geographic settings. Prominent examples include the Spanish Empire under the Bourbon reforms (late eighteenth century), Prussia after the Stein-Hardenberg reforms under Frederick William III (early nineteenth century), Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868–1900), and South Korea under the Park regime (1961–1979). Such cases remain outside the scope of analysis for the QOD agenda. From the QOD perspective, these cases do not count as high-quality or low-quality democracies, for the obvious reason that they are not democracies in the first place. Nevertheless, they are useful comparative references because they are a source of data about the forces behind changes in informal political institutions, including the motivations of rulers who reduced abuses of their own power. For analogous reasons, changes in the opposite direction within the universe of authoritarian regimes—that is, cases of autocratic rule in which levels of clientelism and corruption have increased—are relevant for the study of the persistence or growth of informal institutions. Despite their analytical value, these cases are also excluded from the QOD agenda.

The source of all three problems is the conceptual expansion of “democracy.” In logic and set theory, the set of attributes that define a concept is customarily referred to as the “intension” of a concept, whereas the set of individual cases that meet the definition is known as the “extension.” In this sense, the problems of internal and external causal relations in the QOD agenda are the logical result of an excessive increase in the intension of democracy, whereas the truncation of the empirical basis is the consequence of a parallel reduction of its extension. If the three problems of causal assessment are induced by the strategy of conceptual expansion, the opposite logical approach, which for the purpose of contrast can be called “conceptual separation,” should provide the solution to them. Instead of adding the new attributes of interest to an available set (in this case, the set of elements that define democracy), conceptual separation places the new attributes in a different set. Whereas the end result of conceptual expansion is one large set of attributes in relation to which the original set is only a subset, the analytical outcome of conceptual separation is two mutually exclusive sets of attributes.

In the next section, the strategy of conceptual separation, a purely logical step, is executed by introducing a set of concepts that provides a theoretical alternative to the QOD approach. The basis of this alternative involves the ideas of power and state—in particular, the definition of the state as a monopolistic concentration of political power. An undisputed sociological fact, the idea of the modern state is a safe starting point for the derivation of the other concepts, like regime and administration, democracy and bureaucracy. They will provide proper organization, in terms of boundaries and connections, to the vocabulary, or “semantic field,” of macro-political changes.

Access to Power versus Exercise of Power

The cornerstone of the alternative set of concepts is the distinction between the *access* to power and the *exercise* of power. The distinction is based on the classical concept of the modern *state* as the organization that monopolizes the means of violence within the territory defined by its boundaries—and that relies on such monopoly as the last-instance resource to obtain obedience from the

population within the territory under its control. The access to political power and the exercise of political power are simply two analytically distinct aspects of the institutional structure of the modern territorial state. In all societies where the means of coercion are concentrated in the state, positions in the state become a key source of power. Relations between state and society can then be naturally grouped into two categories. The first, running up from society to the state, encompasses efforts of individuals and groups in society to gain control over state positions—the access side of politics. The second, running down from the state to society, encompasses the use of political power to align the behavior of individuals and social groups with the order created by the state—the exercise side.

Against this background, the *political regime* can be defined as the prevailing form of *access* to political power. The regime has both a qualitative and quantitative component. The qualitative facet is the specific mechanism by which disputes to gain access to state positions are solved. Typical mechanisms are coups, threats of coups, cooptation, manipulated elections, and clean elections, but access could hypothetically be solved by procedures like alternation and lotteries. The quantitative dimension of the regime is the portion of the population that participates in disputes for access. Although in principle any portion up to one hundred percent is possible, in practice all regimes involve some restriction. *Democracy* is a type of regime: it consists of a mechanism of access, fair elections, and universal suffrage. Forms of access that are either not based on fair elections or exclude any adult group from participation fall in the broad category of *authoritarian* regimes or autocracies.

The exercise of political power, the opposite realm of state-society relations, has received less explicit attention in contemporary analysis of comparative institutions. However, to a great extent, *administration* is to exercise what regime is to access. If the concept of administration is taken in the Weberian sense of the patterns followed by rulers in the management of the resources under their control, it can play the key role of providing a distinct analytical domain to the topics that so far have been studied under the umbrella of the QOD agenda. Like the regime, the administration has a quantitative dimension and a qualitative one, both of which can be identified in relation to the fact that the state is a concentrated pool of resources, in addition to the means of coercion, economic assets extracted via taxation.

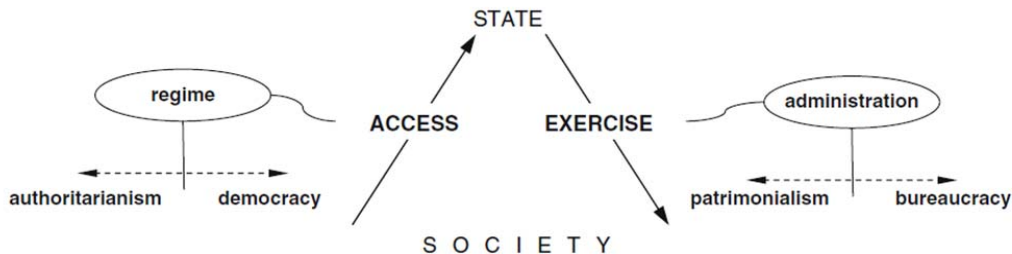
The quantitative component of the administration is the portion of state resources that is transformed into public goods as opposed to private ones. Public goods provided by the state include not only “goods” but also services, like safety, justice, education and health. The range of private goods encompasses personal corruption, the rulers’ appropriation of state funds for private consumption, to the use of political influence and public resources for the purposes of entrenching the position of the ruling group, like covert funding of party campaigns and patronage. The qualitative component of the administration is the specific mechanism or set of mechanisms by which state resources are transformed into goods and distributed.

Within a given state, these mechanisms may vary across sections of the territory, social groups, and policy realms, but a key distinction is whether goods and services are provided according to universal/general standards, like merit and need, or particularistic decisions based on personal connections and the ruler’s discretion. Particularistic criteria are naturally associated with the portion of state resources that is appropriated by the rulers. However, in the case of appropriation, the distinction between the quantitative and qualitative components (the size and form of corruption) is important because the same amount of appropriated resources can be managed in different forms (for instance, clientelism versus nepotism, depending on whether the beneficiaries are political partners or relatives). Following Weber again, extreme forms of

appropriation and particularism in the exercise of state power define the patrimonial type of administration, or *patrimonialism*. Bureaucratic rule or *bureaucracy* is the polar opposite, and as such is marked by what Weber called a “complete separation” between the ruler and the “means of administration,” which simply means no private appropriation of public resources, and maximum adherence of rulers to impersonal rules (Weber 1978: 220, 1028–1029, 1041).

Figure 1.1 is meant to provide a comprehensive picture of the analytical framework based on the distinction between access to power and exercise of power, hereafter the A-E framework.

Figure 1.1. The Access-Exercise Conceptual Framework



Comparing Frameworks

The central claim of this chapter is that the A-E framework provides a useful alternative to the QOD approach for the purposes of creating and testing causal hypotheses about systematic abuses of political power in new democracies, old democracies, or authoritarian regimes. To compare the A-E framework with the QOD approach, and to examine its potential for political research, it is important to consider the three key analytical choices made in its construction.

First, the A-E framework departs from the QOD approach in the decision of how to deal analytically with systematic abuses of power. Whereas the QOD approach expands the concept of democracy to include within it a series of attributes that are defined in opposition to the patterned abuses of power (e.g., “formal institutionalization”), the A-E framework keeps the original meaning of democracy unaltered, and includes the new attributes in a different set of elements, which is mutually exclusive in relation to the first set. If the QOD approach is based on a strategy of “conceptual expansion,” the A-E framework’s underlying strategy can for the purposes of contrast be called “conceptual separation.” This contrast is purely formal, but it helps to solve the three problems of causal assessment associated with the QOD approach.

The second decision made in the construction of the A-E framework is the adoption of the distinction between access to power and exercise of power as the specific analytical boundary to carry out the strategy of conceptual separation. That is, the strategy of conceptual separation can be executed in several ways, and the A-E framework is only a special version of it. In contrast to the prior, purely formal decision, the decision to adopt the distinction between access and exercise is “substantive” in the sense that it provides a theoretical basis for the formation of concepts about macro-political structures and transformations. To build the expanded definition of democracy, for instance, the QOD approach has largely proceeded to add attributes without any justification other than the intuitive correspondence with institutional features that have a positive normative value in

contemporary Western cultures. A comprehensive definition of a good polity according to Western values, although an important achievement in political philosophy, is not the same as a useful concept for causal assessment in comparative politics. If, for example, democracy is defined as the institutional setting that corresponds to the value of individual freedom or human autonomy, the new definition will probably have no “closure” in the sense that a potentially infinite number of features are candidates for inclusion. As a consequence, problems of causal assessment aggravate. By contrast, the notions of access to power and exercise of power derive from the modern state, which in addition to an undisputed sociological fact, is a well-defined political concept, and for that reason provides a safe basis to begin the organization of the semantic field with which to analyze the phenomena that motivated the QOD agenda.

The last set of decisions in the A-E framework includes the definition of “regime” in terms of access, and “administration” in terms of exercise. Regime and administration, in turn, provide the overarching concept for the polar types of authoritarianism versus democracy, and patrimonialism versus bureaucracy, respectively. Individual notions in the A-E framework are certainly not original. From Machiavelli to Mosca, the tradition of “Italian realism” in political thought has defined the very essence of politics as the conquest and preservation of the power to govern, where conquest can naturally be assimilated to access and preservation to exercise—exercise is actually a more general notion than preservation, for preservation is exercise with the specific purpose of impeding access to others.¹⁰ The value added by the framework is given by a) the hierarchical organization of the concepts within it—for example, democracy is a type of regime, which in turn is the set of institutions of access, and access is one of the two facets of the state, the peak of the conceptual hierarchy; and b) the connections and borders that it is able to draw among the individual concepts. It is through these connections and borders that notions like regime and administration, or democracy and bureaucracy, gain analytic precision and theoretical relevance.

For instance, the A-E framework clarifies the relation between state and regime, an issue long debated in Latin American studies. Just as every person has an age, every state has a regime. Age is a variable that partially characterizes a person in the same way that regime is a variable that partially characterizes a state. The regime is simply the institutions of access to the state. State and regime are not the same thing, but they are not separate entities either, as implied by the distinction “democratic state” versus “democratic regime.” The regime is an aspect or part of the state.

Similarly, by defining democracy as a specific regime of access, the A-E framework enhances the precision of the standard Shumpeterian definition and makes unnecessary what has been the most common caveat in employing it. Taking into account the existence of “tutelary powers” in Chile that over the 1990s constrained the influence of democratically elected presidents and representatives, scholars have found it useful to add to the Shumpeterian attributes the condition that elections grant real power to those elected.¹¹ When democracy is defined as a form of access to *state power*, the patch becomes redundant. Power is already present in the definition of regime, and it logically carries over into the definition of the democratic type. According to the A-E framework, if elections do not grant access to state power, they are not part of the political regime.

What is the relation between the minimalist definition of democracy and the notion of exercise of power? The minimalist definition is centrally about access and is mostly silent regarding the form of exercise. However, democracy as a form of access does have one key implication for the form of exercise. According to the minimalist definition, power cannot be exercised in such a way

¹⁰ For a statement of this tradition, see Bobbio (1985).

¹¹ The addition of this condition to the definition of democracy was first advocated by Valenzuela (1992: 70); for further analysis of this strategy of “conceptual precising,” see Collier and Levitsky (1997: 442).

as to cancel the value of free and inclusive elections as a form of access.¹² The implication is important, but it is clearly tributary to the centrality of access in the definition of democracy. Other than this access-centered implication, the definition of democracy has no requirements for the exercise side of politics. Other concepts are necessary if the central attributes of the form of exercise of power in a country are to be characterized.

The A-E framework also reveals the need to distinguish types of failures of horizontal accountability, a central notion in the QOD agenda. Failure of the legislatures to control the president—the generic form of weak horizontal accountability—can have two distinct sources: congress may have voluntarily given up its monitoring powers, or it may have been coercively deprived of them. The first case is a problem of exercise, a decision made by representatives in power. The most consistent example is probably Argentina in periods in which the Peronist party won both the presidency and the majority in congress. The second case, exemplified by Peru under Alberto Fujimori in 1992, is a problem of access. In depriving congress of its authority, the president undoes what elections have decided, and access to power is no longer democratic. The key implication is that failure of horizontal accountability can either be an issue of the traditional agenda of regime change (when congress is closed by force) or be thought of as a problem of exercise (when congress willingly delegates its authority). Conceptualizing both as a generic problem of “quality of democracy” creates confusion about sources and nature. For the kind of problem that authors in the QOD agenda are interested in, the fundamental question in relation to failures in horizontal accountability is whether access or exercise is involved. The access/exercise distinction is then more precise than the contrast between weak and strong accountability.

Finally, a key advantage of the A-E framework is that it provides a precise location for problems of institutional quality within the conceptual map of political processes and structures. Except for the work of O’Donnell, the expanded definition of democracy advanced by all other contributions within the QOD agenda is a truly “amphibian” construction. That is to say, it mixes elements not only of access and exercise, or state and regime, but also of state and society, as in definitions that include education levels or strength of civil society, in addition to free and inclusive elections.¹³ As a result, it is not clear whether a high quality democracy is meant to characterize a part of the state, a part of society, or both. By contrast, the A-E framework focuses on patterned abuses of power, and locates them within a specific part of the institutional structure of the modern state: the exercise of power.

The Three Problems Solved by the A-E Framework

The decision to include or exclude a new attribute of interest in the set of elements that make up the definition of an available concept has a fundamental implication for whether the relation between the new attribute of interest and the attributes in the available concept becomes *definitional* or can be viewed as *empirical*. In this sense, the QOD approach involves a definitional relation between democracy and patterned abuses of power like corruption and clientelism: they are incompatible by

¹² The concept of “competitive authoritarianism” introduced by Levitsky and Way (2010a) illustrates the importance of this key implication: in competitive authoritarian regimes, the party in power directly interferes with the ability of the opposition to compete for power. It is vital for the study of democratization to distinguish cases in which the form of exercise affects democracy in a causal, empirical way, rather than in the definitional way illustrated by Levitsky and Way’s competitive authoritarianism.

¹³ Elements of civil society are included in the expanded definition of Beetham et al. (2008: 12–13), and education is included in the expanded definition proposed by Levine and Molina (2007: 21).

definition. This incompatibility is the logical result of a redefinition of democracy that includes in the new version of the concept low levels of patterned abuses of political power—in the limit, a zero level. In contrast, by preserving the original definition of democracy, and locating the new attributes of interest in a separate set of elements, the A-E framework is especially suited for the empirical study of the relation between democracy and patterned abuses of power.

From the perspective of the A-E framework, expanding the definition of democracy is an unfortunate decision because it takes as a *premise* of analysis (incompatibility) what should actually be seen as one among many possible *results* of research. The relation between democracy in its original sense and patterned abuses of power can in principle have multiple forms: research may conclude that they are always incompatible, but it may also find that they are compatible under specific conditions: that one causes the decline of the other, that one causes the enhancement of the other under certain circumstances, or even that they have no relation at all. Since the forms and directions of the relation are potentially limitless, for the purposes of causal analysis, the strategy of conceptual separation underlying the A-E framework is better than the conceptual expansion implicit in the QOD approach. This is especially true when available knowledge on the relation is clearly limited. In fact, the larger the variety of theoretically possible relations, and the lower the level of empirical information about them, the more appropriate it is to adopt a conceptual framework that maximizes the number of hypotheses that can be formulated. The A-E framework provides the logical basis for articulating a larger number of hypotheses than the QOD approach.

Conceptual separation also makes explicit the fact that it is still unknown whether the causes of the rise of democracy in its original sense are the same as, or different from, the causes of a reduction of patterned abuses of power. The QOD approach does not necessarily imply that third causes are the same. However, a fundamental criterion for including elements in the same concept is whether they respond to the same causal pattern (similar causes and agents). This again implies that the decision to expand a concept should be the conclusion of empirical research rather than its point of departure. By separating access from exercise, and the corresponding transformations of regime and administration, the A-E framework leaves it to empirical research to determine the degree of similarity between the causal processes underlying changes in one domain versus the other.

Finally, the strategy of conceptual separation underlying the A-E framework maximizes the number of cases that can be analyzed. The empirical universe of the QOD approach is restricted to those cases that meet the original definition of democracy, for only such cases qualify as low or high quality democracies. By contrast, conceptual separation allows the A-E framework to classify cases as patrimonial or bureaucratic, irrespective of whether or not they are democracies; that is, it can analyze how patterned abuses of power are distributed in democracies and in non-democracies. This enlargement of the empirical basis is important because all cases contain relevant information about causes or effects of patterned abuses of political power.

Evidence and Theory on Trajectories of Exercise

Empirical Support

Is the A-E framework more productive for analyzing the empirical evidence than the QOD approach? In contrast to the data on the access dimension of politics, systematic measures of the institutions of exercise around the world are scarce. Analysis of what are arguably the three best datasets demonstrates the value of conceptually separating exercise from access. The datasets have a distinct geographical focus: the Evans-Rauch dataset on “Weberianness” of national administrations includes 34 countries from 4 continents; the UNDP survey on the quality of the civil service covers 18 Latin American cases; and Agustina Giraudy’s research on subnational patrimonial

administrations focuses on 21 provinces of Argentina and 31 states of Mexico. I have expanded these datasets to include conventional measures of democracy, as well as basic economic and geographical variables, in order to identify the covariates of exercise (table 1.1).

A clear “negative” stylized fact emerges from all three datasets: institutions of access and institutions of exercise are *not* empirically related. The magnitude of the correlation coefficient between measures of access and of exercise is low across all three datasets, and it is never significant. This supports the conjecture that access and exercise are not only conceptually different dimensions of politics, but also that they are not part of the same underlying empirical domain. In OLS models, which add the ability of controlling for potential confounders such as income, the effect of democracy on bureaucracy (and vice-versa) remains low and non-significant.

Table 1.1. Correlation between Access and Exercise across Three Datasets

	Middle Income Countries ^a	Latin American Countries ^b	Argentine Provinces ^c	Mexican States ^d
Correlation	0.59	-0.08	0.251	0.265
Significance	0.74	0.752	0.273	0.150
N	34	18	21	31
Year of Measure (Access/Exercise)	2000/1997	Avg 1995-2002/2004	Avg 1983-2007	Avg 1997-2006

^a Exercise is the index WebScale built by Peter Evans and James Rauch: http://weber.ucsd.edu/~jrauch/research_bureaucracy.html; Access is the index of PolCom built by Coppedge et al. (2003) <http://www.nd.edu/~mcoppedg/crd/datacrd.htm>. Viewed on June 18, 2012.

^b Exercise is the linear average of three measures of the quality of Civil Service (efficiency, merit, and capacity) produced by Longo (2006); Access is the Electoral Democracy Index elaborated by Munck (2009: 81).

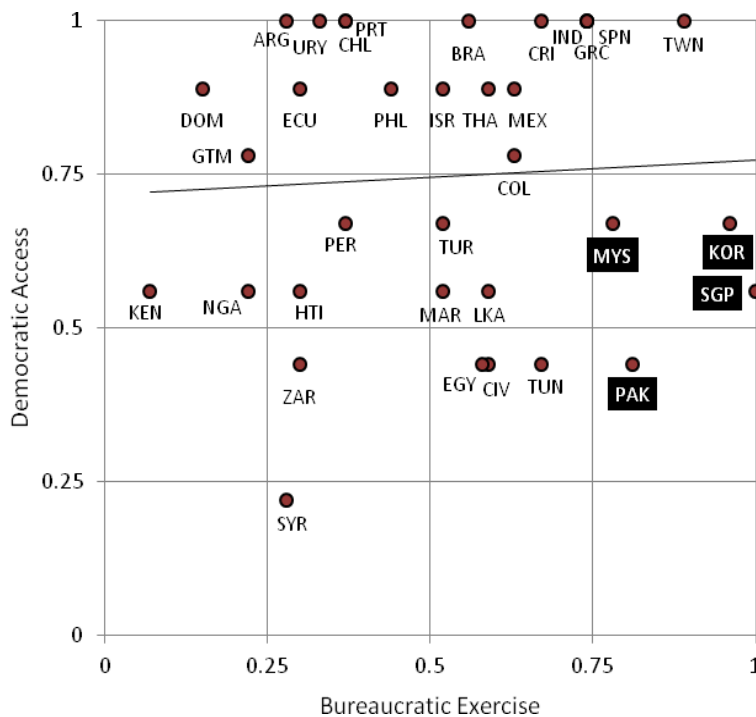
^c Access and exercise are taken from Giraudy (2009: 68, 82, respectively).

^d Access and exercise are taken from Giraudy (2009: 69, 83, respectively).

Another important piece of information in at least two of the datasets is the significant number of cases that combine authoritarian access and high-quality exercise. Research using the QOD framework tends to overlook these cases because the logical setup of the framework truncates the empirical scope by excluding political units that do not meet the minimal definition of democracy. A purist scholar in the QOD approach would exclude all cases with access scores below one, and a more pragmatic one would exclude all cases below three-quarters of a point along the same axis, which still leaves out 55 percent of cases. The excluded cases, however, contain valuable information about the conditions causing the decline of corruption, clientelism, and other abuses in the exercise of power. In the Evans-Rauch dataset, countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Pakistan are not democracies but they have made the transition out from patrimonialism, and that is precisely the transformation that scholars in the QOD paradigm want to learn about (see figure 1.2, excluded cases highlighted). Similarly, Giraudy’s dataset shows that, between 1995 and 2005, some sub-national units in Argentina (La Pampa, Misiones) and Mexico (Coahuila, Durango, Querétaro, Veracruz) reduced their levels of patrimonialism while maintaining low democratic scores, or becoming more authoritarian.

In the dataset for Latin American countries, one case stands out for having better quality of exercise than of access: Chile. Studies in the QOD approach have traditionally been ambivalent about how to characterize Chile during the first decade after the fall of dictator Augusto Pinochet. On the one hand, comparatively low levels of corruption and effective rule of law seem to place Chile among the select group of “high-quality” regimes; on the other, the political influence of “tutelary powers” in the army and the presence in the national legislature of “Senadores Vitalicios” (senators appointed by right-wing groups rather than democratically elected) clearly made Chile a less democratic country than its Southern Cone neighbors, where elected presidents and legislatures faced no restrictions to their authority. Between 1990 and 1998, Chile had elements of the expanded definition of democracy, but did not meet the minimal one. The A-E framework eliminates the confusion about this case. In the 1990s, Chile’s institutions of access to power were less democratic, but the institutions for exercise of power were more successfully bureaucratic.

Figure 1.2. Access and Exercise of Power in the Evans-Rauch (2000) Dataset



A final statistical finding is the most substantively relevant one: causes of improvements in the access to state power are different from causes of improvements in the exercise. Simple OLS regressions using the Evans-Rauch dataset show that while income is a significant predictor of bureaucratization, it is less relevant as a predictor of democracy. In Giraudy’s dataset for Argentine provinces, a curious result emerges. No independent variable is significant in predicting either democratization or bureaucratization except for a purely geographical one, distance from the political capital, which is relevant for bureaucratization but not for democratization. In effect, distance from Buenos Aires makes provincial governments more patrimonial in the exercise of power, but not less democratic in the access, even when controlling for income and domination by

the Peronist Party, which public opinion views as the main culprit of clientelism. The effect of distance is the only one that remains strong and significant across different specifications of the regression model (table 1.2).

Thus, the old Weberian insight about peripheries providing more room for abuses of power, even if poorly articulated in terms of micro-foundations, receives strong empirical support. The main implication for the comparative advantages of the A-E framework over the QOD approach is clear and points in the same direction as the prior results. Given that the institutions of access and the institutions of exercise have distinct origins, it is counterproductive to conceptualize their transformations as part of a single macro-process. That is precisely what the strategy of conceptual separation advocated by the A-E framework prevents.

Table 1.2. Sources of Patrimonialism across Argentine Provinces
OLS Regressions. Dependent Variable: Exercise

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	.583 (1.389)	.430 (1.431)	.033 (.304)	-.466 (.857)
ACCESS	.332 (.243)	.493 (.247)	.473 (.233)	.488 (.234)*
DISTANCE	-.332 (.121)**	-.370 (.117)**	-.371 (.113)**	-.341 (.105)**
EDU	-.372 (1.384)	.461 (1.388)		
INCOME	.479 (.516)	.551 (.205)	.471 (.242)	
PERONISM		.359 (.205)	.335 (.187)*	.357 (.192)*
HDI				1.018 (1.052)

Definitions and Sources

Access, Exercise: See fns. 14 and 15.

Distance: Miles from the capital city of the province to Buenos Aires city.

Education: Average of literacy rate and enrollment rate. UNDP Argentina 2009: 32–35.

Income: Income per capita. UNDP Argentina 2009: 32–35.

Peronism: Index constructed using data from <http://www.guiaelectoral.com>. It is the linear average of the vote share for the Peronist Party in all elections for national legislators and provincial governors since the return of democracy in 1983.

HDI: Human Development Index. UNDP Argentina 2009: 32–35.

Theoretical insights: Causes of access and exercise

The A-E framework has important advantages as a source for theory-building. It is more effective than the QOD approach for developing new hypotheses about the causes of the low quality of political institutions in Latin America, as well as to mobilize old but valuable insights that have been overlooked by the democratization-centered vision of regional politics.

The separation of issues of access from issues of exercise facilitates addressing a preliminary question to any inductive search for the causes of patterned abuses in the exercise of power: when did they begin? For scholars using the QOD approach, given that democracies are relatively new in the region (mid-1980s), “low-quality democracies” have to be new as well. The emphasis on the novelty of low-quality democracies as an integral institutional package is, however, one of the most misleading implications of the democratization vision. In reality, what is new in the Latin American landscape is the democratic access, but the patrimonial exercise is very old. Treating patrimonialism as a deficit of democratization, as the QOD agenda does, leads the search for causes not only to the wrong theoretical place, but also to the wrong historical time. Only by conceptually separating the institutional domains of access and exercise can differential age be fully acknowledged and exploited for theory building. It is not possible to answer *why* patrimonial rule occurs unless it is clear *when* it begins. Exploration of antecedent conditions in search of causes requires a clear sense of the temporal origins of patrimonial exercise. The A-E framework allows for the possibility that the attributes and transformations of the institutions of exercise are different from those of access in terms of both age and timing. Patrimonial exercise of power—under democratic or authoritarian regimes of access—is a problem with deep historical roots in Latin America. At risk of simplification, patrimonialism was the defining feature of the *caudillo* rule that emerged in the wake of independence, and a key institutional component in the coalitions behind the oligarchic parties and governments that superseded *caudillo* domination in the last third of the nineteenth century. At least in the biggest countries of the region, the mass political parties that replaced them actually subsumed oligarchic structures, especially in the countryside, and old patrimonial practices carried over into new parties (Gibson 1997: 342–352).

A twin insight can be derived by applying the notions of institutional change and stability—which in the analysis of democratic access has originated the study of transition and consolidation respectively—to the domain of the exercise of power. Studies of Latin American politics, largely confined to the domain of access, have produced a stylized picture of institutional life in the continent in which the dominant feature is instability—the numerous and radical oscillations throughout the century between democratic and authoritarian regimes are the reason for such emphasis. However, when it comes to patrimonial rule, institutions of exercise have been remarkably stable and resilient in Latin America. Hence, theories of institutional reproduction and adaptation are more relevant for the problems that have inspired the QOD agenda than theories of change and transition. In combination, the insights about age and stability of patrimonial exercise call for more historical and structural approaches than the ones that scholars embracing the QOD agenda have attempted so far. To a large extent, the age and stability of the institutions of exercise have the opposite sign as those of the institutions of access. Theory must develop accordingly.

If the QOD problems are re-diagnosed as issues of patrimonial rule, sociological and economic theories that have been overlooked by the literature can be usefully invoked. Sociological investigations on the origins of modern political institutions in Western Europe are vast and diverse, and they share a strong insight regarding issues of access and exercise, even if not explicitly framed that way: whereas the forces behind the bureaucratization of European administrations stemmed from sustained geopolitical pressures in the post-Westphalia international context, democratization has been a reflection of more “domestic” factors, especially changes in the balance of power and coalitional realignments between social classes.¹⁴ Threats from outside forced European rulers to

¹⁴ For the classical account on the origins and development of the modern state under geopolitical pressure, see Hintze (1970) and Finer (1997: 1261–1270). Ertman (1997) explicitly separates the explanations of “regime” and “administration” in Early Modern Europe. The statement that democratization occurred because of pressures from below

maximize efficiency in the exercise of power, and threats from below pushed them to make concessions that resulted in the democratization of the access. Bureaucratization in non-European cases, like Japan under Meiji, or South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s, also seems to have been a response to geopolitical pressures. By extrapolation to Latin America, the absence of sustained threats of foreign invasion becomes a potential source of continued patrimonialism in the region. Not surprisingly given its conceptual setup, this claim has received no attention in the QOD approach.

In economics, models of “predation” or “rent appropriation,” which are roughly equivalent to patrimonial rule, are different from models of democratization as well. Whereas democratization is again explained in terms of threats from below (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006: 23), patrimonialism is the result of the ability of politicians to exploit their most unconditional followers (Polo 1998, Persson and Tabellini 2000: 71–74). When citizens identify with a party for reasons other than its platform for economic policy (e.g., on ethnic or ideological bases), then by the time the leaders of that party are in power, they can appropriate public resources and secure their reelection at the same time by calibrating appropriation to the level just below the critical point at which economic harm to their followers outweighs the favorable ideological bias. These insights seem to travel easily to Latin America, where the three parties with plausibly the strongest identification from followers, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico, Acción Democrática (AD) in Venezuela, and the Argentine Peronist Party (PJ), also have a strong record of patrimonial rule when in power. Details and variations of theories on bureaucratization and patrimonialism are less important than the fact that they are available but have remained dormant for the research using the democratization framework, despite their obvious relevance for the phenomena the QOD agenda intends to explain.

The A-E framework is also useful for identifying the types of political agents who may advocate improvements in the quality of institutions of exercise, as well as their motivations. This is the preliminary step for understanding the microfoundations (and building formal models) for the stability and change of patrimonial rule. The separation of access and exercise as distinct political domains allows for the possibility that struggles for change in each of the domains are different foci of conflict. In particular, by cross-tabulating the cleavage of democratic versus authoritarian forces and the cleavage of bureaucratic versus patrimonial groups, the arena of political conflict around institutions can be conceptualized as a field of four quadrants: bureaucratic democrats, bureaucratic authoritarians, patrimonial democrats, and patrimonial authoritarians. Given the abundance of evidence on persistence of patrimonial rule despite rotation of parties in power, it is tempting to speak of a Mosca-type of “political class” that in most countries of Latin America is squarely located within the patrimonial democratic quadrant. The fact that leaders of mass political parties, one of the main beneficiaries of the democratic transitions in the 1980s, are also the main bastions of resistance against the de-patrimonialization of exercise, is one of the clearest signs that democratization and bureaucratization mobilize different classes of political agents, and cannot be seen as part of the same process. The critical political question is why the patrimonial democratic political class is not checked by bureaucratic democratic forces in society. Does this fail to occur because they do not have enough power to force the change (small numbers, collective action problem, correlation with low social power); or is it because they do not have a strong enough preference for change (e.g. the costs of patrimonial rule are atomized across large sections of

obviously needs important caveats, mainly the consideration of “competition above.” Even Barrington Moore (1966: 444) acknowledged the purely political role of rival elites that attempt to outnumber each other by looking for allies among subordinate classes.

society, or they accept domination by patrimonial democrats out of fear of bureaucratic authoritarians)? The A-E framework cannot answer these questions, but it is crucial for framing them.

Theoretical insights: The relation between access and exercise

Finally, the analytical distinction between access and exercise is a necessary condition for investigating the crucial relation between patrimonialism and democracy. As the crisis of traditional parties and the rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela illustrates, government corruption may cause widespread discredit of incumbent parties, and induce large sections of the public to support an “anti-political” leader, who may in turn exploit the public’s political alienation to take dictatorial measures. That is, sustained patrimonialism may be an opportunity for would-be dictators and a threat for democracy. Another effect of patrimonialism on the political regime, relevant for poor countries, was theorized by Jonathan Hartlyn (1994) in his study of the Dominican Republic post-Trujillo, and by Levitsky and Way (2010) in their analysis of competitive authoritarianism in the post-Cold War era. Patrimonialism causes authoritarianism in countries with small, private economies because any use of public resources for partisan purposes by the party in power introduces a bias in the arena of political competition that cannot be neutralized by the opposition for lack of sources to fund a meaningful campaign.

The focus on the sequence and timing of large political processes, a traditional concern within comparative historical analysis, is crucial for the study of the relation between forms of access and exercise in Latin American politics. In particular, can countries build efficient bureaucracies *after* they established democratic regimes? The historical record is rather grim. With few conspicuous exceptions, all durable processes of de-patrimonialization originated under autocratic auspices, for instance, during state formation in Early Modern Europe or the rise of the developmental state in South East Asia from 1960 to 1970.¹⁵ A mechanism that thwarts bureaucratization under democracy was specified by Martin Shefter (1977): if mass political parties emerge *before* a strong Weberian bureaucracy is in place, public resources naturally become a primary target of predation because patronage is the parties’ easiest strategy of survival and expansion. The institutional combination of democratic access and bureaucratic exercise is, according to the argument, the point of arrival for a trajectory in which bureaucratization precedes democratization, and seems out of reach for a path in which democratization precedes bureaucratization. However, democratic access involves an obvious mechanism for gradual improvement of the quality of exercise: electoral competition gives the public the opportunity to punish the government’s patrimonial behavior by voting for a pro-bureaucratic opposition. Recent work on state reconstruction in post-communist Central Europe provides abundant evidence on how opportunistic parties restrain corruption when faced with “robust” political competition (Grzymala-Busse 2007). The conditions under which patrimonialism becomes a real public concern for the “pivotal voter,” political competition is robust enough to overcome the negative effect pointed out by Shefter, and the opposition’s promise to foster bureaucratization is credible, are a key area for future research.

¹⁵ The exceptions include the *mani pulite* investigation in Italy (1992–1996), and the decline of machine politics in large U.S. cities around World War I.

Conclusion

A radical, albeit silent, change of focus has occurred in the study of Latin American politics. After decades of attention to the institutions of access to state power, scholars are increasingly interested in problems of exercise of power. The change of focus, however, has remained hidden behind the curtain placed by the continued use of “democracy-centered” concepts and theories. In effect, phenomena like clientelism, corruption, and government by presidential decree have become primary concerns in the agenda of students of Latin American politics. To deal analytically with them, the dominant strategy has been to expand the definition of democracy in such a way as to make clientelism and executive decrees signs of low levels, or low quality, of democracy.

The result of the strategy of conceptual expansion has been interference with causal assessment. Diagnosed as deficits of democratization, the fundamentally different nature of the problems of exercise of power has passed unnoticed. As a consequence, their true causes remain unknown. This article has not attempted to find the causes. Instead, it has proposed an alternative conceptual approach that facilitates research. The A-E framework is based on three successive conceptual choices: 1) drawing a strong conceptual separation between the issues of democratic transition and consolidation on the one hand, and the so-called issues of democratic quality on the other; 2) favoring a specific version of that separation by using the distinction between access to power and exercise of power, notions that in turn derive from the concept of modern state; and 3) re-diagnosing the presumed problems of “low-democratic quality” as signs of patrimonial rule.

Since scholars may want to use some component of the A-E framework, and re-adapt or discard the rest, a recapitulation of the advantages, potential costs, and alternatives to each of these decisions is in order.

Conceptual separation. The main reason for “pulling democracy back out” from the new research agenda is to minimize the number of connections drawn by definition between democracy and other variables, and to maximize the number of relations that can be studied empirically. Knowledge about how clientelism affects democracy is limited, and in order to learn about that effect, it is necessary to keep them separate. Being conservative in relation to the original, minimalist meaning of democracy is crucial for another reason: democracy cannot claim a definitive victory in the region, as is dramatically shown by the 2009 coup in Honduras and the succession of attacks against the opposition and the free press in Venezuela throughout the 2000s. The minimalist definition of democracy is too valuable a tool in this context to manipulate its meaning.

Access, exercise, and state power. The intended contribution of the A-E framework is the integration of traditional political concepts in a relatively simple analytical structure centered on the territorial state. By defining “regime” (democratic versus authoritarian) in terms of access, and “administration” (bureaucratic versus patrimonial) in terms of exercise, it organizes a vast semantic field in comparative politics. It provides precision to its component concepts by drawing clear boundaries and connections between them. As a result, for instance, the relation between state and regime gets clarified: the regime is one of the two faces of the relation between the public and state power. Similarly, by defining democracy as a specific regime of access, the A-E framework enhances the precision of the standard Shumpeterian definition—it provides justification for the inclusion of attributes related to competition and participation, and for the exclusion of elements not related to access, and it makes redundant the caveat about absence of tutelary powers.

Patrimonialism and bureaucratization. Re-diagnosing problems conventionally viewed as deficiencies in democratization as issues of patrimonial rule and failures of bureaucratization is meant to mobilize theories, insights, and data that have largely remained outside the focus of the

research on Latin American politics. In this case, terminological conservatism (i.e., rolling the meaning of democracy back to its Shumpeterian roots) favors theoretical innovation. Critics of the decision to invoke theories of bureaucratization may argue that alternative accounts of the “exercise of power,” other than the degree of bureaucratization, are available.

The main alternative for conceptualizing exercise is in terms of the degree of liberalism or constitutionalism. This approach is at least partially orthogonal to the issues of access, and would focus attention more centrally on checks and balances. In particular, these notions seem more relevant for problems of “horizontal accountability” and the abuse of presidential discretionary powers.

This alternative conceptualization raises three issues. First, it seems preferable to locate Madisonian checks and balances in a yet another domain of institutional power, distinct both from access and exercise, namely, that of the *division* of state powers. This additional domain may in turn need its own categories of analysis.

Second, weak “horizontal accountability,” understood as the failure of legislatures to control the executive, can have two different sources. It may be the consequence of a coercive invasion by the president, in which case *access* and democracy are affected—i.e., elected representatives are deprived of their institutional power. It may also be the consequence of voluntary delegation by the legislature, in which case the problem is a form of *exercise* of power by the elected representatives, and access or democracy remain unaltered.

Finally, the decision to use the specific term “exercise” is inconsequential, so long as its distinctive implications are clear; the corresponding political actors and causal patterns are different from those involved in access. The particular term does not matter, provided it is clear that a new theory is needed to untangle basic confusions in the literature.

Chapter 2

Macrofoundations of Regime Change: Neo-Weberian and Neo-Marxist Accounts

In the final lecture of his career, Max Weber argued that,

whether the military organization is based on the principle of self-equipment or that of equipment by a military warlord who furnishes horses, arms, and provisions, is a distinction quite as fundamental for social history as is the question whether the means of economic production are the property of the worker or of a capitalist entrepreneur. (1981: 320)

Few statements in Weber's writings are so openly confrontational in relation to Marxist social theory. Behind what at first sight might seem an arbitrary reference to the details of military organization in the Late Middle Ages, Weber has in mind a sharp distinction between two basic types of power relations. In contrast to the means of *production* emphasized by Marxist sociology, Weber posited control over the means of *destruction*—based on the “military equipment” just noted—as a major source of social power and political change.

The distinction between means of production and means of destruction, and between economic and politico-military sources of power more generally, prefigures with remarkable accuracy a major, although implicit, divide in contemporary studies of regime change. In this tradition, regime trajectories are routinely understood as the outcome of conflicts that emerge in the course of two alternative macrohistorical processes: either state formation or capitalist development. Each of these processes involves unprecedented accumulation and concentration of the means of production—the capitalist firm—and the means of coercion—the territorial state.¹

Scholars relating regime variations to capitalist development traditionally view the contrast between democracy and dictatorship as the reflection of different power balances between social classes, either between the landed upper class and the urban bourgeoisie, or between the bourgeoisie and the working class. On the other hand, authors adhering to the state formation approach explain variations in political regime in terms of alternative resolutions to the struggles involved in the construction of modern state structures—struggles between the

¹ On the key distinction between accumulation and concentration of power resources (either economic or political), see Tilly 1990: 16–28.

state-making elites and regional groups resisting incorporation into a national territory and taxation from a remote political center.

Since the contributions of the classical precursors, debates between these rival perspectives on the causes of regime change have been as frequent and animated as the disputes within each of them. In a recent critique of the capitalist development perspective by an analyst focused on state formation, Brian Downing has argued that the first autocratic regimes in Western Europe had nothing to do with a reaction from feudal landowners during the transition to commercial agriculture—which was specifically Barrington Moore’s thesis on the origins of modern dictatorships. According to Downing:

It was War and not domestic pressures that led to the rise of autocratic states in Prussia and France. The Junkers needed no elaborate state apparatus to market grain in the West or tie labor to the soil. The Prussian state that emerged from the household rule of the Hohenzollern electors was a machine geared toward war. (1992: 239)

Debates within each tradition have also persisted. Against the thesis that the bourgeoisie is the chief sponsor of democracy—the other component of Moore’s explanation—another prominent advocate of the capitalist development approach has argued that “none of the great bourgeois revolutions has actually established bourgeois democracy” (Therborn 1977: 17).² Within the state formation perspective, authors agree only on the implicit thesis that the form of political regime depends on the kind of resistance that the state-making elite must overcome in order to build modern state structures—the stronger the resistance, the larger the scope of political rights conceded by state builders. Yet, the specific determinants of the resistance against state-making initiatives are a major focus of contention. Thus, whereas for Charles Tilly the resistance is a function of the prior social organization of the population that was eventually incorporated into the state’s territory (1990: 15, ch. 5 *passim*), for Thomas Ertman it depends upon the institutional organization of the Medieval representative bodies that preceded the onset of the state formation process (1997: 19–25).

This chapter clarifies the debates between and within the state formation and capitalist development approaches to regime change in order to take stock of their distinctive contributions and strengths and to pinpoint some pitfalls that block further progress in the analysis of regime change. For that purpose, the chapter advances a double thesis: whereas the various hypotheses in conflict are substantially more similar than it seems, the outcomes explained by those hypotheses are actually different. The first part of the thesis focuses on the explanatory variables and involves detecting the common foundations underlying apparently rival approaches to regime change. The state formation and capitalist development approaches have at least two key theoretical underpinnings in common, which are usually overlooked even by their advocates. First, they share an analytical framework centered on the concept of power. Second, they employ a common logic for building explanatory arguments, the “refraction model of causation,” which

² The image of a bourgeois revolution creating a democratic regime of course belongs to Marx, but Therborn addresses the statement against Moore (1966: 418, 431), who explicitly emphasized both the bourgeois and revolutionary origins of political democracy. Within the capitalist development approach, the alternative hypothesis—that the strength of the working class actually explains the rise of democracy—has also been called into question, especially as to its scope of application (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992: 40–63; Collier 1999: 14–17, 33–36, 54–59, 171–177.)

views national political regimes as local adaptations to a universal process of change in the organization of power. These two elements are major strengths shared by both approaches, which set them apart from other perspectives on regime change, including modernization, cultural, and game-theoretic approaches.

The second part of the thesis, which analyzes the outcome variable, uncovers differences in a supposedly common object of explanation, and is the point of entry to discussing the pitfalls of these approaches. Two observations provide the frame for this discussion. First, the concept of democracy used in regime analysis refers to a multidimensional set of institutions, such as division of powers, competition for office, and universal suffrage—even the Schumpeterian definition of democracy that has prevailed in the field is a highly compound concept (1947: 269–273). Second, the installation of the different institutional components of a democratic regime is the result of distinct causal processes. On the basis of these two observations, it can be shown that theories that view each other as rival explanations of democratization are actually engaged in a false debate. Rather than opposite explanations of the same outcome, they should be viewed as mutually independent hypotheses about the different components of democracy.

To a great extent, the double thesis advanced in this chapter runs against the current of discussions about regime change. In effect, as a collective project, these discussions involve a continual process of refinement of the explanatory variables, which nevertheless takes for granted the usefulness of a broad conceptualization of the outcome variable in terms of highly aggregate categories—essentially “democracy” versus “autocracy,” or any equivalent contrast. The double thesis, on the contrary, suggests that the competition among increasingly refined explanatory arguments should not obscure the logical framework shared by all of them. Likewise, it implies that the usefulness of a highly aggregate conceptualization of the outcomes to be explained is largely exhausted, and actually interferes with causal assessment.

The chapter first examines the common theoretical matrix of explanations within the state formation and capitalist development approaches. It then shows how the most representative contributions from both approaches apply the common theoretical matrix, clarifying exactly what is at stake in the disputes across and within them, and showing how circumscribed those disputes actually are. Next, it turns to the analysis of the outcome variable, revealing that allegedly rival explanations in fact do not focus on the same object of explanation and thus are not mutually exclusive hypotheses. The conclusion analyzes how the common theoretical matrix distinguishes state formation and capitalist development approaches from other perspectives on regime change.

Common Features of Rival Explanations

The concept of power

The concept of power is the key building block in the creation of theories for both the state formation and capitalist development approaches. It refers to the fundamental observation that, in all societies, some groups and individuals have a greater capacity than others to achieve their goals; and if these goals are incompatible with those pursued by others, the former manage to prevail over the preferences of the latter. In fact, in the pursuit of their own goals, they are able to mobilize other people’s energies even against their will. In addition to this shared definition of social power, both approaches address the question that logically follows from it: how can some groups and individuals prevail over others? The answer for both approaches lies in the

possession of material resources with which it is possible to control the others' behavior. In viewing the control of material resources as the key source of social power, state formation and capitalist development perspectives reject cultural approaches to regime change, which either ignore the issue of power altogether or associate it with the influence of intangible factors like ideas, norms, and knowledge.

The only difference between the state formation and capitalist development perspectives is that the former focuses on political resources while the latter emphasizes control over economic resources. Political power is based on the control of facilities, such as weapons, garrisons, and prisons, related to the exercise of physical violence, the application of which can damage the existence, bodily integrity, and freedom of subordinate groups, and thereby prevent their disobedience. Conversely, economic power includes scarce goods—such as machines, fertile land, and money—that enable their owners to induce the people who lack those resources to behave in a specific way, which normally consists of doing productive labor under the conditions set by the owners

How do the state formation and capitalist development approaches move from this simple concept of power to constructing comprehensive theories of political change? The linchpin is the assumption that the prime goal of the holders of power resources, either economic or political, is to preserve and expand their command positions, and conversely, that the goal of those who lack power resources is to reverse their subordination. The consequent clash of interests and power struggles is, for both approaches, the most important source of social change, including regime change. The causal connection between power struggles and social change is of course the thrust of Marx's famous assertion: "the history of society is the history of class struggle" (1978: 473). Weber's criticism of this perspective was directed not against viewing power struggles as the engine of social history, but only against emphasizing conflicts over the means of production at the expense of conflicts over the means of coercion. Hence, in empirical research on political regimes, the rival approaches focused on capitalist development and state formation in fact apply a single explanatory principle: regime transformations can be traced to asymmetries in the distribution of material resources and the power struggles that follow from them.

The refraction model

A second distinctive feature of the state formation and capitalist development approaches corresponds to an explanatory logic that views variations in national political regimes as local repercussions of universal processes of change. As the British historian H. R. Trevor-Roper wrote in his celebrated essay on the formation of Modern Europe: "the various countries of Europe seemed merely the separate theaters upon which the same great tragedy was being simultaneously, though in different languages and with local variations, played out" (1967: 46).

For state formation and capitalist development approaches, the "great tragedy" is associated specifically with a global revolution in the organization of power—the centralization of the means of coercion in the territorial state on the one hand, and the concentration of economic resources in the capitalist firm on the other. In turn, Trevor-Roper's "local variations" refer, in both approaches, to the variety of political regimes with which each country got through the power struggles involved in those great transformations.

This shared form of argumentation is composed of two explanatory elements: an exogenous process of change that operates as a common shock to all cases, and a set of conditions peculiar to each case that sends countries affected by the common shock along different regime trajectories. This "refraction model of causation" is crucial for organizing and

clarifying the disputes on regime change. First, the overall logical structure of the refraction model is shared by the two approaches. Second, the concrete macrohistorical process that enters the model as the exogenous common shock differentiates state formation and capitalist development approaches from one another, and is precisely what is at stake in the disputes between them. Finally, the debates within each approach center on the conditions of refraction.

Mapping the debates onto the structure of the refraction model points in the same direction as the reconstruction of the shared underlying conceptual framework advanced above—the intensity of disputes between and within approaches should not conceal key areas of consensus. By converging around the concept of power and the refraction model of causation, state formation and capitalist development approaches can be seen as different applications of the same theoretical framework. As shown below, the areas of consensus underlying debates within each perspective, albeit also largely unnoticed, are no less important than the areas of agreement underlying disputes between perspectives.

Circumscribing the Debates

The consensus behind disputes within the state formation approach

The rise of the territorial state is the key impulse for regime change within the state formation approach. The great transformation involved in the rise of the modern state corresponds to the transition from a system of “parcelized sovereignty” to an organization that monopolizes the means of coercion within the territory defined by its boundaries.³ According to the state formation perspective, this transformation over time affecting all countries in Early Modern Europe was nevertheless refracted by context-specific conditions that account for variations in regime forms across countries. All European countries converged on the territorial state as a generic form of political organization, but variations in the process of state formation determined that states differed in the specific kind of political regime they adopted.⁴

Explaining contrasts over time in the emergence of modern states is the focus of a remarkable—although implicit—consensus among scholars within the state formation perspective. A shared theoretical account and empirical understanding of the rise of the territorial state is a distinctive feature of this perspective. Scholars adhering to the state formation approach would agree with Otto Hintze’s pioneering insight: “[A]ll state organization was originally military organization, organization for war. This can be regarded as an assured result of comparative history” (1975: 181). The core causal claim of this approach is that the territorial state emerged in Western Europe as the only viable form of political organization in the wake of the escalation of geopolitical competition during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a direct consequence of the superior military performance of the territorial state, geopolitical competition forced rulers struggling for political survival to centralize the means of coercion. In this context, open war provoked the extinction of the various systems of fragmented sovereignty that had dominated the continent since Antiquity—feudal empires, city-states, urban federations, and theocratic enclaves. War and preparation for war caused the convergence on the territorial state by selecting out less competitive forms of military organization.

³ The expression “parcelized sovereignty” was coined by Anderson 1974: xi.

⁴ I view the conceptual relation between state and regime in a simple way. If the state is the monopoly of the means of coercion within a delimited territory, the regime is the set of institutions that regulates the access to the state’s top positions. The regime is thus a variable to characterize the state.

Political survival in Early Modern Europe depended not only on the modernization of military organization but also on the intensification of the extractive activities that would provide the financial resources required by preparation for war. In effect, the military and extractive organizations that rulers in Early Modern Europe built as a byproduct of war preparation were actually the central organizational components of the modern state (Ardant 1975: 164–242). The integral character of the connection between coercive and extractive activities in the formation of the modern state was early captured by Norbert Elias:

The society of what we call the modern age is characterized...by a certain level of monopolization. Free use of military weapons is forbidden to the individual and reserved to a central authority. Likewise, taxation of property or income is concentrated in the hands of a central social authority. The financial resources thus flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of military force, while this in turn maintains the monopoly of taxation....They are two sides of the same monopoly. If one disappears, the other automatically follows. (1994: 268)

In accordance with the theoretical framework centered on the concept of power, the state formation approach posits two interlocked arenas of power struggles: the fight for political survival in the external arena forced rulers to open a domestic front of conflict against those groups that controlled the resources required to keep competitive military forces—money, men, weapons, and supplies—and that were reluctant to surrender them.

The need of financial resources to fund the construction of modern state structures—the fiscal component in this general account of state formation—is crucial for explaining regime variations. Indeed, fiscal policy in the formative period of the modern state is the key link between the process of state formation as an exogenous common shock and the refraction of that shock into different regime trajectories. The general idea is that rulers trying to cope with the fiscal pressures imposed by war and state-making activities followed different extractive strategies because the kind of resistance they met varied from one region to another. Variations in regime trajectories reflect different solutions to the conflicts and exchanges between the state-building elite and the subject population around the financial needs of the incipient states.

Thus, scholars in the state formation perspective not only agree on the empirical understanding of the state formation process, but also share the intuition that the main source of regime variation resides in the extractive aspects of that process. Against this backdrop, debates about regime variations within this perspective concern the specific conditions that were paramount in shaping domestic resistance against state-making initiatives, the extractive strategies with which the state-building elites tried to overcome them, and the ensuing conflicts. In other words, disagreements within the state formation perspective concern the diverse—i.e., refracted—local responses to the financial pressures imposed by geopolitical competition. The works by Tilly, Ertman, and Downing, the three most sophisticated contributions of the state formation approach to date, exemplify these disputes.

According to Tilly, the kind of resistance confronted by Early Modern rulers was a function of the prior socioeconomic organization of the populations that were eventually incorporated into the state's territory, whereas for Ertman and Downing, it depended upon the political organization. Tilly links state formation to regime variations through socioeconomic conditions of refraction:

Rulers pursuing similar ends—especially successful preparation for war—in very different environments responded to those environments by fashioning distinctive relations to the major social classes within them. The reshaping of relations between ruler and ruled produced new, contrasting forms of government, each more or less adapted to its social setting. (1990: 30)

Tilly's point of departure is the observation that the territories that state builders managed to control differed strongly in their level of urbanization and the incidence of commerce (1990: 15, 20–30, 99–107). The key contrast is between the feudal manor and the city, or between “coercion-intensive” and “capital-intensive” settings. Thus, state builders in search of the means of war had to confront two types of rivals—either landlords or merchants—and adapt their extractive strategies accordingly.⁵ Coercion-intensive settings, such as Russia, Brandenburg, and Castile, were regions of subsistence agriculture and few cities, where resources were in kind (crops, cattle, land), dispersed in the countryside, and controlled by landlords who relied on coercion to extract them. By contrast, the Netherlands, northern Italy, and the south and west of England were capital-intensive regions, with many cities and commercial wealth, where markets, monetized exchanges, and high value-added production prevailed.

The contrasting socioeconomic organizations faced by state builders provide, in Tilly's model, the conditions of refraction of the state formation process into different regime trajectories. In coercion-intensive settings, the absence of ready capital led rulers to build massive apparatuses to squeeze resources from a reluctant population. In these cases, rulers developed large military forces to conquer peasant villages and discipline local lords, giving rise to the first modern autocratic regimes. Constitutional regimes, on the other hand, emerged in capital-intensive settings, where rulers, instead of resorting to coercive techniques of extraction, built the state through “compacts with capitalists.” For Tilly, then, political liberties and representative institutions were the outcome of negotiations between state-building elites and cities, by means of which money and other essential resources for the creation of modern state structures were obtained in exchange for the extension of citizenship rights and participation in government.

Like Tilly, Ertman explains regime trajectories as the outcome of the conflictual interaction between state-making rulers and their domestic adversaries. Yet Ertman changes the focus from the socioeconomic to the political organization of resistance against the state formation process. The key opposition to the state-making ruler was not that of landlords and merchants, but that of the local governments and representative bodies—the estates—from which the crown had to obtain authorization to levy new taxes since the Low Middle Ages.

Ertman argues that in countries where local governments in the Middle Ages were organized in a “participatory” manner, as in England, Scandinavia, Hungary, and Poland, the estates generated reserves of social capital, as well as financial and military resources, that could be mobilized to resist absolutism and force the crown to accept a constitutional arrangement of power sharing. Where, on the other hand, local government was structured in a top-down, “administrative” way, as in Portugal, Spain, France, and Germany, representative assemblies

⁵ Statebuilders were not always successful. When landlords were too powerful, as in Hungary and Poland, the very process of state formation failed. As Polish and Hungarian nobles in control of the essential resources vetoed the centralizing initiatives, state-builders could not meet their geopolitical challenges, and lost substantial extensions of territory to the hands of the Germans, Russians, and Scandinavians. Similarly, too powerful cities, such as Genoa and Venice, routinely frustrated political centralization projects in the Italian peninsula.

remained internally divided, and thereby rulers were able over the long run to play one chamber off against the other and weaken the representative body's ability to resist the ruler's absolutist designs.

Downing also views the different types of Medieval political institutions as refracting the state formation process into different regime trajectories. He argues that "medieval constitutionalism," a set of institutions including representative assemblies and individual guarantees against arbitrary political actions, furnished most countries in Europe with a unique predisposition to modern democracy. Moreover, in contrast to Tilly and all theorists of the capitalist development approach, who view liberal democracy as a radical break with medieval institutions, the question for Downing is not what brought democracy about, but what slashed its medieval roots—or, more precisely, which forces prevented the development of fully democratic regimes in those countries that had the medieval predisposition but eventually developed absolutist forms of government.

Only in the western and eastern extremes of the continent, the Iberian Peninsula and Muscovy, did medieval constitutionalism not take root, which explains why the democratic trajectory was precluded in Portugal, Spain, and Russia. Yet if these cases support the hypothesis that medieval constitutionalism was a necessary condition for the democratic path, France and Germany—countries that followed the absolutist trajectory despite their medieval predisposition—show that it was not sufficient. Thus, Downing posits a second filter of refraction of the state formation process, which explains why some countries within the subset of those that had the medieval predisposition instead deviated from the constitutional path and joined Spain and Russia. The second filter of refraction, according to Downing, is the degree to which "mobilization of domestic resources" was necessary during the state formation process. Downing claims that in France and Germany the need to mobilize domestic resources for warfare broke down constitutionalism in favor of strongly centralized monarchies. By contrast, the Netherlands, England, and Sweden found alternate methods of waging war and building state structures—extraordinary commercial wealth in the first two cases, and foreign loans in the last one—and thereby were able to dispense with the attack on the constitutional legacy of the Middle Ages.

The double filter, of course, makes Downing's version of the refraction model subtly more complex than those advanced by Tilly and Ertman. For these latter two authors, the prior socioeconomic and political organization of the subject population was at the same time both a necessary and sufficient condition for sending countries undergoing state formation along different regime trajectories.

In sum, beneath the disagreements among Tilly, Ertman, and Downing regarding the causes of regime variations, important areas of consensus can be found. The three most sophisticated versions of the state formation argument share with the contributions of the capitalist development approach both the conceptual framework centered on the concept of power and the refraction model of causation. On the other hand, Tilly, Ertman, and Downing have in common two additional elements that specifically differentiate them from capitalist development approach. The first element is a shared empirical understanding of the rise of the modern state, which enters the refraction model as the macrohistorical process of power reorganization. Second, they share the theoretical principle that regime trajectories can be traced to different solutions to the struggles between the state-building elite and its domestic adversaries over the financial requirements of the state formation process.

The only area of disagreement among Tilly, Ertman, and Downing refers, in the last instance, to the conditions that refracted the state formation process into divergent regime trajectories. However, from a logical point of view, Downing's version of the conditions of refraction, far from being incompatible with that of Tilly and Ertman, is actually complementary to them. The key point is that, when analyzing the struggle between the state-building rulers and the groups reluctant to surrender essential resources, Tilly and Ertman allow for variations in the strength of one of the two sides in the conflict—resistance by the subject groups. They hold the other constant, i.e., the state builders' onslaught.⁶ Downing, by contrast, focuses on variations in the state builders' attack—which was more intense the more they had to rely on domestic resources—while assuming that the nature of the resistance against it was constant. However, a causal model allowing for variations in the relative power and political posture of both contenders is not only viable but also desirable.

The capitalist development approach

Theorists of the capitalist development approach agree on the general idea that the rise and subsequent dynamics of capitalist economies produce substantial asymmetries in the distribution of economic resources, and that the ensuing power struggles are refracted by country-specific conditions into different regime trajectories. Aside from this general consensus, disputes within this approach are more complex than disputes within the state formation approach. In contrast to the latter, which are circumscribed by the conditions of refraction of the macrohistorical process, competing positions within the capitalist development approach also disagree on the specific phase of capitalist development that is the most relevant as a source of regime variations. Whereas Moore points to the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture in the very origins of modern capitalism, Göran Therborn and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens focus on the emergence of labor as a major social class in later phases of capitalist development.

By tracing variations in national political regimes to the formative period of modern capitalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Moore's analysis adopts the same timeframe as that of the state formation perspective. In the same way that state-building elites responded to war-induced fiscal pressures by fashioning different extractive policies, rural lords reacted to the challenge of commercial agriculture by pursuing different strategies of labor control and promoting alternate political coalitions. The transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture was, according to Moore, refracted into different regime trajectories by the prevailing structure of class relations, including the form of exploitation of peasant labor by landowners and the balance of power between the landed upper class and the urban bourgeoisie (1966: 420, 423, 433–435). Whereas in England and the northern states of the United States, where landowners relied on "free labor" to work the soil, in France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and China, the rural upper classes intensified or reintroduced labor-repressive forms of agriculture, such as slavery, serfdom, and feudal dues. In relation to the balance of power between the landlords and the bourgeoisie, the English and northern United States rural upper classes found in the city a strong ally for launching a bourgeois revolution to remove the vestiges of pre-modern times. With the abolition of royal absolutism after the Puritan Revolution in England, and the elimination of slavery in the southern United States after the Civil War, England and the United States converged on democracy as the long-term regime outcome. In France the

⁶ In Tilly's argument, the state builders' strategies simply adapt to (and reflect) the resistance from landlords or merchants, and thus have no independent source of variation.

bourgeoisie was also a powerful group, but the labor-repressive practices of the French landowners precluded a coalition between them. In Germany, Russia, Japan, and China, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie was not powerful enough to challenge the landlords' interest in retaining the prevailing socioeconomic arrangements.

To explain the divergent regime trajectories within the subset of countries where landlords adapted to commercial agriculture by means of forced labor practices, Moore introduces a second filter of refraction: the capacity of the peasantry to resist the landowners' repressive strategies (1966: 453–483). In France, Russia, and China, the solidarity networks among peasants were more robust than the vertical links between peasant and lord; however, whereas the French peasantry found a strong anti-feudal ally in the city to produce a bourgeois revolution and placed France on the democratic trajectory, the lack of a bourgeois component in Russia and China made peasant insurrection install a communist dictatorship. Finally, the absence of an organized peasant opposition allowed German and Japanese rural lords to preserve labor repressive practices and, in alliance with a dependent bourgeoisie, oversee a “revolution from above” that resulted in fascist dictatorship.

In an alternate version of the capitalist development approach, Therborn argues that none of the bourgeois revolutions created liberal democracies and, furthermore, that democracy “has always and everywhere been established in struggle against the bourgeoisie” (1977: 35). Besides opening an internal debate within the capitalist development approach, Therborn's case also involves a major criticism of rival approaches to regime change, especially modernization theory. According to Therborn, cross-national statistical findings showing a high correlation between democracy and basic indicators of economic development—such as industrialization and literacy—are correct, but for reasons that modernization studies fail to identify. Specifically, Therborn states that:

the advance and development of capitalism strengthens the working class, [and] this explains the traditional sociological correlations of democracy with wealth, literacy, and urbanization. (1977: 29)

Hence, the growth of the working class was, according to Therborn, the key impulse for regime change. However, in contrast to models positing a linear relation between the strength of the working class and democratization, Therborn argues that cross-country differences regarding the viability of multiclass coalitions refracted the rise of the labor movement into a variety of regime trajectories. Multiclass coalitions played a crucial role because, according to Therborn, the labor movement was nowhere strong enough to achieve democracy on its own. Therborn identifies two auspicious conditions for the construction of pro-reform coalitions pivoting on the working class: an independent class of small farmers and divisions within the ruling class. The existence of independent small farmers favored the creation of a popular coalition broad enough to surmount the upper classes' resistance to democratic institutions, as in Denmark, Australia, and New Zealand; whereas divisions in the ruling class led to intense competition for popular support, as in England, the United States, the Netherlands, and the Third Republic. By counterfactual analysis, Therborn argues that, in the cases where none of these two conditions was present—Germany, Italy, Austria, and Japan—dictatorial regimes would not have been dismantled had it not been for foreign military interventions. By way of recapitulation of the explanatory arguments, Figure 2.1 presents the hierarchy of attributes that define works within

the state formation and capitalist development perspectives, from those shared by all of them to the ones that are distinctive of individual authors.

Figure 2.1. Shared and Distinctive Elements of the State Formation and Capitalist Development Perspectives

Elements Shared by SF and CD Perspectives	Focus on Power Refraction Model
Differentiation between Perspectives	Type of Power: Economic versus Military
Differentiation within Perspectives	Conditions of Refraction e.g.: urbanization vs. constitutionalism

Unpacking the Outcome, Revealing False Debates

The state formation and capitalist development approaches employ the same kind of theoretical concepts and explanatory models. But do they explain the same outcomes? Democracy is a long-term regime outcome that all authors focus upon. However, a democratic regime is a multidimensional set of institutions, including representative assemblies, division of powers, popular participation, protection of civil rights, and competition among parties. More importantly, the installation of each component is the result of non-simultaneous, relatively independent causal processes. This multifaceted character of the democratic form of rule—even when viewed in the strict sense of a delimited set of political institutions—is the main source of controversies across and within the state formation and capitalist development perspectives. Potential confusion in debates about regime variations is produced by “underspecified theses”—that is, causal arguments that fail to indicate the specific component of the regime outcome they focus upon.

A more subtle yet frequent problem in the literature is created by “misplaced counter-theses.” Like all counter-theses, misplaced counter-theses are presented as replacing prior, allegedly wrong, regime explanations. They are misplaced because, despite being specific enough as to the regime component that is the focus of their explanation, they fail to notice that it does not coincide with the one explained by the supposedly flawed one. A misplaced counter-thesis may be right in relation to the causal connection it tries to make, but it is wrong as a disconfirmation of the explanation under critical inspection. Hence, competing theories may actually not be rival explanations of the same regime outcome, but rather mutually independent hypotheses about its different constituent parts. Regime explanations may differ because the

specific outcome explained by each is different, and not because of some intractable discrepancy in their understanding of the causal process behind regime variations.

Moore's theses have been a recurrent point of reference for later works, most of which developed their own regime explanations as explicit counter-theses to Moore's core arguments. At the heart of the controversy is Moore's connection between the bourgeoisie and democracy. Only Tilly agrees with it—partially. For even though Tilly views democracy as the result of negotiations in which the city—that is, the bourgeoisie—played a prominent role, he situates the whole bargaining process within the state formation context, a process which is obviously outside Moore's focus.

Albeit for different reasons, advocates of the state formation and capitalist development approaches converge on viewing timing as a key flaw of Moore's bourgeois revolution thesis. Whereas state formation explanations contend that the actual causes of democracy predated the bourgeois revolution, critical positions within the capitalist development perspective claim that democratization forces emerged only after it. Thus, the democratic "hero" would be either older than the bourgeoisie—the medieval collegial bodies resisting early modern rulers' absolutist pressures—or younger than it—the working class wresting political rights from a reluctant elite. These rival positions fail to notice that all three power groups may have played a role in constructing democracy, each of them contributing a different component.

Consultation versus competition

In emphasizing the medieval roots of democracy, Downing's version of the state formation approach to regime change is not only an explicit counter-thesis to Moore's bourgeois revolution argument, but also affects Tilly's case about the role of the modern city in the creation of citizenship rights. Downing's argument can be reduced to two parallel propositions. First, when problems of war and finance arose in the early modern period, rulers who had no outside source of money were left with only one alternative to the loss of sovereignty: swift mobilization of domestic resources, which meant constitutional crises, the destruction of collegial bodies, and the rise of absolutism. Second, rulers who found alternate financial sources, such as commercial wealth and foreign loans, were able to escape the conflict with collegial institutions controlling taxation, and thus the constitutional legacy of the Middle Ages entered the modern era untouched.

Downing's account is actually a misplaced counter-thesis to Moore's and Tilly's explanations of democracy because there is a fundamental asymmetry in his argument. His explanation is more complete for the rise of autocracies than for the emergence of democracies. Whereas the need of domestic resources was a sufficient condition for the rise of autocratic regimes, the absence thereof and the consequent preservation of constitutionalism were only a necessary condition for democracies. Downing leaves unexplained the transition from medieval constitutionalism to modern democracy. What factors activated the medieval "predisposition" and produced the emergence of a democratic regime? In particular, why did liberal democracy actually emerge after the bourgeois revolution depicted by Moore and the rise of cities analyzed by Tilly, and not in the Middle Ages?

However, the option of considering medieval constitutionalism as a component of modern democracy rather than as a predisposition to it, as Downing sometimes does, does not solve the problem. Given the obvious differences between medieval constitutionalism and modern democracy in terms of political competition and popular participation, the former would not only be one of several components of the latter, it would be rather insignificant in relation to

Moore's and Tilly's research goals. The capitalist development factors that Downing dismisses may provide more leverage in explaining the emergence of the democratic components on which Moore and others focus.

If Downing does not focus on the institutions of competition and participation, the two institutional components included in Robert Dahl's definition (1971: ch. 1), what component of democracy does his argument explain? Like Ertman, Downing focuses on the "consultation" component of the democratic institutional set, which basically refers to constitutional arrangements of power sharing between the executive branch and collegial decision-making bodies. Hence, what Downing and Ertman explain is whether geopolitical competition resulted in the institutionalization or the dismantling of the division of powers, and related variations in the political resources and responsibilities allocated to the legislatures within the broader institutional framework of the modern state.⁷

Competition versus participation

In the same way that the distinction between consultation and competition shows that Downing's and Ertman's versions of the state formation approach are not counter-theses in relation to Moore's argument, the distinction between competition and participation can help clarify the debate within the capitalist development approach regarding the relative weight of the bourgeoisie and labor in the rise of democracy. This line of analysis, explicitly advanced by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, attempts to disentangle the discrepancy between Moore and Therborn by arguing that whereas the bourgeois revolution explains the competition component of democracy, the rise of the working class explains the participation component. Specifically, the causal model advanced by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens views each of the new social classes that emerge in the course of capitalist development as fighting for its own inclusion in the political arena, and resisting the incorporation of those below it (1992: 44, 47, 77). In this view, the bourgeoisie struggled for its own inclusion against the feudal nobility, but opposed extending participation rights to the working class. Successive institutional transformations incorporating new classes into the political regime occur when the power of the new class counterbalances that of the already included ones.

This argument, however, must be refined in two directions—one conceptual, the other empirical. First, the competition component of democracy does not reduce only, or even primarily, to "bourgeois inclusion," as Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens imply. Competition, in the strict sense of a contest for electoral support between alternate political parties, is essentially a peaceful device for solving conflicts of interests around public issues, irrespective of the interests of whom or how many are represented in the contest (an issue that belongs to the participation component). As Schumpeter (1947: 271), following Weber, emphasized, the competition component of democracy must be contrasted not only to the lack of public contestation over political issues in despotic regimes, but also to violent forms of competition among rival groups, which predominate in military praetorian polities.⁸ Moore's

⁷ For a systematic conceptualization of the consultation component, see Weber 1978: 271–283; and Collins 1999: 114, 122–131.

⁸ In Dahl's adaptation of prior politico-institutional definitions of democracy, the contrast between competition and the lack thereof was emphasized at the expense of the contrast between peaceful competition and violent competition. Recovering the second contrast, of course, does not entail any kind of stretching of the minimalist definition of democracy. For arguments placing competition as a peaceful mechanism of conflict resolution at the center of minimalist definitions of democracy, see Bobbio 1976: ch. 5. Critics of liberal democracy have also

outcome variables are certainly not fully specified, but it is clear that he was not only interested in accounting for the political inclusion of the bourgeoisie. He also wanted to explain the rise of a peculiar institutional configuration that allows for the public expression of political disagreements, and at the same time provides a peaceful mechanism for working them out.⁹ It is this regime outcome, and not simply bourgeois inclusion, that makes the bourgeois revolution thesis interesting—if only because peaceful political contestation is a less obvious outcome resulting from rise of the bourgeoisie than bourgeois inclusion. If the competition component is thus reconceptualized, a second qualification of Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens' argument, specifically refining the connection between the working class and the participation component of democracy, is in order. According to Moore:

in England manufacturing and agrarian interests competed with one another for popular favor during the rest of the nineteenth century, gradually extending the suffrage. (1966: 444)

By tracing the extension of the franchise to the strategic dynamics of a preexisting competitive political arena, Moore makes a rather obvious causal connection, which has nevertheless been ignored by other studies within the state formation and capitalist development approaches. The argument would be that the participation component of democracy was caused not by the emergence of the working class, as Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens argue, but by another component of the democratic institutional set—competition—which was actually the conquest of the bourgeoisie. In a recent assessment of the evidence on the role of the working class in democratic reforms, Ruth Berins Collier has shown that strategic competition among “bourgeois” parties was at least as important as labor protest in the extension of rights to political participation during the first wave of democratization (1999: 33–76). Hence, Moore's cursory suggestion regarding the origins of the participation component has a significant empirical base, and Therborn's and Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens' rejection of the bourgeois thesis must be qualified. Figure 2.2 summarizes the disaggregation of the outcome variable in regime analysis, and links individual authors to a specific component.

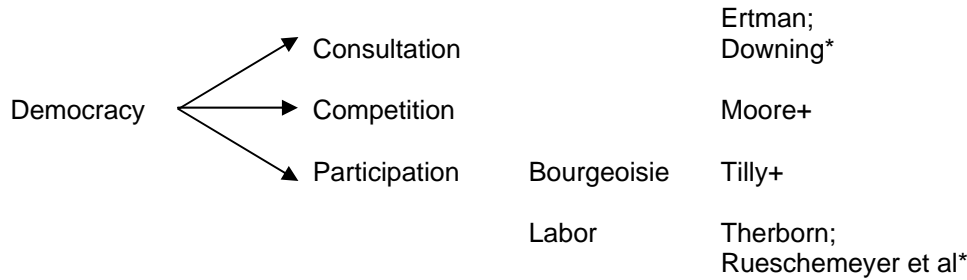
Conclusion

Disagreements about causes of regime change have been exaggerated. Explanations of regime variations are much more similar—and regime outcomes are much more different—than commonly acknowledged by producers and consumers of the macro-comparative literature. Beneath the disputes, major areas of consensus can be found. The analytical framework centered on the concept of power and the refraction model of causation constitute the theoretical core of all comparative-historical studies. The combined adoption of those two tools is in turn based on a

underlined peaceful political competition as its distinctive feature. Carl Schmitt (1926) is the *opus classicus* in this respect.

⁹ This interpretation is supported not only by Moore's several passages describing the outcome of the “democratic route,” but most obviously by the ironic asymmetry repeatedly emphasized by his explanatory argument, according to which peaceful outcomes (electoral competition and tolerance of opposition) resulted from extremely violent forces (revolutions).

Figure 2.2. Disaggregating the Outcome Variable



+ Outcome is underspecified by the author.

* Misplaced counter-thesis in relation to Moore.

shared vision of political regimes as the outcome of power struggles that emerged in the course of the large-scale, macrohistorical transformations involved in “the Making of the Modern World,” as Moore called it.

In connecting long-term regime trajectories to macroscopic processes of change, comparative political sociologists are deliberately ambitious. However, one of the most negative effects of the undue inflation of theoretical rivalries has been precisely that consumers and critics of the literature have routinely failed to appreciate that those research ambitions are backed by a strong body of shared social theory. To highlight the strengths of the social theory underlying state formation and capitalist development approaches, it is useful to compare them to other explanatory approaches to regime change, including modernization and game-theoretic approaches.

Modernization theory, especially in its original formulation, also aspired to associate regime variations to the macrohistorical changes involved in the passage from traditional to modern societies. However, state formation and capitalist development perspectives critically depart from modernization theory in two key respects—the power-centered analytical framework and the refraction model. According to modernization theory, the passage from traditional to modern societies is a multifaceted process involving interdependent changes in all areas of human activity, including urbanization, industrialization, education, and secularization (Lerner 1958: 438). For state formation and capitalist development perspectives, the problem with such a vision is that it fails to grasp the importance of the transformations in the organization of power—either by placing them on a par with other changes or ignoring them altogether. Hence, in contrast to modernization theory, these other two approaches conceptualize the rise of modern society primarily in terms of a revolution in the organization of power. From the standpoint of these two approaches, no aspect of the rise of modern society is more important than the centralization of the means of coercion in the territorial state and the concentration of the means of production in the capitalist firm. Other transformations either follow from them or are not as relevant for explaining regime variations.

The refraction model of causation is the other theoretical component that differentiates state formation and capitalist development approaches from modernization theory. Underlying this contrast is the rejection, by state formation and capitalist development arguments, of unilinear, evolutionary models of causation as a proper framework for understanding the effects of modernization on regime change. Both in old and new versions of modernization theory, different political regimes correspond to different levels of modernization, and democracy is

viewed as the dominant regime form associated with modern societies. By contrast, according to the refraction model, countries may enter the modern age with a variety of regime types, depending on how the conflicts triggered by the state formation and capitalist development processes are solved in each case. An interesting asymmetry between unilinear and refraction models of causation regarding the issue of regime convergence and divergence may be noted: whereas unilinear models rule out divergence of political regimes for the same modernization level, refraction models do not preclude convergence—room is made for the possibility that the conditions of refraction are roughly equivalent across cases.

State formation and capitalist development approaches are incompatible with modernization theory, but they are perfectly complementary with game theory, despite appearances and mutual distrust. The notion has prevailed that the focus on the macrofoundations of regime trajectories and the specification of the causal mechanisms underlying regime changes—the essence of game theory—are opposite enterprises. This notion could not be more incorrect. When advocates of comparative-historical analysis place regime dynamics within the macrohistorical contexts of state formation and capitalist development, the main purpose is precisely to specify as clearly as possible the essential elements of an eminently strategic model of regime change. This includes the definition of the main social and political groups, such as crowns, collegial bodies, landlords, peasant communities, and city dwellers, the specification of their economic interests and political projects, and the identification of the power resources with which they can pursue their own objectives and block those of their rivals. The macrohistorical process involved in the rise of the modern state, for instance, provides the basic information required to model the strategic interaction between crown and assemblies in Early Modern Europe. How should the crown's decision to attack medieval institutions, and the decision of the assemblies to resist it, be understood, if not in a geopolitical context that forced rulers to mobilize as many resources as possible? Thus, a focus on the macrofoundations of regime change, the distinctive contribution of state formation and capitalist development approaches, far from precluding the specification of mechanisms, actually facilitates it. In the modernization approach, regime changes are largely anonymous processes, with no actors or actions involved. By contrast, in delineating actors and preferences, the state formation and capitalist development approaches take the fundamental preliminary step for building a game-theoretic model of regime change.

Major game-theoretic breakthroughs in regime analysis, including that of Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2006), would not have been possible without the prior identification of groups, cleavages, and conflicts by prior contributions from macro-comparative research. In turn, in an exceptional example of true intellectual complementarities, Acemoglu and Robinson have contributed to regime analysis what game theory is best suited for: an original, general, and well-specified mechanism of regime change. In agreement with the basic spirit of macrofoundation approaches, Acemoglu and Robinson's model takes changes in the balance of power as the driving force behind regime change. Democratization occurs when groups excluded from the political regime experience a sudden but transitory increase in their physical capability to challenge the group in power (for instance, the crown of the state formation approach or the bourgeoisie of the capitalist development one). The elites may promise economic concessions to the challengers, but the elites and the subordinate groups face an insurmountable commitment problem: they both know that when the balance of power returns to normal, the elites will have an incentive to renege on their promise, and the subordinate groups will be left with no resources to enforce it. To prevent rebellion, then, both the elites and

the excluded sectors agree on the extension of political rights, that is, democratization, which furnishes would-be rebels with a permanent ability to enforce policy promises. A transitory shock in the balance of de facto power is thus locked in into a permanent rebalance of institutional power.

The commitment problem at the core of the game-theoretic approach to democratization can be seamlessly integrated into theories of macrofoundations, enhancing the precision of the mechanism behind regime change in both state formation and capitalist development approaches. However, a direct dialogue between approaches should address a fundamental challenge. For Acemoglu and Robinson, it is crucial that the shock to the de facto power be transitory—if it were permanent, the masses would not need democracy to punish the elite's misbehavior. By contrast, in the macrofoundation approaches, changes in the balance of de facto power (economic or military) tend to be conceived as deeply embedded, irreversible processes. A fascinating research agenda lies ahead on the nature and duration of the shocks to extra-institutional power behind institutional changes.

Reconstruction of the common theoretical matrix underlying state formation and capitalist development explanations has demonstrated that disputes across and within perspectives have been misleading and overstated. Examination of the outcome variables has further delimited the debates by showing that these two approaches have sought to explain different components of democracy, and correspondingly, the disputes involve misplaced counter-theses and false disconfirmations. State formation and capitalist development approaches depart sharply from other perspectives in macro-comparative analysis, such as modernization and cultural theories. Combined with game theory, the two approaches explored in this chapter hold great analytic promise.

Chapter 3

Power-Sharing through the Electoral Regime: Political Origins of Modern Colombia, 1850–1929¹

Colombia has not always been a violent country. In fact, for the first half of the twentieth century, Colombia was one of the most peaceful countries in Latin America, standing out in the region as a stable and competitive bipartisan democracy. When faced with the critical test for political stability in that epoch, which occurred in 1930 with the Great Depression, Colombia was the only large country in South America where military interventions were not even considered. While an armed coup interrupted Argentina's until-then steady path to democracy, and Getúlio Vargas installed the first modern dictatorship in Brazil, Colombia held elections as scheduled. Moreover, the Conservative ruling party lost the contest, did not make any move to cling to power, and calmly transferred it to the opposition.

However, Colombia was not born peaceful. That half-century of peaceful political existence was a novelty in the country's history. Colombia's nineteenth century was politically chaotic even by Hispanic American standards: the record includes nine national civil wars, dozens of local revolts and mutinies, material destruction equivalent to several years of economic output, and at least 250,000 deaths due to political violence.

How did Colombia make the transition from political chaos to political order? What were the causes of conflict prior to the turn of the century and what were the bases of internal peace after it? The emergence of order in Colombia was temporally correlated with a transformation of the political institutions shaping interparty relations: the introduction of special mechanisms for power-sharing between Liberals and Conservatives, Colombia's two dominant political forces. The central thesis of this chapter is that the correlation between the emergence of order and the introduction of power-sharing institutions is not coincidental, but causal. Before 1905, institutions favoring power monopolization by a single party forced the opposition into revolutionary tactics and the government into violent repression, whereas starting in 1905 the emergence of institutions insuring both parties a share of political power roughly proportional to their prior electoral position allowed for peaceful interaction between government and opposition. From the standpoint of power-sharing mechanisms, the key institutional change was the replacement in 1905 of majoritarian rule by the incomplete vote, a special kind of electoral system. Colombia in turn switched from the incomplete vote to proportional representation (PR) in 1929.

¹Adapted from Mazzuca and Robinson (2009). In this chapter, primary sources are cited in the footnotes, and standard bibliographic sources follow the customary author-date format.

This chapter develops in six sections. The first section briefly reviews the transition from chaos to order, highlighting essential patterns of inter-party relations in Colombia. The second offers a brief technical account of electoral rules, underlining differences between forms of representation that are necessary for understanding what was at stake in the Colombian switch from one set of rules to another. The third section provides an overview of Colombia's transition to proportional representation. It compares the two changes that marked the transition—the introduction of the incomplete vote in 1905 and of the quotient rule in 1929. Sections four and five examine the antecedents and dynamics of each piece of institutional reform.

The final section draws conclusions about political conflict, power-sharing, and representation in modern Colombia. It goes on to develop the implications of the Colombian case for theories on the origins of electoral, and places the Colombian electoral reform in comparative perspective by reviewing similar institutional innovations in other countries of South America.

From Chaos to Order: Changing and Enduring Political Patterns

Standard periodization divides Colombian political history between 1860 and 1930 into two blocks of time, known as *Olimpo Radical* (Radical Olympus) and *Hegemonía Conservadora* (Conservative Hegemony), each of which is characterized by the dominance of one of the two parties and a different set of policies. During the Olimpo Radical, from 1860 to the early 1880s, Liberals were in power. It was a period of frantic institutional reform designed by the “Radical” faction of the party to eradicate Colombia's heavy colonial heritage. Prominent among these reforms were the most extreme version of federalism ever known in the Americas, which allowed provincial armies and banned central intervention in subnational conflicts; a frontal attack to the institutional and cultural power of the Church, including expropriations of wealth, removal from education, and expulsion of the Jesuit order; and a number of free-market policies.

The intended and unintended consequences of Radical Liberal reforms—especially the hostility of a deeply Catholic population and the increasing inability of the central government to stop centrifugal forces—provoked the Conservative reaction. After a failed revolt in 1876 to 1877, Conservatives formed a coalition with dissident Liberals, headed by “Independent” Rafael Núñez, which managed to displace Radical Liberals from power in the early 1880s. The *Hegemonía Conservadora* was inaugurated in 1885, after Núñez's government crushed a revolution by Radical Liberals attempting to regain power, and lasted until 1930. During the sub-period known as *La Regeneración* (1885–1900), almost every component of the Radical experiment was reversed: power was recentralized; states lost their political autonomy; the authority of the president was reinforced and granted extraordinary powers; and the political, economic, and cultural position of the church was restored. Less spectacular were reversals in economic policy, which nevertheless included a significant increase in tariffs and new government authority to intervene in the economy, especially the supply of money.

From another perspective, based not on party or policy distinctions, but on levels and kinds of political conflict, a different periodization—between 1850 and 1950—can be drawn. The turning point for that periodization occurs around 1905, dividing the period into two blocks of time, the first marked by interparty warfare and the second defined by peaceful power-sharing. This of course implies a subdivision of the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, conventionally viewed as a single period.

Parties were the main architects of the emergence of political order after 1905; however, they had also been the main forces responsible for political chaos and material destruction even before that date. Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, both Liberal and Conservative parties were partly electoral and partly military organizations, with proportions fluctuating over time. Military superiority was the key condition to achieving and retaining control of government. Although from 1860 to 1900 the vast majority of government changes followed constitutional prescriptions, the only two transfers of power from one party to the other occurred via military force (Mosquera's takeover in 1861, and Núñez's repression of the Radicals in 1885). Before 1905, then, party alternation in power was a rare phenomenon, and always a violent one.

The pattern of inter-party warfare was a broader phenomenon than the two episodes of violent takeover by the opposition. It also included several failed revolutions, such as the 1876 to 1877 war under the Radical Liberal government, as well as the 1895 war and the Thousand Days' War (1899–1902) under La Regeneración. Furthermore, as revealed during the periods of open war, party warfare also comprised continuing preparation for repression by the government and organization of revolution by the opposition. When Radical Liberals were in power, for instance, private armies became a frequent phenomenon, whereas under La Regeneración the Liberal party sent a series of "diplomatic missions" to neighboring countries to collect weapons for the revolutionary arsenal.

The disappearance of warfare as a pattern of inter-party relations defined the passage from chaos to order. At the same time, a pattern that persisted from one period to the other was the recurrence of internal divisions within the parties, along with the strategic utilization of splits by the rival party. Faced with the division of the governing party into an official and a dissident faction, the opposition would attempt a coalition with the dissident faction in order to displace the official faction from government. Instances of this pattern include the following: the alliance of the Independent or *Nuñista* faction of the Liberal party with the Conservatives in the early 1880s, noted above; flirtations throughout the 1890s between Liberalism and a moderate Conservative faction opposed to La Regeneración's policies; the "Republican Union" that won the 1910 presidential election and comprised factions from both parties that had opposed President Rafael Reyes (1905–1909); and the election of Conservative José Vicente Concha for president in 1914, which counted on the support of the Liberal faction that had been left out of the Republican Union. While bipartisan alliances remained an important feature of Colombian politics, they changed from common military fronts to peaceful electoral coalitions, with the transition from chaos to order around 1905.

The main hypothesis of this chapter is that the transition from chaos to order in Colombia, derived from the replacement of military fronts by electoral coalitions as the typical pattern of inter-party relations, was caused by a change of electoral system.

What Are Electoral Systems?

Electoral systems are rules that convert popular votes into seats in legislatures; they translate electoral support for a party into institutional power. Electoral rules are usually classified in terms of two polar types: proportional versus majoritarian. A perfectly proportional representation (PR) would assign a party a portion of the seats in congress that is exactly the same as its share of electoral support. Under perfect proportionality, for instance, a party that is

voted for by 32 percent of the electorate would get 32 percent of the seats in congress. On the other hand, the majoritarian extreme assigns *all* seats in congress to the party that has earned the largest amount of votes, regardless of whether it received 75 percent of the votes, 51 percent, or 32 percent. Majoritarian systems thus introduce a distortion between level of popular support and institutional power. For the winner of the electoral contest, these systems enlarge its power in Congress and weaken (or even nullify) the power of the other parties.

In practice, extreme forms of proportional or majoritarian representation do not exist. Proportional representation, for instance, is usually combined with the use of “thresholds,” that is, the requirement that parties must receive a minimum portion of votes (e.g., five percent) in order to be represented. Given that parties below the threshold do not get any seats, parties above it are over-represented. Similarly, majoritarian representation is usually combined with the subdivision of the national political arena into a number of subnational districts, each of which holds elections for choosing a fraction of the total number of seats in the legislatures. Even though each district uses a majoritarian rule and hence sends to congress only representatives from the winning party, the subdivision of a country into districts in practice prevents the existence of single-colored congresses, for different parties usually prevail in different districts.

The incomplete vote is a special kind of electoral rule. Like PR, it allocates seats in a single district to more than one party, generally the two largest ones. On the other hand, like majoritarian rule, it assigns a fixed portion of seats to the parties, which is defined beforehand (e.g., three-quarters to the winner and one-quarter to the runner up, or two-thirds and one-third), irrespective of the amount of votes received by each faction. That is, under the incomplete vote, what is at stake in the electoral contest is who the winner and the runner up are, while the relative institutional power that each will have is established before the election.

Electoral rules have an immediate effect on the distribution of institutional power among political parties, and that is why party leaders invest so much time in congress looking for support for their preferred rule. In general, parties that are small or expect to become small advocate proportional representation, whereas majoritarian rules favor parties with 50 percent or more of the electoral support. Electoral rules are also considered to have important longer-term effects on the capacity of elected authorities to govern and on political stability. In fact, positive proximate effects are in general associated with negative deep effects, and vice versa—the so-called trade-off between representativeness and governability. Majoritarian rules score low on representativeness because they tend to leave small parties with no seats in the legislatures, but they foster stability by inducing clear institutional majorities. Proportional rules favor the representation of different parties but the frequent lack of clear majorities and the larger number of parties in congress make coalition-formation and decision-making more difficult, potentially resulting in power vacuums. In the Colombian case, however, no trade-off between representativeness and governability existed between 1850 and 1950. In fact, as we will see, Colombia’s stability after 1905 was achieved by making the political system more representative.

The Colombian Transition to Proportional Representation

The transition from majoritarian to proportional electoral institutions in Colombia involved two key reforms, separated from each other by almost a quarter-century. In 1905 majoritarian rule was replaced by the incomplete vote. This established that the party that won the elections would

get two-thirds of the seats, and the remaining one-third would be allocated to the runner-up, irrespective of the specific percentages of votes. In 1929, the incomplete vote was in turn replaced by the quotient rule, a standard version of PR; since then, Colombian elections have relied on proportional representation.

Both the incomplete vote and the quotient rule were the visible results of an extended, albeit intermittent, negotiation process between the Conservative and Liberal parties. Both reforms were introduced while the Conservative Party was in power, during the second half of the Conservative Hegemony. Neither the introduction of the incomplete vote in 1905 nor its replacement by PR in 1929, however, fit the prevailing explanations of electoral reform, most of which are variations of Stein Rokkan's pioneering account of the Scandinavian cases (1970: 150–157). According to Rokkan, reforms to majoritarian rule occur when a Conservative Party in power anticipates that, with social modernization and the rise of Left parties, Conservatives would become a minority force and hence that their future position in the political arena would be better served by proportional representation than by majority rule.

In contrast to Rokkan's scenario of a retreating Conservative Party, both reforms in the Colombian transition to PR were introduced at a time when the Conservatives were expecting, correctly or mistakenly, that their dominant position would remain unchallenged well into the future. Furthermore, for both Colombian parties it was apparent that the Conservatives' share of legislative seats would be larger under majoritarian rule than under any alternative electoral institution, including the incomplete vote and the quotient rule. Hence, the electoral reform was meant to reduce, rather than enhance, the future institutional power of the party in government. As an additional contrast with Rokkan's depiction of the Scandinavian process, where electoral reform was a spontaneous and unilateral decision of the party in power, the incomplete vote and quotient rule in Colombia were a concession made by the Conservative government to the Liberal opposition, which had advocated electoral reform for several years and was its direct beneficiary in terms of the subsequent re-allocation of legislative seats.

If electoral reform in Colombia was not imposed by the Conservative government, but rather resulted from negotiations between the Conservative government and the Liberal opposition, and if reform caused a reduction of the Conservative Party's power in Congress, the key question is this: what did Conservatives obtain in exchange for such concession? What motivated the Conservatives' acceptance of an electoral reform that would redistribute institutional positions in favor of their political rival?

It is in the specific terms of the Conservative-Liberal exchange that the 1905 reform and the 1929 reform differ. In 1905 the Conservative Party viewed electoral reform as a means to achieve political pacification: the incomplete vote would prevent military insurrections by the Liberals. Prior to 1905, the political exclusion of the opposition, as well as the disproportion between Liberal vote share and seat share caused by majoritarian institutions, had encouraged Liberals to pose an almost permanent threat of civil war. With the incomplete vote, Conservatives agreed to increase the Liberal Party's share of legislative power from a fluctuating zero to five percent to a fixed 33 percent of the seats, which in the Colombian bi-partisan context necessarily occurred at the expense of the Conservatives' own portion of power. Conservatives traded size for stability: they opted for a smaller but safer share of legislative seats. Increased minority representation in Congress would dissuade the Liberal opposition from insurrection.

In 1929, on the other hand, political stability was not at stake. Rather, a deep division within the Conservative Party around the party's candidates for the following presidential elections pushed the two internal factions to vie for the support of the Liberal opposition.

Liberals made a transitory deal with a Conservative faction that, in exchange for electoral collaboration against the other faction, gave decisive legislative support to the introduction of the quotient rule. Hence, whereas in 1905 the vast majority of the Conservative leaders agreed to a reform of electoral rules out of fear of a continuation of political chaos, in 1929 only a faction of the Conservative Party supported electoral reform, and it did so in exchange for a short-term electoral benefit.

Although the incomplete vote was a hybrid electoral formula that became obsolete in the course of a couple of decades, its role in Colombia's political history has been substantially more important than proportional representation. The introduction of the incomplete vote was a true inflection point, one that closed the chapter of recurrent civil wars that had dominated the country since independence, and inaugurated a four-decade period of uninterrupted political stability. Under the incomplete vote, Liberals gave up rebellion and Conservatives stopped repression. In this sense, the incomplete vote was the pillar of the institutional environment that encouraged the development of the coffee industry and the modernization of the Colombian economy in the first half of the twentieth century.

The introduction of proportional representation, on the other hand, involved significantly smaller proximate effects on the redistribution of political power, as well as smaller deep effects on political stability. In terms of the proximate effects, whereas the incomplete vote was meant to increase ten times the Liberals' representation in Congress, proportional representation was expected to carry a small positive adjustment in the Liberal share, from a fixed one-third of the seats under the incomplete vote to an average of 35 percent or 40 percent under the quotient. In terms of the deep effects, the stakes of the two reforms were dramatically different. The risks of political instability if the 1905 reform had failed would have been much higher, at least in the long run, than if the 1929 reform had failed. In 1905, leaders of both parties were remarkably aware that the continuation of majoritarian rule would have forced the Liberal party into "anti-system" tactics. By contrast, in 1929 Liberals were deriving enough power from prevailing institutions to completely discard the option of insurrection. Liberals were too satisfied with the incomplete vote for the Conservative Party to believe that they would engage in civil war if it were not replaced by proportional representation.

The following two sections provide, in turn, an in-depth analysis of the antecedents, causes, and effects of the 1905 and 1929 reforms.

The 1905 Reform: Incomplete Vote and Civil War

La Regeneración and its rivals

The 1905 reform had a crucial antecedent in a failed legislative proposal to establish minority representation in 1898. For a considerable number of politicians and observers of the time, the failure of the 1898 reform proposal had catastrophic consequences. In their view, reform would have prevented the Thousand Days' War. Dissident Conservative representatives drafted the legislative proposal because they feared that Liberals would rebel against *la Regeneración* unless they were secured a portion of institutional power that reflected at least part of their electoral force. The reform proposal seemed to have majority support in Congress, but both the President and the Senate vetoed it. The political process leading to the reform proposal, its blockage, and the subsequent political repercussions illustrate the intimate connection between disproportionate distribution of power and civil war.

In post-independence Colombia, governments of both political signs resorted to legal and illegal means to minimize the opposition's share of institutional power. Nevertheless, exclusion of the opposition reached a historical peak under La Regeneración. In effect, the 1880s witnessed two innovations, one in the composition of subnational executives and the other of national legislatures, that resulted in a virtual monopoly of power by the Conservative party. The 1886 Constitution, the legal basis of La Regeneración, put a drastic end to more than two decades of hyper-federalism by introducing a unitary system of government that empowered the president to appoint governors in all states. In practice, such legal innovation meant Conservative control of every subnational government, even in regions that were traditional bastions of Liberal support, like Santander. During La Regeneración, the opposition's participation in Congress also became negligible: Liberals occupied only two legislative seats between 1886 and the outbreak of war in 1899.

The drastic decrease of the Liberal presence in the legislature was in part an effect of reduced electoral support and the adoption of abstention as a delegitimizing tactic. But it also reflected fraud, obstruction, and repression by the Conservative government, as well as the tighter official control over local politics and electoral boards made possible by re-centralization. To weaken and obstruct the Liberal party's organization and activities, La Regeneración relied on a key legal weapon, Law 61 of May 1888, known as the *Ley de los Caballos* (the pretext for this law was the decapitation of a small herd of horses in Palmira, department of Cauca, which the government decided was evidence of Liberal conspiracy). Coupled with a decree restricting free press issued a few months earlier, Law 61 granted the president extraordinary faculties beyond the control of the Congress and the courts: it allowed the Executive to unilaterally ban or repress political activities that the president himself considered "offensive to public order," a definition that conveniently provided ample leeway to neutralize the opposition. Deemed "subversive" by the government, a range of Liberal meetings and conventions were forbidden, several party leaders were sent to jail or exile, and nearly all Liberal periodicals were suspended or shut down. Hence, anemic legislative representation, coupled with exclusion from regional government and official persecution, narrowed Liberals' institutional power to minimal levels in Colombian history.

The politics of La Regeneración sparked opposition even within the files of the Conservative party. The Conservative schism can be traced back to a congressional debate in 1888 over a proposal to strengthen territorial centralization, but it intensified over the course of the following years, fueled by periodic disputes over nominations to the presidency and other political positions. Division became irreversible in 1896 when President Antonio Caro (1892–1898) revealed his intention to seek re-election. The Conservative party divided itself into a *National* block, which supported the government, and a dissident faction, the *Históricos*. As revealed in the writings of Carlos Martínez Silva, founder and top intellectual of the dissident movement, *Históricos* rejected official politics both on ideological and strategic grounds. For Martínez Silva, the suppression of the opposition's political rights was not only incompatible with the Conservative Party's foundational principles, but also risked the breakdown of political order by forcing Liberals into revolutionary tactics.

Revolution was, in fact, the main option for many Liberals, yet the Liberal party was divided. Starting in 1896, a faction of *Pacifistas*, mostly old leaders from the Radical period, gradually lost ground to the belligerent group, a younger generation of Liberal activists headed by Rafael Uribe Uribe. Both sectors shared the goal of dismantling the exclusionary structure of La Regeneración. However, whereas *Pacifistas* considered that a rebellion would be

counterproductive given the military superiority of the government's forces and favored the strategy of forming an alliance with the Histórico block, Uribe and his followers viewed war and the threat of war as the only path to change.

1898: Failed reform and war

Against the backdrop of Liberal exclusion, Conservative dissension, and danger of war, dissident Conservatives in Congress and the Senate took steps to reform the electoral law in 1898. In early August, Senator Carlos Calderón Reyes, and Representatives Eliseo Arbeláez and José Vicente Concha presented separate proposals to introduce “minority representation” by means of the incomplete vote. Before joining the Histórico faction, Calderón Reyes had served in the cabinet of Caro's government and had authored the 1888 Electoral Code, which established majoritarian representation for all national and subnational Colombian elections. Ten years later, Calderón considered that his code was “full of mistakes,” and that not reforming it would be equivalent “to declaring that only the party in power has the right to vote [and to] consolidating a tyranny by scientific means.”² Defenders of the reform in Congress drew a strong connection between power-sharing and peace. Arbeláez claimed that his project of electoral reform “responded to the burning need of pacifying the spirits.”³

The spirits that needed to be pacified belonged, of course, to Liberal politicians. Starting in 1891, every Liberal convention, program, and manifesto demanded electoral reform, together with the abolition of the Ley de los Caballos. Liberals wanted electoral reform in order to obtain a greater share of institutional power. They systematically denounced fraud and political exclusion, but only rarely were they clear as to the specific remedies to those problems. When Historical Conservatives proposed the formula of the incomplete vote in 1898, Uribe led its defense as if the project had been designed by the Liberal party itself. In the process, he advanced one of the most brilliant statements for power-sharing in Colombia and launched the strongest warning against La Regeneración. In his intervention of September 19, he stated that: “Colombia's biggest problem is that of peace. This problem can only be solved in one way: by giving justice to the Liberal party. And that justice can only be achieved by approving the proposed reforms.”⁴

Even though framed in terms of “political equality,” Uribe's discourse made clear that, for Liberals, the main grievance under *La Regeneración* was exclusion from power. After asserting that “there is no equality before the law,” he proceeded to list evidence of such inequality:

In thirteen years only two Liberal representatives went to Congress, in different terms; we have never had a seat in the Senate; by chance we have had two delegates in the legislatures of Antioquia and Panama; when we have chosen officials for municipal councils, their terms were revoked by the President or the Governor of the Department; we have had nobody in the Ministries, in the Governorships, in the judicial branch or the electoral boards to protect and defend us.⁵

² *Anales del Senado (AS)* 1898: 105–106.

³ *Anales de la Cámara de Representantes (ACR)* 1898: 313.

⁴ *Ibid.*: 386.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 389.

In Uribe's analysis, Liberal exclusion from power involved the breakdown of the underlying "political contract." Given that "the proportional influence in public affairs that should correspond to our party has been persistently denied," the public should recognize that "[t]he constitutional promise has not been fulfilled: the payment in rights in exchange for our obedience has not been delivered."⁶

Political analysis was followed by military ultimatum:

I am not threatening or provoking. I am not coming here as the Roman consul before the Senate of Carthage, bringing in his uniform the options 'war or peace' for you to choose. I am just predicting the unavoidable. I am just warning that this, which today is a peaceful petition in favor of our rights, if you deny it, tomorrow will become a demand backed by the arms, and then, after costly sacrifices, one of two things will occur: if we win, we will give to ourselves not only what we are demanding today, or the full rights that belong to us, but even more than that, at your expense, because of the irresistible impetus given by victory; or, if we lose, not for that will our right die, and you will spend more resources in continuing oppressing us than those required to live with us in peace and equality [...] Give us the freedom to make public and defend our rights with the vote, the quill, and the lips; otherwise, nobody in the world will have enough power to silence the barrels of our rifles.⁷

Faced with the option of concession or war, National Conservatives would eventually risk war. President Manuel Sanclemente shut the door to reform, instructing the Senate, where Nationals were a majority, to block the proposal. Before considering a new electoral law, Sanclemente remarked, "it would be better to wait for more peaceful times, so that an undisturbed study of experience and institutional options can suggest what is best for the public good" (Monsalve Martínez 1954: 310). With remarkable political perception, Uribe had predicted that Nationals would allege inopportune times, in anticipation of which he claimed that "reforms are the cause of appeasement, so appeasement should not be taken as a precondition for reform." To demand "serenity" before solving the grievance is like "asking a doctor to wait until the disease is gone before providing the cure."⁸ With Sanclemente's veto, the last hopes of reform vanished—and so did the chances of peace.

If Sanclemente's hostility to reform showed that bellicose Liberals were right in that *La Regeneración* would not transform itself from inside; and war confirmed that *Pacifista* Liberals were right in that the Conservative government was too powerful to be defeated militarily. The Thousand Days' War (October 1898–November 1902), the most destructive civil war in nineteenth-century Latin America, became a lost cause for the Liberals after the decisive defeat in the Battle of Palonegro in May 1900. A coup by Historical Conservatives a few months later succeeded in displacing Sanclemente from power and placing Vice-President José Manuel Marroquín in the presidency. However, Marroquín betrayed the *Historicos'* expectations of reform and pacification. To gain independence from the group that had sponsored his return to power, Marroquín relied on new political forces created in the course of the war aligned behind

⁶ *Ibid.*: 390.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *ACR* 1898: 387.

Arístides Fernández, a former doorman whose ferocious methods for capturing and repressing Liberals earned him rapid promotion through Conservative ranks. Marroquín had obviously decided to inflict an irreversible defeat on Liberals.

Negotiating peace and power-sharing

Between Marroquín's coup in 1900 and the end of war, peace negotiations gave rise to a second (and last) antecedent of the 1905 reform. Almost immediately after the defeat at Palonegro, when Liberals realized that victory was practically impossible, Uribe raised again the banner of minority representation, leading his party to signal that electoral reform was the price for capitulation. Moreover, initial events surrounding Marroquín's coup encouraged the Liberals' hopes of electoral reform. For the ideologues of the coup, among whom Martínez Silva was prominent, its *raison d'être* was to end the war and to lay the basis of future peace by reinitiating the debate on electoral reform and Liberal participation in power. Marroquín's unexpected change of plans obviously cut off the latent agreement between Historical Conservative and Liberals, who nevertheless made several attempts to end the war under mutually satisfactory terms.

At the beginning of 1901, Uribe and Martínez Silva, leading figures of the new pacification efforts, initiated a series of contacts. In March, Uribe traveled to New York, where Martínez Silva had been sent by the government on a diplomatic mission (which most observers interpreted as an elegant form of exile). In a revealing communication, Uribe told Martínez Silva that "the war could have ended the minute after Marroquín took power, especially if one takes into account the common goals of the Liberal and the [Historical] Conservative parties, and the similar methods employed by one and the other [i.e., revolution and coup] in order to overthrow the National regime." Nonetheless, Uribe regretted the government did not offer "an acceptable basis for an agreement with the Liberal chiefs." Marroquín only promised safe-conducts, and demanded "unconditional surrender, ignoring that Liberals form a political party with the right to be acknowledged as a social force and to receive proper representation" (Morales Benítez 1998: 366–367).

Another year of attrition, which reduced the insurrection to intermittent guerrilla warfare out of the control of Liberal generals, made clear to all actors involved that the Liberal regular army had no option but capitulation. Still, Uribe and the other Liberal general, Benjamín Herrera—who had achieved impressive victories in Panama but could not move his forces further—continued their efforts to extract political concessions from the government before signing a peace treaty. Liberals' proposals prior to the signature of the *Tratado de Neerlandia* (1902 peace treaty) were shaped by the correspondence between Uribe and Colonel Carlos Adolfo Urueta, the Liberal army's emissary to the government. Uribe instructed Urueta to request, as the condition for peace, the creation of an extraordinary congress to treat constitutional reforms. Uribe also demanded a special mechanism for choosing the members of the congress to ensure Liberals that it was not going to be a "charade." Quoting a proposal he had made to Martínez Silva in New York, Uribe urged the government, via Urueta, "to accept that, out of the 64 seats in the Congress, 25 will be allocated to the Liberal party, which is a very modest demand."⁹

In addition to providing further evidence that the Liberals' main concern was participation in power, the communication to Urueta revealed that Uribe understood both the weakness of his bargaining position and the lack of credibility of any promise the government

⁹ *Antecedentes del Tratado de Neerlandia* 1902: 12.

could extend. For him, Liberals should turn in their weapons *after* the congress met in order to guarantee the inclusion of Liberal representatives. But, he recognized, “it seems quite impossible to me that the Government will agree to this condition [i.e., a postponement of disarmament].”¹⁰ If Conservatives required military demobilization before making the promise of a special extraordinary congress with Liberal participation, then Liberals would be left with no tangible resources to sanction the Conservatives if they decided to renege on their promise. After meeting government delegates, Urueta informed Uribe that disarmament was in fact a precondition for signing any peace treaty. Moreover, after reviewing the situation of the Liberal army across the country, Urueta advised Uribe to give up hopes of concessions other than safe-conducts and reform promises. The *Tratado de Neerlandia* was finally drafted on October 24, 1902, and signed four days later. It had sixteen clauses: clauses 1 and 3 defined the steps that the demobilization of the Liberal army should follow, and only clause 14 stated that “The Liberal emissary is confident that the President will follow through on his promise that the Liberal party will have fair representation in Municipal councils, Departmental assemblies, and the National Congress.”¹¹ A few weeks later, Herrera signed the *Tratado de Wisconsin*, which formally ended the war. The only political clause in the treaty included a nominal commitment by the Conservative government to encourage discussion of the proposals of electoral reform that had been submitted to the Congress in 1898 (clause 7-B).

Incomplete vote in 1905: Innovation

No politician in 1899 foresaw the devastating magnitude of the war. Events, duration, and costs escaped the control of leaders in both parties. The “little skirmish of three months” that some in the government had predicted ended up lasting more than three years, causing more than 90,000 deaths, and encouraging the separation of Panama as an independent mini-republic. Liberal leaders, in turn, powerlessly witnessed how their revolution degenerated into anarchic guerrilla and other politically futile impulses. Probably both Conservative and Liberal politicians would have changed their decisions on the eve of war if they had known that by the end of 1903, four percent of the male population would die, seven percent of the territory would be lost, and the Colombian economy would suffer four years of paralysis in some regions and massive destruction in others.

Especially after the loss of Panama, preventing future wars became a top priority for political leaders of almost every affiliation. For the first time since the creation of parties, a broadly bipartisan consensus emerged by 1904. The consensus was built around the diagnosis of past ills and their remedies for the future. Intransigent elements from both parties finally seemed to converge to the vision of moderates, who insisted that the blame for past and recent chaos belonged to the *vieja iniquidad* (the “old iniquity”), Martínez Silva’s (1896) celebrated formula to describe the persistent political exclusion of the opposition.¹² In the 1904 elections, with the support of moderate Conservatives and Liberals, General Rafael Reyes was chosen as president under the slogan “Peace and Concord.” Soon after he took office, a stalemate with the Congress, which had been elected during Marroquín’s presidential term, led Reyes to close it on December 14, thereby eliminating the remaining intransigent Conservative elements from the political arena. Instead of calling another congress, the new president decided to reform the Constitution and call a constitutional assembly, which would be inaugurated on March 15, 1905.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 24.

¹² “La Vieja Iniquidad,” *Repertorio colombiano* (Bogotá), 1 Sept. 1896: 161–169.

Anticipating future legislation on the matter, Reyes made sure that all political forces were represented in the assembly. Each of the nine departments was to send three members, one from each Conservative faction and the third one from the Liberal party. Most prominent Colombian politicians became members of the Assembly, including Victor Manuel Salazar, a Conservative general who had excelled in the war, future presidential candidate Alfredo Vázquez Cobo, the ubiquitous Uribe, and Herrera.

The assembly promptly applied the remedy prescribed in the post-war shared diagnosis: on April 13, 1905 a constitutional amendment introducing minority representation was passed. The legislative process was as fast as formal procedures allowed (four days), and the project received unanimous support. Minister of Government Bonifacio Vélez, who represented President Reyes before the assembly, submitted the proposal of electoral reform on April 10. Article 4, the core of the project, stated that “in all popular elections that have the goal of forming public corporations [e.g., legislatures], the right of minorities to be represented is acknowledged, and the law will define the form and terms under which such representation will be carried out.”¹³ That same day the project was unanimously approved in “first debate,” which according to Colombian legislative rules meant that representatives agreed to submit the proposal to a special commission in charge of studying it.¹⁴

On April 11, the commission, formed by Herrera (from Santander), Felipe Angulo (Bolívar), a former protégée of Núñez, and the Reyista Gerardo Pulecio (Cundinamarca), issued the report. Its first paragraph claimed that “this reform is the peace for the future; it is the first time national unity is formally proclaimed [...] for no Constitution since 1811 had had the courage to acknowledge the right of minorities to be represented; that was the cause of the countless civil wars that have scorched the country.”¹⁵

The constitutional amendment introduced minority representation as a principle, but did not define the specific electoral rule that would make the principle operative in practice. Two weeks after the amendment, by Law 42, the Legislative Assembly chose the incomplete vote. Article 33 of the law stated that two-thirds of the seats in Congress and the Senate, as well as in regional legislatures and electoral boards, would correspond to the electoral majority, and the remaining third to the minority.¹⁶ The reform assigned every district at least three representatives. For the computation of shares in districts where the number of seats at stake was not divisible by three, the Law required that such number be elevated to the next one that was divisible by three, and that the majority get two-thirds of the new number minus one (e.g., in districts with seven representatives, the two-thirds were computed in relation to nine, which, after the subtraction of one seat to the majority, left the opposition with two seats).

Incomplete vote in 1910 and 1916: Ratification

Reyes' government was overthrown five years after its inauguration, but minority representation as an institution survived and in fact became a permanent feature of Colombia's political system. Two critical indications of the level of consensus achieved by the incomplete vote as a power-sharing formula were produced in 1910 and 1916. In 1910 a constitutional assembly was convened to reform the Constitution. Bipartisan in composition, the assembly made the 1886

¹³ *Anales de la Asamblea Nacional (AAN)* 1905: 73.

¹⁴ According to the rules, in the second debate modifications to the project are introduced, based on suggestions by the commission and the floor. In the third and last round, the final draft is approved or rejected.

¹⁵ *AAN* 1905: 73.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 151.

Constitution more liberal. Crucially, it eliminated all the most important constitutional innovations of the Reyes's period *except* for minority representation. In 1916, a new electoral code was approved in order to systematize disparate pieces of electoral legislation into a single body of rules. It covered several areas, including the definition of citizenship, the organization of electoral justice, and the schedule for elections. Regarding the electoral system, it ratified the incomplete vote. Therefore, in the context of broader institutional reforms, legislative bodies had the opportunity to change the electoral system twice in the decade after 1910, but on both occasions Conservatives and Liberals agreed to preserve minority representation.

Reyes' fall and the constitutional reform of 1910 are closely connected events, for they were both the result of the rise of a new bipartisan coalition: the Republican Union. Republicanism grew mainly as a reaction against Reyes' dictatorial methods of rule, which included the closure of congress and the adoption of extraordinary executive powers. The Conservative wing of the new coalition was largely coterminous with the old Historical faction. The Liberal wing, in turn, was represented by politicians who had progressively removed their support to the government in response not only to authoritarian measures but also to the weakening of the Nationals—the reactionary faction within the Conservative camp. Once the threat from the Nationals vanished, Liberals who had initially supported Reyes out of fear of a restoration of the La Regeneración regime decided to join the Republican opposition. Exceptions to the re-alignment of the Liberal elite included top collaborators of Reyes, most prominently Uribe and his followers. The main component of the Republicans' social base was the progressive business community of Antioquia, mainly landowners and bankers who resented Reyes' intervention in the economy and the cases of corruption derived from official contracts to build public infrastructure.

After forcing Reyes' resignation in June 1909 and winning the 1910 presidential election behind the candidacy of Carlos E. Restrepo, the Republican Union encouraged constitutional reform. Many of the authoritarian methods repudiated by the Republicans had acquired constitutional status during 1905 to 1909 due to Reyes' practice of issuing executive decrees and submitting them to ratification by *ad hoc* constitutional assemblies. Republicans were determined to revise the changes by Reyes. Yet more generally, the 1910 reform was meant to translate into constitutional norms the strong bipartisan consensus that had evolved since the end of the war. The goals were to strengthen the rule of law and the rights of the opposition. The reform reduced the power of the Executive and enhanced that of the Congress. Presidential terms were shortened from six to four years. The Executive became accountable for all violations of the constitution—not just the few specific cases foreseen by the 1886 text. Finally, immediate reelection of the president was forbidden—whereas the Congress was assigned a chief role in foreign relations and selecting members of the Supreme Court, and annual meetings of the legislatures were protected from presidential interference. Although these reforms involved important breaks in relation to Reyes' regime, the key continuity was found at the level of the electoral rules.

During the second half of May, at least four separate projects concerning electoral rules were submitted to the constitutional assembly, including one by Nicolás Esguerra (May 15), the last survivor of the Radical Liberal period, founding figure of the Republican Union, and main architect of the constitutional reform. All four projects embraced minority representation as a general principle, and three of them specified the incomplete vote as the formula to make it operational in practice. The project enforcing only the general principle, presented by Conservative Hernando Holguin y Caro on May 20, was discussed on May 26 and became law

the following day. From the extraordinary pace of the legislative process it can be inferred that no significant opposition to the project was raised. As in 1905, the final version of the constitutional amendment left to ordinary law the determination of the specific electoral rule, but in contrast to its predecessor, it mentioned possible operational formulas: “All elections in which more than two individuals are to be chosen will be ruled by the incomplete vote, the quotient rule, the cumulative vote, or any other mechanism that insures the proportional representation of the parties. The law will define the method to make this right effective” (Montoya 1938: 26).

The Republican Union proved to be a short-lived political force, but it left an enduring legacy in Colombian politics. Once the aspiration of constitutional reform was fulfilled, no shared goal was left for Conservatives and Liberals to remain united within a permanent coalition. Starting in 1914, with the election of José Vicente Concha as president, Colombia returned to the pattern of unambiguously Conservative governments. Nevertheless, the constitutional amendments of 1910 would last eight decades. Comparing the 1910 reform to the constitutions of 1863 and 1886, observers have noted that the key difference of the 1910 amendments, and the cause of their durability, is that they were consensually drafted by a bipartisan assembly, expressing the institutional visions shared by all members of the political elite, whereas the two prior constitutions were actually the program of one party unilaterally imposed on the other after military victory (Melo 1989: 220–225; Correa Uribe 1996: 7–10).

During the Republican period, however, the Congress failed to supply an electoral law specifying a method to put minority representation into effect. As a result, until 1916, the legislative vacuum was covered by the law that established the incomplete vote in 1905 (Law 42/1905, Art. 33).

In 1916, a comprehensive electoral code was adopted for the first time. Although the code, Law 85, was an extremely long text, with 307 articles in 17 chapters, it was essentially meant to achieve two broad goals: first, to establish a specific electoral rule, as required by the 1910 amendment; second, to strengthen controls over the electoral processes in order to reduce fraud and manipulation by local politicians. The project that was finally approved was originally authored by Bonifacio Vélez, Reyes’ former minister and author of the 1905 constitutional amendment on minority representation. As a member of the National State Council in Concha’s government, Vélez submitted his project to the Senate in August 1915. It privileged the incomplete vote over the quotient rule because, Vélez alleged, it was a better mechanism for the representation of the minority. An elegant table, attached at the end of his project, backed his point. In the table, Vélez’s computed how results for the 1915 legislative elections would have yielded different proportions of Conservative and Liberal seats under different electoral systems. The table showed that the incomplete vote granted Liberals five more seats than the quotient rule (Vélez 1905: 69–70). Regarding the problem of fraud, the project included various dispositions, including one (Art. 168/4) that declared invalid all elections “in which the number of votes issued is larger than the number of registered voters”—not uncommon in Colombian electoral contests.

To recapitulate, both the 1910 amendment and the 1916 electoral code ratified the incomplete vote, indicating solid bipartisan consensus over the need of minority representation. The justification given by Vélez in 1916 for the ratification of the incomplete vote could have very well been signed by any Liberal representative:

It is an undeniable fact, one that is acknowledged by our political history, that most of our civil wars, which flooded our soil with blood, paralyzed progress and

broke the bonds of peace, have originated in the lack of properly representative Governments, in the systematic and hateful exclusion that was installed in the Republic. Minority representation prevents revolutionary attempts. (Vélez 1905: 62–63)

The fall of Reyes, the rise and disappearance of the Republican Union, and increasing political tension over fraud—four rather disruptive phenomena, which nevertheless did not threaten the incomplete vote at any moment—provided critical tests of the practically unanimous level of consensus achieved in favor of minority representation in Colombian politics.

Causes of war and consequences of reform

Is it possible to assess whether it was power-monopolization, rather than other factors, that caused recurrent war in the second half of the nineteenth century, and whether power-sharing was the cause of peace during the first half of the twentieth century?

War before 1905, as well as peace after then, were certainly multi-causal phenomena. Historians and other social scientists have advanced both economic and political explanations.¹⁷ Explanations, however, are usually meant to account for a single, discrete event, like the Thousand Days' War, rather than the recurrent pattern of war, rebellion, and repression in the nineteenth century, or the subsequent period of peaceful power-sharing—let alone the macroscopic transformation of the Colombian political arena from chaos to order. The explanation here not only attempts to cover a long expanse of time, from 1850 to 1950, but also emphasizes political causes at the expense of economic ones. However, in contrast to many political explanations, this argument is deliberately specific, for among the array of political factors that could be mentioned, it emphasizes power-sharing via electoral rules and a particular legislative reform: the introduction of the incomplete vote in 1905. If pressed to argue by counterfactual reasoning, it would advance twin claims:

- 1) Wars in general could have been prevented, and the Thousand Days' War in particular could have been avoided, if the incomplete vote had been introduced in time.
- 2) Had the incomplete vote not been introduced in 1905, the pattern of inter-party warfare would have revived a few years later.

Case studies can be methodologically weak strategies of causal inference. However, three pieces of evidence provide support to the counterfactuals. First, at different points in time before 1905, Conservatives tried different packages of concessions to the opposition, but they never included the incomplete vote. In fact, except for electoral reform, by 1899 Sanclemente's government had removed all other political grievances Liberals had voiced, including the abolition of Ley de los Caballos. Electoral reform was the only persistent Liberal demand that was not met. This is why we favor a political explanation that is specific about the cause. As a posterior confirmation of the motivations driving Liberal rebellion, 1906 provides an instructive negative image of 1899: in 1906 Reyes granted reform but assumed dictatorial powers, whereas in 1899 Sanclemente put an end to extraordinary presidential powers but blocked electoral reform. Sanclemente could not avoid civil war, whereas Reyes earned generalized Liberal applause. Evidence on the terms of the exchange between Reyes and the Liberal party abounds.

¹⁷ For explanation of the first kind, see Bergquist (1978), and for explanation of the second type see Delpar (1981).

Even Herrera, who would eventually withdraw his support from Reyes' administration, considered that "after almost twenty five years of Conservative monopoly, Reyes allowed us to breathe, to get back into public life, to become citizens again" (Melo 1989: 217).

A decade later, with the perspective provided by the passage of time, Liberal Senator Fabio Lozano and the Conservative *costeño* Manuel Dávila Florez engaged in a debate over a legislative project on "crimes against the Nation" in the context of which the *do ut des* of Reyes and the Liberal party was admitted with unusual political accuracy and candor. After Lozano attacked the project on the grounds that it would favor tyranny, Dávila Florez noted: "but Colombian Liberalism, your Honor, wholeheartedly supported General Reyes's dictatorship." Lozano quickly replied:

I am able to prove that Liberalism did not commit any crime in supporting that government. In order to neutralize any charges, it would be enough to consider that the attitude [of support] was a response to the very special circumstance that Reyes began his administration by offering Liberals a piece of sun, political equality.¹⁸

Dávila Florez would not miss the opportunity provided by his opponent's confession and retorted: "But that theory is shameful because it means that Liberalism accepts dictatorial governments in exchange for participation in power."¹⁹

Second, whereas suspicion of fraud in presidential elections before 1905 was a quasi-automatic prelude to rebellion and armed conflict, after the introduction of the incomplete vote, Liberals' satisfaction with their portion of power outweighed their discontent with electoral manipulation by the Conservatives. In the 1922 presidential elections, fraud was blatant. However, in contrast to the pre-1905 antecedents, rebellion did not follow. According to the explanation advanced here, this was because Liberals had one-third of the institutional power—after 1905, war became an option in which they had much more to lose and much less to win.

The third line of empirical support to the counterfactuals is contained in the testimony of the best political analysts of the time, including Julio H. Palacio, Pedro Navarro, Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, and Hernán Montoya. They were widely recognized both for their political astuteness and their relative impartiality. For Palacio, for instance, the blockage of the 1898 proposal by the Senate and Sanclemente, "was the *causa principalísima* [the paramount cause] of the devastating war."²⁰ And vice-versa, "for me, the true father of peace in Colombia, a fact that the nation still needs to acknowledge and thank, is General Reyes, who facilitated minority representation. Without the dictatorship of Reyes, the peace treaties of Neerlandia and Wisconsin would have been dead letter for a long time, and another war would have liquidated the country."²¹

Navarro, in turn, confidently asserted in 1935 that the incomplete vote was "the best law of Reyes's dictatorship: Colombia owes to it the internal peace that it has enjoyed for the last thirty three years, the basis of its progress and material wellbeing." Navarro added that peace had

¹⁸ AS 1916: 558.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 558.

²⁰ Palacio 1942.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 290.

a second cause. “Even if it seems a paradox,” peace was also caused by “the civil war of 1899–1902, in which Liberalism proved that it was willing to make any sacrifice in order to stop the violation of public liberties and citizenship rights” (Navarro 1935: 15, 16).²² Of course, Navarro’s two causes were sequentially connected: peace was caused by the law, which in turn was caused by Liberalism’s potential threat of new “sacrifices.”

Regarding the role of economic factors, the line of argument advanced here is the opposite that of Charles Bergquist (1978). For Bergquist, and more broadly for Marxist scholars, economic forces provide the deep structure of the political process. Political decisions either reflect underlying economic interests, or are the effect of idiosyncratic and accidental factors. According to this perspective, political decisions are not consequential: they can at most “trigger” an outcome like a war, but those outcomes have nevertheless been determined beforehand by underlying economic processes. In apparent support of Bergquist’s interpretation, the Thousand Days’ War coincided with a fiscal crisis and a sharp decline in coffee prices, Colombia’s main export.

However, a perspective like that of Bergquist can be inverted: economic factors can actually be seen as only the “triggering event” that unleashed a deeper political conflict around the historical exclusion of the opposition. As observers and participants of the events made clear, the fiscal crisis was only a symptom of the political conflict over power-sharing. Martínez Silva (1934: 467–68; 500–501), Miguel Samper, and other participants aware of the “political economy” of La Regeneración pointed out that most government spending was allocated to military contention and repression of the Liberals.²³ Economic turmoil was actually an indication of the impact of political conflict on the growing fiscal crisis, and the associated monetary expansion of the 1890s. Finally, Liberal complaints against La Regeneración’s monetary and fiscal policies can be seen as an opportunistic move to earn support from social sectors hurt by inflation, not the reflection of opposing economic interests, which Helen Delpar (1981) demonstrated were relatively similar between the political parties. Ultimately, the target of Liberalism was a share of institutional power.

The incomplete vote and credible power-sharing

Why did Conservatives and Liberals agree on the incomplete vote as the main mechanism to share power? Other options for power-sharing included laws against fraud, which would have enabled Liberals to get seats from districts that were their electoral bastions; or proportional representation, which could have also facilitated Liberal representation in Congress. Neither alternative, however, was a viable solution that would appease Liberals. Laws against fraud would not be viewed by Liberals as a real concession. “Changes in the law are useless unless habits change,” Historical Conservative Martínez Silva observed in the midst of one of the recurrent debates on electoral corruption.²⁴ He was expressing a current of thought, well-established among many Conservatives and Liberals, that blamed bad political habits or what was euphemistically called “lack of civic education.” Perhaps more important, the key perpetrators of electoral fraud were local politicians, known as *caciques* and *gamonales*, over whom national politicians had little or only intermittent control (Deas 1993: 218–219). An extreme example of electoral corruption—surely one of innumerable examples—was the 1904 incident known as the *Registro de Padilla*, in which the Conservative *cacique* from Guajira

²² For similar appraisals, see Nieto Caballero (1984: 266–267) and Montoya (1938: 17).

²³ See also ACR 1898: 387.

²⁴ *Revistas Políticas Publicadas en el Repertorio* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1934), II: 434.

Juanito Iguarán persuaded other local authorities to sign a blank sheet so that he could fill in the “official” electoral results for the presidential election in his district. Either because of deep-rooted habits or the autonomy of electoral brokers at the municipal level, top leaders in the Conservative Party lacked the political resources needed to provide a formal solution to fraud that Liberals could find realistic.

Precisely due to fraud, proportional representation was not a viable formula for power-sharing either. Faced with different options for electoral rules, Liberals probably feared that, with the problem of fraud still open, the installation of proportional representation would incite *caciques* to redouble their efforts at adulterating electoral results in order to minimize the presence of Liberals in the legislatures. In fact, in public discussions of alternative electoral rules during the Conservative Hegemony, a repeatedly-mentioned argument against proportional representation was “poor political culture,” which sometimes meant that proportional representation required calculations that were too complex for the public, but more often it had the euphemistic sense of electoral corruption.²⁵ In contrast to proportional representation, the incomplete vote is a “fraud-proof” formula. So long as the Liberal opposition obtained at least one vote, it would get 33 percent of the seats. The comparative advantage of the incomplete vote over proportional representation as a mechanism of power-sharing in a context of moderate to high electoral corruption is what led Conservatives and Liberals to include the incomplete vote in the constitutional amendments of 1905 and 1910, as well as in the electoral code of 1916.

In sum, the deep structure that drives change involves politics; economic forces, by contrast, may contribute triggering events, but are not necessarily the underlying source of change.

Towards Proportional Representation: Conservative Dissension and Threat from Below in the 1920s

The quotient rule, a standard form of proportional representation, was introduced in Colombia in November 1929. The reform was the outcome of a long and uninterrupted crusade by the Liberal party. Liberal support for proportional representation began in the 1910s but was restricted to a few isolated voices. It grew stronger over the first half of the 1920s, achieving unanimity by 1925. Senator Luis de Greiff, a pioneering advocate of proportional representation, was the man responsible for aligning fellow Liberals into a compact bloc behind the advocacy of the quotient rule. From 1920 to 1929, Liberals submitted to the Senate and the Congress a dozen proposals to introduce proportional representation. Cosmetic variations of the same institutional innovation, the proposals reflected Liberals’ various attempts at convincing a critical mass of Conservatives about the benefits of the quotient rule. In the Conservative camp, its representatives were uniformly opposed to innovation during the first half of the 1920s. Between 1926 and 1927, however, perhaps persuaded by the Liberal campaign, many of them (though still insufficient to force the reform) changed their minds and announced that they would accept the elimination of the incomplete vote in favor of a more proportional electoral system. In 1928 to 1929, the Conservative party divided itself into two groups, each of which promoted a different presidential candidate for the 1930 elections. In return for Liberal support of their candidate, Alfredo Vásquez Cobo, the *Vasquistas* provided the necessary votes to pass the proposal of proportional representation; a transitory Conservative division allowed the decade-long Liberal campaign to eventually reach its goal.

²⁵ Evidence on this kind of argument is reviewed below.

Why did Liberals want to replace the incomplete vote with the quotient rule? And why did Conservatives resist reform? Liberals mounted a double attack against the incomplete vote, criticizing it both as a barrier against the entry of third parties—for it only rewarded seats to the winner and the runner-up—and as a distortion of the relative electoral power of Conservatives and Liberals—for the size of the rewards was fixed irrespective of the number of votes obtained by each party. “The main defect of the incomplete vote,” de Greiff argued in support of his 1922 project, “is that it only recognizes two parties, one of which receives 66 percent of the seats and the other 33 percent, even if that proportion does not correspond to their electoral force.”²⁶

The barrier argument, in contrast to the distortion argument, reflected a major shift in the reasons that Liberals had traditionally advanced to promote electoral reform. In defending the participation of third parties, for the first time in the history of electoral reform Liberals favored an innovation that apparently had no benefits for them in terms of a bigger share of institutional power. According to Liberals, the third party to benefit the most from the hypothetical introduction of proportional representation would be the Socialists or another Left-wing force, which would subtract votes from Liberalism, not from Conservatism.

Why, then, would Liberals advocate so resolutely, and Conservatives resist so obstinately, the introduction of proportional representation? Three possibilities exist. The first is that Liberals exaggerated the vitality of third parties, believing more in the distortion argument against the incomplete vote than in the barrier argument. In this case, Liberals might have actually favored proportional representation because they expected that the number of seats they would gain by removing the one-third ceiling imposed by the incomplete vote would be larger than the number of seats lost due to the division of the opposition between a Liberal and a Socialist party. A second alternative is that Liberals might have genuinely believed that a Socialist party would emerge as a significant political force. In that case, they might have favored the quotient rule, either because they viewed it as a mechanism to secure a public good valued by both traditional parties—like the prevention of a Socialist revolution. The third possibility is that the liberals thought they could extract an exclusive benefit from a three-party system, for instance, the creation of a progressive Liberal-Socialist coalition that could force the government to make public policies more compatible with Liberal preferences. The following three subsections explore these possibilities.

Demanding more than one-third

If the quotient rule were to enlarge the Liberal share of institutional power, the reasons why Liberals supported proportional representation and Conservatives opposed it would be self-evident. Liberals never admitted in public they were looking for a larger number of seats. Conservatives, in turn, insisted that if they opposed proportional representation, it was not out of fear of a reduction of their weight in the Legislatures—on the contrary, they argued that it was to prevent more power falling into their own hands. In his opposition to the proposal of proportional representation that Liberals had submitted to Congress in 1928, Conservative Alberto Vélez Calvo argued:

[I]f the project becomes law, Liberals are going to complain after elections; scandals will be a thousand times bigger than they are today. It is obvious that in Nariño, in Antioquia, in Boyacá, and probably in Cundinamarca, in the

²⁶ AS 1922: 203.

Santanders, and in Huila, Liberalism will be reduced to its minimal expression. Probably Conservative exuberance in those Departments will not allow the opposition party to get any representatives, and we, Conservatives, do not have any interest to come to this house and fill it with three-quarters or four-fifths of the seats, instead of the two-thirds we have had.²⁷

Moreover, for Vélez Calvo, the quotient rule was a threat to public order precisely because it would eliminate the benefits that Liberals derived from the incomplete vote: “we are sure that, faced with total defeat under the new system, Liberals will for months talk about persecution, fraud, and oppression by the Conservatives. That will unsettle the country, with no benefits for anyone.”²⁸ Even in October 1929, faced with the imminent approval of the quotient rule, Conservative Representative Guillermo Salamanca insisted on its negative effects for Liberalism, and made a last minute attempt to “save” his traditional opponents from the catastrophe: “if the quotient rule is approved, will Liberalism or any other Left-wing party be able to obtain the seat they have today in Departments like Boyacá? [...] We conservatives have fulfilled the duty of warning the Liberals about the danger that the quotient rule has for their organization.”²⁹

Proportional representation as a public good

In the early 1920s, politicians of all persuasions recognized that the incomplete vote had been the basis of social peace for the prior fifteen years. However, social change over that same period made the incomplete vote obsolete as a mechanism of power-sharing—or so Liberals argued. Sustained economic growth during the two decades after the Thousand Days’ War had in effect fostered urbanization, industrialization, and the rise of a working class that, if still small, acquired political salience by organizing strikes, unions, confederations, and proto-parties, like the Socialist Party (whose first comprehensive program was issued in 1919). To persuade the government of the need of a new electoral reform, Liberals argued that sooner or later the incomplete vote, by marginalizing third parties, would push Labor-based parties like the Socialists into revolutionary tactics, in the same way that the majoritarian system had forced Liberals into civil war the previous century. This argument was, in fact, the most recurrent one in Liberal vindications of the quotient rule.

In the 1922 legislative debate around de Greiff’s proposal, Liberal Senator Eugenio J. Gómez argued:

[S]ocial peace is not only affected by armed movements but mainly by an unfair law [i.e., the incomplete vote] that does not allow the representation of important currents of opinion [...] Given that the current law assumes that a party different from the historical ones does not exist, and given that such parties do exist, there are good reasons for many of our citizens to feel deprived of their political rights and be dissatisfied with the existing order.³⁰

²⁷ ACR 1928: 384.

²⁸ ACR 1928: 384.

²⁹ ACR 1929: 232.

³⁰ AS 1922: 473.

Two years later, in the introduction of his own proposal of electoral reform, prominent Liberal Senator Alejandro Galvis Galvis warned: “we have the obligation to prevent agitation, turmoil, and sacrifices. New trends are emerging that will cause serious frustration if not channeled properly by explicitly acknowledging their force and influence.”³¹ In providing arithmetical examples of how the quotient rule would work, Galvis Galvis’s tables included the Socialist Party as if it had become a permanent element of Colombia’s party system.³² The argument recurred in the sessions of the following year, when for the first time the entire bloc of Liberal Senators signed a collective proposal on proportional representation, as a signal of how intensely committed they were to electoral reform. “It is imperative to modify the straitjacket imposed by the incomplete vote,” declared the document. Proportional representation would “allow political, economic, and social parties to express themselves in their full force and induce them to work within the framework of the rule of law for the preservation of peace. Public order needs [reform].”³³

In 1927, Liberal Senators again followed the tactics of signing a collective proposal, which this time was reinforced by a symmetric movement by the bloc of Liberal representatives in congress. According to its declaration of motives, proportional representation “provides room for action to legions of Colombians who do not fit any more within old programs and the traditional party organizations.” The rise of new parties “must be used in favor of the country. The current law [incomplete vote] is anachronistic and has already given to us all the good things it can provide.” The bloc of Senators did not miss the opportunity to reiterate the catastrophic consequences that would follow if the Legislatures failed to introduce the quotient rule. If the political “currents that live underground and press to emerge to surface” do not receive participation in Congress, then “the Republic will last as much as the discontented masses want it to.”³⁴

During the debate of the same proposal in Congress, Liberal Carlos Hernández traced the trajectory of Colombia’s electoral systems: “With the old system of absolute majorities only one party had representation. With the current system of the incomplete vote, two parties have representation. With the quotient rule, in the future all trends with enough force will have the door open to representation.”³⁵ He added that if the Congress did not provide new electoral rules, third parties “will conquer the representation they have the right to either by the suffrage or by revolution. Tyranny or Revolution. These two extremes, which will be the death of the republic, are the outcomes we, the two traditional and big parties, must avoid as a common cause.”³⁶ In 1928, Representative Gabriel Turbay, one of the most brilliant Liberal speakers and strategists, entered the debate only to provide new rhetoric for old concepts. He argued that, back in the 1910s, “the incomplete vote involved a big victory and progress, but it left the legacy of injustice, the abhorrent and arbitrary notion that only two parties can live [...] The coexistence of the two big collectivities is what gave birth to the system of *repartimiento de prebendas* [rent sharing], the inevitable outcome of the iron circle of Colombian Parliamentarism.”³⁷

Either as a dilatory maneuver or out of sincere conviction, a typical reaction by Conservative leaders was to deny the existence or relevance of a third party, the *raison d’être* of

³¹ AS 1924: 374.

³² *Ibid.*: 374.

³³ AS 1925: 145.

³⁴ AS 1927: 294.

³⁵ ACR 1927: 351.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 352, 353.

³⁷ ACR 1928: 378.

the Liberal campaign in favor of proportional representation. When, during the 1922 sessions, Senator Gómez asserted that it was time that the two traditional parties grant participation to Socialists, Conservative Carlos Jaramillo Isaza abruptly interrupted him: “but those parties do not exist, your Honor.” Gómez replied: “Oh, please, do not shut your eyes in the face of the evidence. Facts are not to be discussed, they can only be commented on.”³⁸ More conciliatory and sophisticated, de Greiff conceded that only two parties were relevant at that time, “but we do not legislate only for the present. We also legislate for the future, and we have to make room to political groups that may later on find stable bases. Perhaps Socialists will strengthen their organization; it is also possible that a Labor Party is founded.” Pushing the limits of imagination, de Greiff also speculated that “it may as well occur that an extreme faction of the Conservative party, reacting against the organization of the Socialists, forms a Fascist party.”³⁹

Proportional representation as a partisan good

Faced with the rise of Labor-based parties, Liberals might have actually envisioned proportional representation as a mechanism to advance or protect partisan interests rather than as a public solution to potential political disorder. De Greiff, for instance, thought that the representation of Left-wing parties in the Legislatures could create an institutional ally to join the Liberals in a movement for progressive reforms. In a dispute with an ardent defender of the incomplete vote, de Greiff asked: “What fundamental innovation, in the area of public instruction for instance, can be attempted with the famous 33 percent equilibrium? The minority must restrict its focus to secondary laws: to laws on honors and pensions, because all substantial reform is stymied by the resistance imposed by the incomplete vote.”⁴⁰ If proportional representation became law, some of the new Socialist seats would probably be obtained at the expense of the Liberal party, but Liberals might nevertheless prefer reform if the aggregate weight of a Liberal-Socialist coalition surpassed the one-third of seats that were allocated to them by the incomplete vote. That is, Liberals could have been willing to trade a reduction of the party’s institutional power for increased chances of policy reforms.

Liberals might have also hoped that proportional representation would divide the Conservative party. Conservative divisions would favor policy reforms by forcing Conservative subgroups to compete for Liberal support in their preferred policy areas and hence to make concessions in other areas. Conservatives, not Liberals, acknowledged this potential transformation of Colombia’s traditional two-party system. As Julio Eduardo Ramírez, member of *Valencistas*, noted only weeks before the proportional representation became law in 1929, the quotient rule:

is lethal for traditional parties, especially for the Conservatives, which is an organized party and its force stems from its discipline. The quotient formula opens the gate to all kinds of dissolvent forces and personal ambitions; it brings anarchy into elections; it weakens the cohesion that must exist within political groups, to the point that these—not too far in the future—may lose their own

³⁸ AS 1922: 526.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 573.

⁴⁰ AS 1922: 574.

shape; finally, it fosters indiscipline and dissidence, atomizing opinion, leaving it without leaders and directors, essential factors in all parties.⁴¹

Liberals had a variety of reasons to support proportional representation, public or private. These included the preservation of public order versus the search of a bigger portion of power, defensive or aggressive, and the protection of its own minority position versus the quest for new coalitions capable of introducing progressive reforms. Naturally, not all reasons had the same weight in the minds of Liberal representatives or were equally prominent across legislative debates. For different Liberal politicians at different points in time, some of those reasons seemed more relevant than others. For instance, whereas de Greiff in 1922 viewed proportional representation as a formula to improve his party's 33 percent quota, Turbay in 1928 thought that electoral reform would transform Colombia's party system to make it more compatible with the social cleavages of a mass society. Despite variations over time and across individuals in terms of the underlying justification, the aggregate result was the same throughout the 1920s: unanimous Liberal support to proportional representation. Unfortunately for Liberals, no matter how uniform and strong their commitment to the quotient rule was, there was nothing they could do without the approval of the Conservative majority, or a fraction of it.

The 1929 Juncture

The unified resistance of Conservatism against proportional representation broke down in 1929. A year before, the Conservative party divided between the two candidates for the presidential election of 1930—that of Guillermo Valencia and Alfredo Vásquez Cobo. Vasquistas joined the Liberals in favoring the elimination of the incomplete vote and the introduction of a new electoral rule. In contrast to Liberalism's multifaceted justification of the quotient rule, however, the Vasquistas' motivation was straightforward: they needed the votes of the Liberal party to secure the electoral victory of their own candidate. In exchange, they offered collaboration with a package of Liberal initiatives in Congress, including centrally the quotient rule. Vociferous opponents of proportional representation before 1927, like Jaramillo Isaza or Rafael Trujillo Gómez, suddenly became ardent defenders of reform. Some, like Senator Guerrero, who not too many sessions before had claimed that rural villages were too uneducated to understand proportional representation, and too poor to receive education, went as far as to allege a vast pedigree in favor of reform: "I am an advocate of the quotient rule, and I have presented projects establishing such principles since 1912."⁴² The true motivation of the Vasquistas was publicly known, and Valencistas denounced it: "Our group will not risk, in return for short-term political gains, the integrity of the Conservative doctrine it advocates."⁴³ Valencismo's opposition, however, was powerless against the numerical superiority of the so-called "pliers" formed by the Liberal/Vasquista alliance. The original project was introduced by Liberal representative Guillermo Peñaranda Arendas. It was debated in the Congress between mid-September and early October and in the Senate in late October, and it became law on November 5 (Law 31).

To support their position in favor of proportional representation, Liberals and Vasquista Conservatives resorted to the same kind of "public good" argument that Liberals had advanced so many times in former sessions: economic change in previous decades had encouraged the

⁴¹ ACR 1929: 479.

⁴² AS 1929: 486.

⁴³ ACR 1929: 479.

emergence of new social groups, and new social groups, if not granted political representation, involve a threat of anti-democratic revolutionary movements. Naturally, Liberals did not mention their ambitions for a greater share of power, and Vasquistas omitted any reference to the electoral gains they expected to obtain from the alliance with the opposition. The novelty in the context of the 1929 sessions, however, was that Liberals and Vasquistas furnished the public good argument with a decidedly gloomy tone. Their discourses took for granted that an institutional crisis was an imminent fact. In the introduction to his project, for instance, Peñaranda Arenas asserted that “the problem [of political representation] has never been as acute as it is today. It is urgent to stop the discredit of the legislatures and the final ruin of republican institutions.”⁴⁴

Trujillo Gómez, the Vasquista representative recently converted into the creed of proportional representation, similarly diagnosed that Colombian democracy suffered a “lethal illness” because “the voice of rural and industrial workers” and “the interests of professions and trades” have not been “heard in this Parliament.” The incomplete vote is a “system that ignores the living forces from the suburbs, ranches, workshops, and factories,” and for that reason it is to be blamed for the “twilight of democracy,” which, among other “disturbing problems,” includes “systematic abstention and popular fatigue with the electoral function.” For Trujillo Gómez, proportional representation meant “the opportunity to stop this disaster: tomorrow it will be late.”⁴⁵ According to the opening statement in the report of the commission that studied the project in the Senate, “democracy suffers a regrettable bankruptcy due to the fact that the people have lost their faith in the electoral system.” Like Liberals and Vasquistas in Congress, the commission in the Senate predicted that proportional representation would “restore the lost trust and return the prestige to the Legislatures, reviving civic enthusiasm around electoral contests.”⁴⁶

An element in the final version of the law provides a suggestive indication of the readiness with which Vasquista Conservatives extended extra concessions to Liberals, and made clear that, despite the rhetoric of crisis and catastrophe, Vasquistas’ main concern was centered on the following presidential elections—and the purchase of Liberal support for their candidate. The form of proportional representation approved was not “pure,” but “mixed:” a special clause in article no. 4 stated that under no circumstances could a party obtain more than two-thirds of the seats (even if its vote share was larger than 66 percent). By accepting this mixed formula, Vasquistas agreed to an arrangement that was bound to reduce Conservatism’s legislative power.

Like the incomplete vote in 1905, the introduction of proportional representation in 1929 was a concession by the Conservative government to the Liberal opposition. In contrast to the 1905 reform, in return for which Conservatives secured political peace in the long term, the 1929 reform was expected to provide a short-term political gain for a faction of the party in power. Although different Liberal politicians favored proportional representation for different reasons, Vasquista Conservatives had one motivation for the approval of a new electoral reform, namely, to obtain Liberal support for the presidential candidacy of Vásquez Cobo. The electoral motivation, which the rival faction of the party did not hesitate to condemn, was naturally hidden behind the rhetorical invocation to higher goals, including the incorporation of the incipient working class into the institutional arena as a third party (a goal that some Liberals apparently did embrace). As a measure of the price that Vasquista Conservatives were willing to pay for

⁴⁴ ACR 1929: 9.

⁴⁵ ACR 1929: 214.

⁴⁶ AS: 815.

Liberal support in the following presidential elections, they agreed not only to proportional representation, but also to a legal ceiling on the amount of seats that the government could get.

Conclusion

The transition from chaos to order in Colombia in the mid-1900s was driven by a change in the institutional allocation of political power. After the Thousand Days' War, Colombia's two parties agreed to share power by means of a new set of electoral rules. The incomplete vote—the cornerstone of the new electoral rules—was a strategic concession by the Conservative government to the Liberal opposition. In exchange for permanent representation in the legislatures, Liberals abandoned military insurrection as a political strategy. Transition to proportional representation was completed in 1929 with the introduction of the quotient rule. The quotient rule was also a concession from the government. The new concession, however, was not driven by Liberalism's potential military power but by the institutional power it had accumulated since the first concession. The incomplete vote provided Liberalism with political resources to press for even more political resources. The opportunity to seize new resources arrived when, on the eve of the presidential election of 1930, the Conservative party split, and rival factions started to bid for Liberal support. Political peace was not at stake in 1929—at least, Liberals were too satisfied with the status quo to challenge it.

To conclude, these findings on the Colombian transition from majoritarian rule to proportional representation can be placed within the recent literature on the electoral history of Colombia. A specific focus has been on the relation between institutions of power-sharing in the first half of the twentieth century and the outbreak of new episodes of violence in the second half. Finally, the analysis points to general theoretical lessons about the origins of electoral rules and explore their application to other Latin American cases.

Power-sharing and the Colombian electoral tradition

Recent historiography has underscored the existence of what Eduardo Posada-Carbó (1997) has called an “electoral tradition” in Colombia, which can allegedly be traced back to the independence period.⁴⁷ According to this argument, Colombia's electoral tradition manifests itself in the energy that politicians of both parties have routinely invested in elections, including campaigns adapted to different audiences, the early appearance of political newspapers, and in general a permanent interest in gaining the electoral favor of an increasing number of sectors in society. For Posada-Carbó, a key feature of Colombia's electoral tradition would be the competitive nature of electoral contests. Thus, election results were uncertain, winners in some cases were decided by close margins, and a number of government-backed candidates actually lost the race.

The present study of the transition to proportional representation in Colombia shows that elections were not the only arena in which politicians competed for political power. The allocation of political power in Colombia was also decided in ongoing negotiations about the rules that defined how votes would translate into seats. Moreover, in the 1910s and 1920s, leaders of both parties invested extraordinary amounts of time and effort in the design and debate of the institutions governing elections. Throughout those two decades, no other issue received more attention in the Congress or the Senate. Specialists in electoral rules included not only

⁴⁷ See also Posada-Carbó (2005).

second-level politicians of both parties, but also top leaders like Uribe, who drafted a proposal for the first systematic electoral code; Abadía Méndez and Olaya Herrera, whose intervention was crucial for approval of the law eliminating the pirate lists in 1920; and José Vicente Concha, the author of a handbook in constitutional law that contained the most up to date taxonomy of electoral rules. In the legislatures, debates around electoral rules reached peaks of sophistication when, for example, Liberal de Greiff displayed complicated arithmetical computations to illustrate how different combinations of electoral rules would work. The legislative debate naturally extended into the media, but it also reached academia. Before 1930, at least nineteen doctoral theses were written on the topic of proportional versus majoritarian representation. Concha and Olaya Herrera were in fact regular members in the committees of that kind of dissertation. Hence, to complement and reinforce the recent argument about Colombia's electoral tradition, both elections and debates around the rules governing elections were vibrant political arenas, and they both mattered for the distribution of political power between Conservatives and Liberals.

Regarding the other element of the electoral tradition reviewed by Posada-Carbó—the competitive nature of elections—it is worth noting that, according to the present study, the transitions from order to chaos occurred in concomitance with the rise of a mechanism that made electoral contests for legislative seats *less* competitive. In effect, by defining beforehand a fixed portion of institutional power for each party, the incomplete vote removed a key element of uncertainty inherent in most electoral contests. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, Conservatives and Liberals took for granted the two-thirds/one-third division of the political pie. According to this argument, it was precisely that non-competitive mechanism that made possible the primacy of civilized political interactions over armed conflict. Elections became relevant in Colombia only when they lost their competitive nature.

Power-sharing and contemporary violence

Although politics in contemporary Colombia are obviously outside the scope of this research, the following question emerges in retrospect. If power-sharing was so effective in reducing conflict through the late 1940s, why did political violence return to Colombia while proportional representation was still in place? Two lines of analysis—one sociological, the other political—highlight the consistency between the present explanation of political order during the first half of the twentieth century, and the occurrence of long periods of chaos in the second half. First, the explosion of *La Violencia* in the late 1940s suggests that institutions for sharing political power, like the incomplete vote, are best suited for managing certain kinds of conflict in specific types of societies. The incomplete vote is an effective pacification mechanism for an oligarchic society, where politics is dominated by a reduced number of political factions, which are either recruited from the dominant economic groups, or agree in promoting the basic parameters of a primary export economy. Economic modernization, and the corresponding emergence of a more complex society with new social groups, may have caused the expiration of the positive effects of power-sharing. The incomplete vote made possible the incorporation of an oligarchic opposition into an oligarchic government. The incorporation into the political arena of the actors brought about by economic modernization, with a new set of demands, naturally requires different institutional and policy transformations. The failure of Colombian political institutions to adapt themselves to a new kind of society can be thought of as equivalent in terms of its effects on political order to Sanclemente's failure to incorporate Liberal oligarchies before the Thousand Days' War.

The second possible reason for the expiration of the positive effects of electoral rules is the decline of the parties' interest in controlling the legislative branch relative to the attractiveness of the presidency. The growth in the size of the government, a secular trend shared by almost all countries in the region, increased the value of the presidency as a political reward to partisan activity. What is specific to Colombia is the increased competitiveness of the party system starting in the early 1920s. The 1922 presidential election revealed to both parties that Liberals had regained enough strength to become a formidable electoral rival, and could legitimately hold the expectation of defeating the Conservatives in a free election. The 1930 election confirmed the expectation. The fact that the presidency became an achievable goal for both Conservatives and Liberals made the Executive the main target of political competition. While they had been a clear minority, Liberals contented themselves with a piece of the Congress, and Conservatives did not feel any threat over their control of the presidency. The problem when both parties are able to compete for the presidency is that, by its very nature, executive power is substantially harder to share than legislative power, and certainly the power-sharing institutions designed in the 1900s were meant to induce coexistence of parties only in the congress and the senate. Suggestively, the *Frente Nacional*, the coalition government that managed to put an end to La Violencia, is a form of power-sharing at the level of the executive branch.

Rokkan from Scandinavia to the Topics and the Pampas

The Colombian case illustrates that the leading argument in political science about the origins of electoral institutions, credited to Stein Rokkan, is right in that parties choose forms of representation to maximize their share of seats in congress. However, the present study also points to an important caveat: parties maximize institutional power subject to the constraint that political order is preserved, which is done by securing that rival parties receive a share of political power sufficient to dissuade them from anti-system tactics. In the Scandinavian cases analyzed by Rokkan, proportional forms of representation were introduced by conservative elites in government who anticipated that the increasing popularity of the Socialist Party would soon send them into the opposition. Proportional representation, according to the calculations of the Conservatives, would protect their political position once they were out of power, and would prevent full control of the parliament by the Left. The obvious question that the same Scandinavian cases pose, and Rokkan left unanswered, is why Socialist parties did not switch back to majoritarian forms of rule after they gained control of government, since reversal would in fact have maximized their presence in the legislatures?

Extending the political logic of the analysis of the Colombian case, it is plausible that Scandinavian Socialists preserved proportional representation because they did not want to risk alienating the opposition and forcing it into anti-democratic methods. Conventional arguments in political science on the origins of electoral reform can thus be revised and made more general. Motivations for electoral reform include not only the ambition of parties to make their share of seats as large as possible but also the fear of de-stabilization by the opposition. In two-party systems, the largest political party favors the electoral rule that over-represents the electoral majority (i.e., majoritarian rule), unless such over-representation induces a significant threat of rebellion by the minority, in which case the big party will accede to more proportional forms of representation. That is the main theoretical lesson that can be extracted from our analysis of the Colombian case.

Although the incomplete vote is an exotic species of electoral rule, it found fertile soil in other South American countries. The incomplete vote was introduced in Uruguay in 1898 and in Argentina in 1912, and in both cases it was the outcome of a political process that provides further evidence of the role of electoral reform as a device for peaceful power-sharing between government and opposition. In Uruguay and Argentina, reform was introduced by political elites for whom the fear of revolution by the opposition was much stronger than the fear of electoral defeat. In fact, as in Colombia in 1905, in both countries the party in government at the time of the adoption of the incomplete vote was confident to remain in power well into the foreseeable future (although in the Argentine case the perception was wrong). The government sponsored an electoral reform that would inexorably shrink its presence in the legislatures: appeasement motives played a key role.

The trajectory of the Uruguayan party system prior to the introduction of the reform is remarkably similar to the Colombian one: two historical parties, *Colorados* and *Blancos*, dominated the scene; like the Colombian Conservatives, Colorados achieved political hegemony by the end of the century and, like Colombian Liberals, Blancos were willing to challenge it through armed rebellions. An important difference between the two systems is that in Uruguay the territorial cleavage between the parties ran deeper than in Colombia, whereas the ideological one was more diffuse. In fact, the only substantial disagreement between the Uruguayan parties centered on the participation of the opposition in government. Due to the geographical concentration of partisan forces, Blancos' demands for power-sharing were two-dimensional: they fought not only for minority representation in the National Congress, but also for control of a subset of the departments in which the Uruguayan territory was politically divided. Colorado governments acceded to both demands, but only after major civil wars.

Blanco control over a fraction of departments was the achievement of the *Revolución de las Lanzas* (1870–1872), but it had to be regained in 1904 through a new military uprising after the Colorados reneged on their original commitment. Similarly, the institutionalization of minority representation in the Uruguayan Congress was a direct consequence of the military uprising led by *caudillo* Aparicio Saravia in 1897. The intimate connection between pacification and electoral reform is revealed by the fact that the introduction of the incomplete vote was the main clause in the *Pacto de la Cruz* (September 1897), the peace agreement that put a formal end to Saravia's rebellion. The pact, then, has an identical political meaning to the Treaties of Neerlandia and Wisconsin that Colombian Conservatives and Liberals would sign a few years later.

In 1905, sensing that Uruguay was entering a new era of peaceful coexistence between the two parties, José Espalter, a prominent Colorado legislator, drew natural counterfactual conclusions:

Those who live in the country know that we could have avoided the *Blanco* revolution of 1897, and perhaps all other rebellions as well, if we had introduced an electoral system that allowed *Blancos* to have a minority in Congress. Someone heard one of our great statesmen saying: 'give *Blancos* twelve legislators, and we will prevent war.' War was not prevented because the opposition was not granted even one representative. The basis of peace was the law of incomplete vote that allowed the minority to get a third of the representation. The law of the third is in fact the peace! (1905: 59–60)

In Argentina, the incomplete vote was one of the three innovations introduced by the illustrious *Ley Sáenz Peña*, which actually gained continental prominence for its two other components: the secret ballot and mandatory suffrage. These two components meant full democratization of the oligarchic order established in the late 1870s. For the political elite that crafted the reform, however, the incomplete vote was no less crucial than effective democratization: around 70 percent of the legislative debate, as well as all the best presentations by individual legislators, focused on the type of electoral rule. The complexity of the reform reveals that those who designed it were pursuing multiple goals. The consolidation of political stability, however, was clearly a chief goal.

In contrast to Colombia and Uruguay, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century Argentina witnessed the consolidation of a single-party system, dominated by the conservative *Partido Autonomista Nacional*; the challenger of the regime in Argentina was a new actor, the *Unión Cívica Radical*. Like the older oppositions in the other two countries, the main demand of the Radical Party was participation in power, and it also espoused insurgent tactics. The Radical Party was born as a splinter of the failed revolutionary movement mounted in 1890 by oligarchic groups excluded from government. Radicals rebelled again in 1893 and 1905, with no immediate results, but the sequence of uprisings helped to create a reformist movement within the conservative elite. In 1910, when president Roque Sáenz Peña promised electoral reform, a revolutionary episode was not imminent, but reformist conservatives were persuaded that the consolidation of political stability in the long run required power-sharing. “If the majority was not so selfish, the minority would never pose a threat to the institutional order,” claimed Sáenz Peña himself in the brief message with which he submitted the bill of electoral reform to the Congress in August 1911 (Sáenz Peña 1952: 89). In one of the best allocutions of the legislative debate, reformist legislator Ramón Cárcano resorted to the typical metaphor from mechanical physics to describe what was at stake with the reform:

When escape valves are closed, the boiler explodes. Every ten years, following the fatal movement of a cosmic law, rebellion has shocked and mutilated the Republic [...] For the last twenty years, the government has either fought open rebellions or feared the threat of them. Our current electoral laws are a bad system and a bad policy: they alienate citizens, induce abstention, and arm the opposition. Blood, prisons, proscriptions, trials, paralysis of wealth, commerce and work.⁴⁸

Four years after the reform was approved, and to the surprise of conservative forces, the Radical party won the presidency. Like the Scandinavian socialists in relation to proportional representation, Radicals preserved the incomplete vote, even though restoration of majoritarian rule would have given them full control of congress. Rokkan’s theory, as revised in light of the Colombian case, works in Uruguay and Argentina: Liberals, Blancos, and Radicals gave up the threat of rebellion in exchange for institutional participation in government.

⁴⁸ *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados* 1911, II: 159–160.

Chapter 4

Rentier Populism and Plebiscitary Regimes: Export Boom in South America after 2000

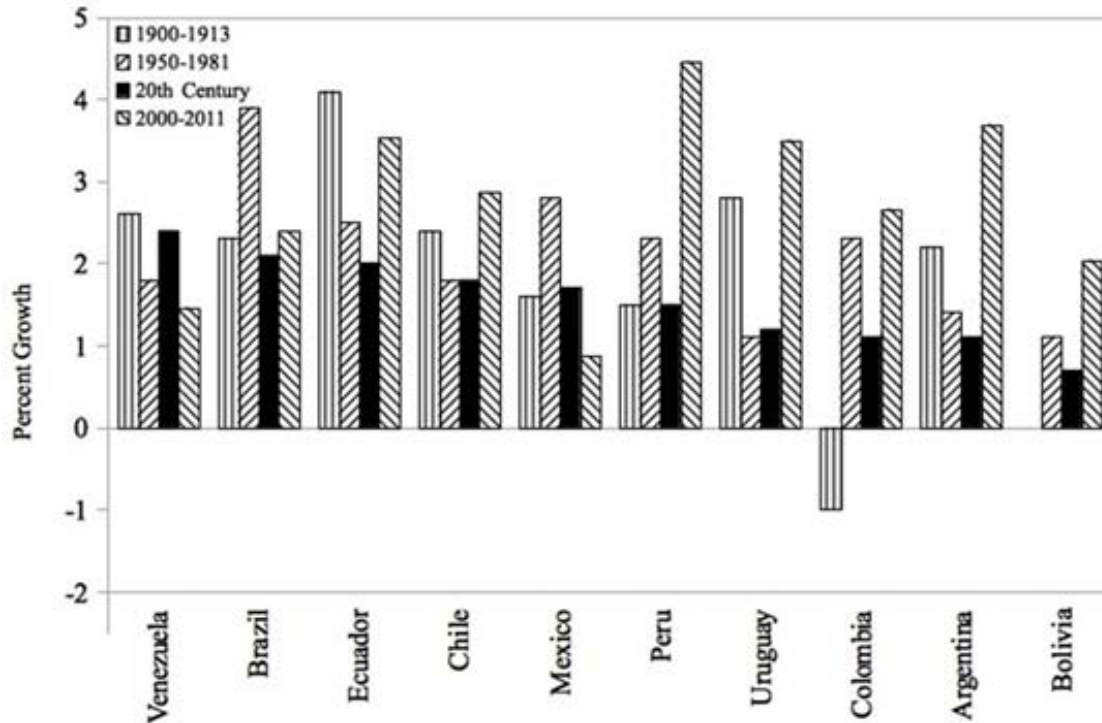
Beginning in the second half of 2003, South America experienced an unprecedented natural resource boom. This period saw—based on what was possibly the greatest economic expansion in the history of the region—not only an enormous growth in wealth, but also low inflation and the emergence of a more equitable distribution of income. In the scope of income growth, this boom is similar both to the peak decades of export-led development of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and to the most dynamic years of import-substitution industrialization after WWII, including the Brazilian “miracle” (figure 4.1). This period is a true novelty in relation to the prior two centuries of economic development in South America. Further, this new economic development has gone hand in hand with the consolidation of democracy throughout the region.

The timing of the “golden decade” was fortuitous. Skepticism, if not disappointment, pervaded South America at the close of the twentieth century. After the lost decade of the 1980s, which in addition to negative growth was marked by exceptionally high levels of inflation, the hopes awakened by market reforms in the early 1990s evaporated only years later with the meltdown of 1998 to 2002. Believing that neither the old statist model nor the new gamble on the free markets could provide a sustainable solution to the problems of economic growth, the resigned acceptance of underdevelopment became the dominant attitude among leaders, analysts, and the public.

Precisely at that moment, world trade shifted dramatically, in important respects due to the rise of China, whose emergence as an industrial superpower and a voracious consumer of fuels, metals, and agricultural products presented South American economies with a remarkable opportunity for economic expansion. In 2000, buying the most basic model of cellular phone required 15 barrels of oil. In 2011, a barrel and a half bought an iPhone. In 2002, one hundred metric tons of soybeans had the same value as a small Honda car. Ten years later, they are worth a convertible BMW. Raúl Prebisch’s theories died again. To find equally favorable terms of trade for South American exports, historians have to go back to the last third of the nineteenth century, when world capitalism turned Argentina, Brazil, and Chile into the world’s first “emerging economies,” as suppliers of raw materials for the Industrial Revolution in the North Atlantic (figure 4.2). Economic analysts of South America are quite familiar with the new terms of trade. More importantly, ordinary citizens—from rural workers in the Bolivian *Media Luna* to professionals in São Paulo—can feel the effects in their pockets.

The *political* repercussions of the boom—the focus of this chapter—are likewise highly visible, and widely felt. The boom is tightly connected with the two major political developments of the beginning of the twenty-first century: the general convergence around leftist governments and policies, and the divergence between *moderate-institutional* and *radical-hegemonic* variants of the left.¹ The central contrast here concerns the extent to which the executive branch dominates the policy-making process. Unlike the moderate-institutional variant, in the radical-hegemonic variant the president concentrates power at the expense of congress and the courts, rejecting all forms of political accountability other than popular elections. This involves a fundamental difference in access to power, and thus in the regime.

Figure 4.1. Average Annual Per Capita GDP Growth for Selected Periods, 1900-2011



Source: CEPAL, Montevideo-Oxford Latin American Economic History Database

The Natural Sources of the Leftist Convergence and the Hegemonic Divergence

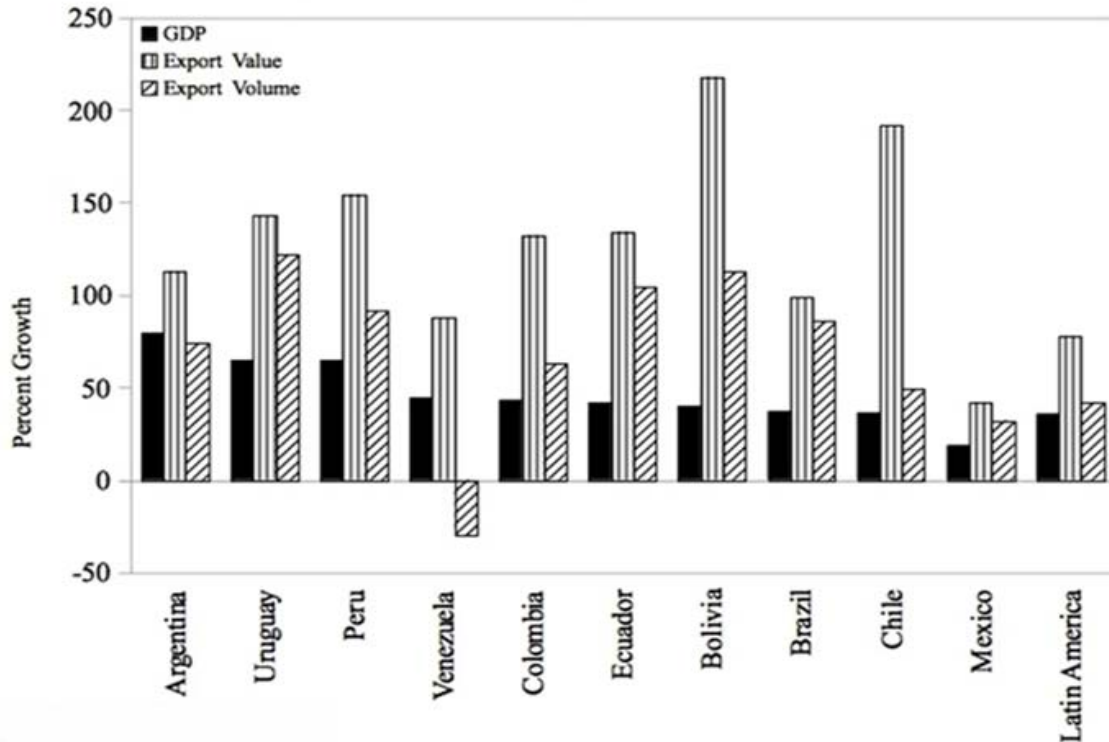
The “left turn” that swept across South America in the 2000s owes its consolidation, but not its origins, to the economic boom.² The origins of the turn lie in the demographic fact that the

¹ For excellent accounts of the left turn and its two (or more) variants, see Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter (2010), and Levitsky and Roberts (2011).

² Weyland (2009), Murillo et al. (2011), and Kaufman (2011) have produced excellent work on the relation between the commodity boom and the left turn. Their goal is to explain policy outputs, while the focus of the present chapter is on regime outcomes. Murillo et al. address the left turn in general, not variations within it, whereas Kaufman and Weyland explore sources of the divergence between populist/radical and orthodox/moderate variants of the left. The theoretical framework advanced by this chapter is designed to explain both variations over time (general turn to the left) and across cases (specific versions of the left turn). Like Weyland, this chapter borrows insights from theories

median voter of any Latin American country is poor, which means that median income is substantially lower than national GDP per capita. Consequently, political parties or movements that campaign on the promise of redistribution from rich to poor have, in principle, a considerable electoral advantage over conservative rivals (holding constant the effects of political “identities”). However, only fiscal latitude makes redistribution viable and allows leftist governments to stay in power. Without growth, fiscal surpluses evaporate. Without fiscal resources, leftist governments face an iron dilemma. Either they betray their electoral mandates

Figure 4.2. GDP and Export Growth for 2002-2010



Source: CEPAL. Montevideo-Oxford Latin American Economic History Database

and rule on the right, or they risk macroeconomic instability and plunge into potentially fatal governability problems. Colombia is the only exception to the left turn. While the median Colombian voter is also poor, the intensification of guerrilla warfare during the 1990s made security rather than redistribution of wealth the top concern (Posada-Carbó 2012).

Like the convergence on the left, the radical-hegemonic divergence has separate causes for its origins and for its consolidation. The *origins* lie in the bankruptcy of traditional political parties caused by the exhaustion of their political capital after decades of governments that were too corrupt to supply a minimal level of public goods, too cartelized to allow for entry of new

of “rentier state,” but while his emphasis is on psychological mechanisms, this chapter highlights coalitional ones. Weyland de-emphasizes the role of party structures, which in this chapter interact with the commodity boom to generate regime variations.

forces, or too impotent in the face of long periods of economic deterioration. Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia are exemplary cases.

The *consolidation* of radical hegemonies, however, is a consequence of the economic boom. A fundamental intervening factor has been the rise of a social coalition that, in light of its source of funding and bases of political support, can be called rentier populism. The dominance of rentier populism has re-shaped the political landscape in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and to a lesser extent Argentina. In these four countries, rentier populism has created conditions for the persistence of the radical variant of left governments and, more importantly, of distinctly hegemonic forms of rule—i.e., political regimes in which the president dominates the policy-making process and is free from institutional oversight. Rentier populism reflects the type of natural resource that drives growth, and the method the state uses to extract resource rents. In Argentina, and in the Andean countries with the exception of Peru and Colombia, the main economic beneficiary of the boom has not been a specific economic sector, a cluster of private firms, or a distinct social class. The big winner has been the government. The state is the main or sole owner of hydrocarbons in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, the main producer of copper in Chile, and the largest recipient of soybean rents in Argentina. To different degrees, these countries have gravitated towards the so-called “rentier state” that derives its revenue from the exploitation of a single, government-owned natural resource.³ By contrast, Peruvian gold and copper mines are privately owned, Brazilian and Uruguayan agricultural rents remain largely in private hands, and, given the legal structure of Petrobras, Brazilian oil rents are evenly divided between the state and a pool of minority shareholders around the world.

The methods and sources of fiscal extraction define which groups in society demand accountability. In the extreme case of the rentier state, the government does not owe anything to anybody, and in principle has no incentive to make deals involving “taxation in exchange for representation,” a canonical source of civil and political rights. Four of the five countries approaching the rentier state ideal type—Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina, in decreasing order of proximity—have experienced the rise of hegemonic forms of rule.

At the same time, Chile—more of a rentier state than Argentina and Ecuador—has maintained, if not accelerated, its trajectory of institutional improvement. Chile could consolidate a hegemonic form of rule but a strong party system prevents its emergence. Chile has additional immunity against radical hegemonies because, in contrast to other rentier states, copper was *already* owned by the state when the region received the first economic tailwinds in 2002. In Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the government fought with private firms for control of mineral and agricultural wealth. The fight exacerbated the level of political polarization that in general surrounds the emergence of radical hegemonies. For those governments that chose to fight, victory helped to consolidate power.

Among non-rentier states, the effect of the natural resource boom is not as relevant in political terms. With the rise of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), a moderate, programmatic left-wing party, Brazil avoided radical hegemonies. Further, the election of Dilma Rousseff after Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva served two presidential terms appears to have started a transformation of the patrimonial institutions that have dominated politics since time immemorial. Uruguay, like Chile, replaced the old military dictatorship with a democracy that has improved itself through the very practice of representative government, and the victory of the *Frente Amplio*, another moderate and programmatic left-wing party, has only accelerated this trajectory.

³ See Karl (1987) for a pioneer application of the rentier state theory to Latin America.

While an economic blessing, abundant natural resources can be a curse for political institutions.⁴ The risks of institutional poisoning are much higher for countries in which the physical structure of the economy allows rulers to build a rentier state without much effort. The modern state involves a fundamental political dilemma. On the one hand, the monopolistic control of the means of violence is a prerequisite for the protection of human lives and property, the most basic public good. On the other hand, the concentration of power, if it lacks strong boundaries or is captured by despots, can be the source of public evils like political oppression, economic predation, and underdevelopment traps. By strengthening the fiscal position of the state in all countries of South America, the boom of natural resources reinforced the power of national governments and made the dilemma of the modern state even more acute. This new power can contribute to the provision of the public goods still required for the economic and political development of the region—i.e., the boom as a blessing. Yet it also increases the risks of discretionary government and corruption, which would worsen the old accountability deficits of the new democracies—i.e., the boom as a curse. Only under special circumstances is a more powerful state a better state.

Chile's immunity against the poisoning that has affected other rentier countries, as well as the institutional improvements of Brazil, suggests that the physical structure of the economy and the methods of extraction are not the only causes behind divergence. Peru and Colombia, which are endowed with vast reserves of minerals and hydrocarbons but have avoided the creation of rentier states, also point to the need of extra explanatory factors. The obvious but crucial fact is that the economic boom has not worked its effects on countries as if they were blank canvasses. It hit countries at the same point in the calendar but at different junctures in their social and political trajectories.

Different configurations of local conditions, *in addition* to the physical structure of the economy, refracted the shock into a variety of policy and institutional outcomes. Shared social and demographic conditions across South America processed the boom differently from commodity-abundant countries with high median incomes, like Norway, Canada, and Australia. Advanced economies have emphasized redistribution across generations, whereas South America spread the new torrent of wealth across social classes. At the same time, differential conditions *within* Latin America, what Max Weber would call the “constellation” of political and economic forces, caused the commodity boom to improve the institutional quality of democracies in countries like Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay, and to dismantle the defenses against abuses of presidential power in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina. The impact of the new economic abundance in South America has then been refracted by two types of prisms. One of these is common to the entire region, involving shared features of social structure. The other—which creates divergence across countries—involves a combination of constraints emerging from the structure of financial markets and from the party system.

Convergence across South American countries resulted from the intersection of new international prices and persistent levels of economic inequality. This intersection produced a substantial change in the parameters that had dominated political activity during the last decades of the twentieth century. It made possible the economic incorporation of informal and marginalized sectors of the population, which expanded during the long period of economic stagnation that followed the debt crisis of 1982 and swelled as a consequence of the market

⁴ The statement should be qualified, for the “Dutch Disease” is an economic curse. This chapter will only focus on political repercussions.

reforms of the 1990s.⁵ If the new commodity prices killed Prebisch's economic theories, they revived Gino Germani's political sociology with the creation of conditional cash transfers (CCT's), a scheme of economic redistribution that spread like wildfire among South American countries, once fiscal conditions made it viable.⁶ Half a century after the original wave of "mass politics," the continent has embarked on the incorporation of the most vulnerable sectors in society. As in the prior juncture, it is again the deliberate intervention of the state that extends protection from the risks that market economies present to those who did not accumulate a modicum of physical and human capital.

In contrast to the past, however, the new welfare state is a minimalist one. It provides only a rudimentary safety net aimed at lifting people out of indigence, but not out of poverty. The incorporation of the structurally unemployed and informal sectors in the context of international free trade—a fundamental source of revenue for the minimalist welfare state—is another crucial contrast with the original incorporation wave, which generally resulted in the creation of formal jobs in state-protected industries and the unionization of workers. The new form of incorporation will not create new formal workers, new trade unions, or new labor parties. Incorporation through conditional cash transfers is not an invention of the new economic prosperity, but the commodity boom generated the revenue to pursue CCT's as a systematic strategy in the countries that had cautiously experimented with them, like Brazil and Chile, and spread the minimalist welfare state to the rest of the region. The boom consolidated the propagation of the new redistributive scheme. Beyond the general outcome of informal sector incorporation, different sets of South American countries—depending on the structure of capital markets and party systems—experienced distinct coalitional dynamics, which in turn sent political regimes into contrasting trajectories of exercise of power and structures of political accountability.

Forms of Institutional Poisoning

Institutional poisoning has different manifestations, depending on whether it affects the state itself (poisoning as praetorianization), the form of *access* to state power (autocratization), or the patterns of *exercise* of state power (hegemonization).

*Praetorianization*⁷

Violent conflict is the curse *par excellence* of natural resources. The distribution of the new wealth created under booms almost always provokes dispute, and conflict may overflow legal channels of resolution. The consequence is Huntingtonian praetorianism: widespread non-institutional mobilization. In South America, however, the commodity boom was a blessing for governability. Between 1996 and 2002, a period that roughly coincides with the lost economic lustrum, Argentina and Venezuela, two of the countries that would later benefit the most from the boom, experienced acute episodes of praetorianism, which included the twin events of general bankruptcy of traditional political parties and massive anti-establishment street protests.

⁵ For the original wave of labor incorporation see Collier and Collier (1991).

⁶ CCT's are small payments to poor families in exchange for the commitment of school attendance and regular medical checkups. Germani (1971) is the source of several original insights about the transition to mass society in Latin America.

⁷ Huntington (1968).

Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina became prominent examples of the syndrome of “interrupted presidencies,” marked by the evaporation of presidential authority in the context of intense popular mobilization.⁸

Everything changed a few years later due to the first tangible fiscal repercussions of the commodity boom. The governments of Hugo Chávez, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, Evo Morales, and Rafael Correa restored presidential authority. After demobilizing protests, they recovered governability and soon after were re-elected or ratified with extraordinary levels of support. “We had to extinguish the fire,” claims Alberto Fernández, the Cabinet Chief under the Néstor Kirchner government, “and the only way we could do it was by providing social assistance, and the only money we had to do it came from the taxes on [the exports of] soybeans.”⁹

Autocratization

Dahlian democracy is another possible victim of the natural resource curse.¹⁰ Autocratization occurs when access to power becomes less competitive because the opposition is boycotted or banned, or less inclusive because substantial sections of the population are denied political rights. All countries in Latin America except Cuba entered the new century with democratic regimes of access. In South America, according to a wide scholarly consensus, Venezuela has gradually lost democratic access due to a string of presidential blows against competition, although not against participation. The loss of competitiveness gained international attention in 2007 when Chávez closed *Radio Caracas*, an opposition television network, but it had already begun with the constitutional reform of 1999, which eliminated official financial support for political parties and created substantial asymmetries between government and opposition in terms of ability to campaign.

For Bolivia, even though international agencies of regime analysis continue to classify it as a democracy, the Morales government has also fostered, in an attenuated fashion, the autocratization of access. In contrast to Venezuela, the main victim in Bolivia has not been competition but participation, and not of voters but of opposition candidates, including the mayors of Sucre and Potosí, Jaime Barrón and René Joaquino, who have been harassed by judges controlled by the government. In Ecuador, shortly after taking office in 2007, President Correa set in motion a process that removed 57 members of the opposition from Congress, which amounted to cancelling the verdict of the ballot box as a mechanism of access. Like clones of the Chávez government, the governments of Morales and Correa have engaged in high intensity rhetorical battles against established media. But only Correa went beyond words: the indirect control of the press under threat of intervention, which began with the expropriation of *Gramavisión* in mid-2009, became more systematic after the constitutional reform of May 2011 granted the president permanent powers of control.

Together with autocratization, however, the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia have intensified the mechanisms of “vertical accountability” by means of an extraordinary expansion of the opportunities for voters to ratify or recall presidents. In addition to standard plebiscites, Chávez, Morales, and Correa subjected themselves to indirect popularity tests by calling for referendums on constitutional reform in which approval of reform and support for the president were tacitly but irreversibly linked. Displaying a level of convergence

⁸ For the syndrome of “interrupted presidencies,” see Valenzuela (2004).

⁹ Author’s interview, June 3, 2001.

¹⁰ Dahl (1971) disaggregates democracy into the dimensions of competition and participation.

that cannot be coincidental, a few months after taking office, the three presidents called for referendums on constitutional reform and for elections of the constitutional assembly (1999, 2006, and 2007, respectively). In turn, once the work of the assemblies was finished, a new round of popular consultations took place for the approval of the new constitutional text (1999, 2009, and 2008). The reforms introduced presidential re-election in all three cases, and a new clock for the presidential term in Venezuela and Ecuador, which gave Chávez and Correa the opportunity to face an early test for renewing their mandates (2000 and 2009). In addition, Chávez and Morales were subject to recall elections (2004 and 2008) and, as the veteran of the trio, Chávez faced a second test for presidential re-election in 2006. Chávez and Correa also called for referendums for a second constitutional reform (2009 and 2011), which in the case of Venezuela resulted in the authorization for a third presidential term starting in 2012 (plus the portion of the term prior to the first constitutional reform).

Counting presidential elections, recall consultations, referendums for constitutional reform, and elections for constitutional assemblies, Chávez held plebiscites on seven occasions, obtaining a mean support of almost 55 percent; Correa did it five times, an average of once a year; and Morales three times, once every two years. The average support for Correa and Morales has been 65 percent. Bolivia and Ecuador traded interrupted presidencies and massive social protests for strong presidents fortified by serial popular acclamation. In Argentina, which in contrast to the three Andean countries shows no signs of autocratization, the Kirchners have not called for any plebiscites. However, both government and opposition have increasingly equated mid-term elections to popular consultations about presidential performance, providing Argentine democracy with a functional substitute for the plebiscitarian pattern in the three Andean countries.

*Hegemonization*¹¹

Despite the visible signs of autocratization in Venezuela and the more tenuous ones in Bolivia and Ecuador, the main victim of the natural resource curse in South America has not been the form of access to power but the form of exercise. In Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and especially Venezuela, presidents dominate the state.¹² They have concentrated policy-making power in their own hands, at the expense of congress and their performance has been subject to only nominal scrutiny by legislatures, courts, and nonpartisan agencies of oversight. A plebiscitarian hegemonic presidency is the extreme case, combining maximum decision-making power, minimum oversight, and indefinite reelection.

Although none of these countries exhibits the three attributes in full degree, Chávez, Correa, the Kirchners, and Morales have come closer to the ideal type than any other elected president in the history of their countries. If recurrent plebiscitarian ratification furnished governments with a strong majoritarian tone, hegemonization has made them distinctly anti-minoritarian. The conventional way of measuring hegemonization, the tally of presidential decrees, supports the notion that presidents Chávez and Néstor Kirchner governed without congress. However, qualitative assessment of executive-legislative relations provides more valid measures of hegemonization. In Venezuela, Ecuador, and to a lesser extent, Argentina, congress has delegated the governance of the national economy to the president. The cause of power delegation has not been executive coercion against legislators, which would have actually

¹¹ For “hegemony” as used in this section, see Botana (2006).

¹² Corrales (2010), Conaghan (2011), and Madrid (2011) provide excellent descriptions of political regimes in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, respectively.

involved the autocratization of the regime, as it occurred in Peru under Alberto Fujimori in 1992. The proximate sources of hegemonization have been varied: lack of interest on issues of national scope among members of the ruling party, inability of the opposition to solve collective action problems, and a general shortage of appropriate technical background.

In Venezuela, delegation occurred through three *Leyes Habilitantes* (2000, 2001, and 2007), which allowed Chávez to decide on his own regarding the nationalization of hundreds of economic assets and redefine a substantial number of budget allocations. Almost no important economic policy decision has been shared with the opposition. Year after year, the Argentine Congress granted Néstor and Cristina Kirchner extraordinary powers despite the extinction of any indications of social or political emergency. In the preparation of the national budget, the keystone of Argentina's economic legislation, the Congress has repeatedly approved presidential proposals with artificially low projections of economic growth and revenue. Similarly, Chávez has sent barely credible estimates for the price of oil. Since Congress cannot attach strings to revenues that exceed estimations, national budgets approved by the Argentine and Venezuelan legislatures leave the presidents ample room for discretionary spending. Between 2004 and 2009, the Argentine president allocated an average \$18 billion a year without legislative oversight (about twice the size of the budget for the Ministry of Public Works). In Venezuela, such discretionary spending amounted to 20 percent of total revenues (Corrales 2010: 35). The decision to use the Central Bank's international reserves to repay foreign debt, one of the three most important economic decisions of the Cristina Kirchner government, was made by presidential decree (December 2009). However, Argentina under the Kirchners is a case of moderate hegemony. For instance, the nationalization of pension funds in 2008, one of the other key decisions, was extensively debated in Congress and approved with support from the Socialist party. In debating the 2009 law creating the Universal Family Allowances, the Argentine CCT program, minority parties showed a capacity to participate in law-making that was unparalleled in Chávez's Venezuela. In March 2008, President Cristina Kirchner's attempt to further raise export duties on soybeans by presidential decree provoked such resistance that she had to transform the decree into a legislative proposal. Congress rejected the proposal by one vote, handed a tough defeat to the government, and in the process discovered that it could limit presidential authority. The ultimate source of these limits was rooted in society, although the greater ability of Congress to echo social resistance is an indication of hegemonic moderation that sets Argentina apart from the three Andean cases.

Plebiscitarian Hegemony, Delegative Democracy, Classical Populism, and Neo-Populism

Due to their regimes of access and exercise of power, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina form a special group of countries in South America. They are, to different degrees, *plebiscitarian hegemonies*. In the polar type of plebiscitarian hegemony, mechanisms of vertical accountability—through which citizens ratify or revoke the presidential mandate—operate with maximum frequency. By contrast, horizontal controls—the oversight by legislatures, courts and comptrollers—are suspended indefinitely. Plebiscitarian access and hegemonic exercise are “functionally” connected. From the perspective of the plebiscitarian presidents and their supporters, the continual acclamation of presidential performance has logical and political priority over any other form of accountability. The electorate is the ultimate political tribunal and its ongoing support makes the judgments of other branches of government irrelevant. With seven

plebiscitarian ratifications and almost complete presidential control over the economy, Chávez's regime in Venezuela is the closest to the polar type. Argentina under the Kirchners, who have relied on informal substitutes for plebiscites and gained control over only a portion of economic policymaking, is the most moderate case in the group. Ecuador under Correa and Bolivia under Morales are intermediate cases.

Despite obvious similarities to delegative democracies, plebiscitarian hegemonies are a different type of regime.¹³ Delegative democracies, which in Guillermo O'Donnell's original conceptualization were exemplified by the regimes of Carlos Menem in Argentina and Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil, were above all *democracies*. Plebiscitarian hegemonies, by contrast, may not be democratic. In Venezuela, access to power has become less competitive over time and has been classified as a case of electoral authoritarianism.¹⁴ The concept of plebiscitarian hegemony characterizes mainly a form of exercise of power and deliberately contains minimal information about the form of access, which refers only to the nature and intensity/frequency of presidential elections. That single attribute about access is included in the concept because, hypothetically, the plebiscitarian component is functionally linked to the hyper-presidential form of exercise that defines the hegemonic type.

Both attributes, hegemony and plebiscitarianism, are either complementary or have a common cause. Regime competitiveness, by contrast, has a separate source. Delegative democracies, originally associated with large-scale market reforms, included two attributes that marked a strong contrast with classical populism: they *de*-mobilized popular sectors, and dismantled the redistributive schemes created in the state-led development era. Plebiscitarian hegemonies, by contrast, have strong empirical connections both with the *re*-mobilization of popular sectors and economic redistribution, especially of the wealth created by the commodity boom.¹⁵ Precisely because delegative democracies lacked the attributes of classical populism, O'Donnell rejected the characterization of the Menem, Collor de Mello, and Fujimori regimes as "neo-populists."¹⁶ Delegative democracies also included rule by technical experts. By contrast, the plebiscitarian hegemonies of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina have militated against technocrats. A common denominator between these cases has been the gradual depletion of human capital and technical knowledge in finance ministers, statistical agencies, central banks, and state-owned firms, which is opposite to the trend in Chile and Brazil.

Two conceptualizations of populism have dominated the literature on Latin American politics. Accordingly, the relation between plebiscitarian hegemony and populism depends on the type of populism. "Classical populism" is a socio-political coalition, a set of economic policies, or a combination of both, by contrast "neo-populism" refers almost exclusively to a type of political leadership.¹⁷ Neither variant of populism is a regime type, whereas plebiscitarian hegemony is only a regime type. Despite the absence of analytical connections between plebiscitarian hegemony and populism, empirical relations are crucial. According to the definition of neo-populism, which centrally includes a political leader who mobilizes large-scale popular support from the top-down, Bolivia under Morales is clearly not a case of neo-populism. Most social movements that joined the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) had become active

¹³ For the concept of delegative democracy, see O'Donnell (1992).

¹⁴ For a characterization of Venezuela's regime type, see Corrales (2010), and for the theory of competitive authoritarianisms, Levitsky and Way (2010).

¹⁵ These connections are strictly empirical and subject to test; they are not analytical because mobilization strategies and economic policy are not part of a purely institutional definition.

¹⁶ O'Donnell (1995).

¹⁷ For conceptualizations populism centered on leadership, see Weyland (2001) and Barr (2009).

years before the emergence of Evo Morales. These movements autonomously coordinated the selection of a common leader, and preserved their identities under the new leadership. The role of MAS's electoral base in the rise of Morales is much closer to that of active citizens than to passive followers.

The other attribute of neo-populism, the use of a high-voltage anti-establishment rhetoric as a mobilization strategy, is in fact shared by all four empirical cases of plebiscitarian hegemony. From Correa's *pelucones* and Chávez's *burguesía pro-yanqui* to Morales' *oligarquías* and the Kirchners' *grupos concentrados*, all plebiscitarian presidents give their audiences an enemy who is the source of the country's evils, leaves no room for negotiation, and has to be engaged in a fight to end. Intense anti-establishment appeals are so systematic within each case and so common across cases that the possibility of random coincidence should be ruled out. However, in the context of the explanation that will be advanced in the following sections, neo-populist rhetoric is largely "superstructural." While interesting for its recurrence over time and repetition across cases, neo-populist rhetoric plays only an accessory role in the underlying political dynamics and can be placed at the very end of a long causal chain made of more fundamental factors.

No definitional connections exist between classical populism and plebiscitarian hegemonies, for the former is a type of coalition and economic policy, and the latter is a form of political regime. They are phenomena of different orders. Precisely for that reason it is possible to study causal relations between them and, in particular, to assess whether coalitions and policies similar to those of classical populism are the causes behind the rise and consolidation of plebiscitarian hegemonies. Classical populism was a state-sponsored coalition of the first generations of factory workers and national firms producing consumption goods. Redistributive policies, especially from rural to urban sectors, expansion of social rights, and tariff protection would create the conditions for semi-autarchic development. Economic winners of the model would secure the political success of the populist leaders. The source of classical populism was the intersection of large social and economic processes, both national and international. The slow but steady deterioration of terms of trade for Latin American exports, combined with demographic, industrial, and urbanization trends that reached politically critical thresholds, created new coalitional possibilities, including certainly the populist one.

Plebiscitarian hegemony is the political regime that reflects the emergence and domination of a new type of social coalition. Like classical populism, the new coalition pivots around a social sector that is the creature of a long accumulation of economic and social processes, the incorporation of which depends on an inflection point in export prices. However, the macro-processes that came together to create the political room for new coalitions have very little in common with those of classical populism. Classical populism was an industrial coalition; the coalition behind plebiscitarian hegemonies is that of rentier populism.

Rentier Populism I: The Theory

In the extreme case of rentier populism, a caricature with no empirical instances in any place of the world or moment in history, only two actors form the ruling alliance: the government and the informal sectors. The government is the only owner of a natural resource that commands a high price on international markets. The government distributes the revenue from the natural resource to the informal sectors, which comprise a majority of the population. Exploiting the resource

requires no substantial investments within the politically relevant time horizon. Either the necessary technology and physical capital are not expensive or they had been expropriated from a private investor. In exchange for redistribution, the informal sector provides votes to secure political victories and street mobilization to intimidate economic and political losers. The rentier populist coalition fully integrates itself into the international market for goods but it refrains from participating in financial markets. It needs the former as much as it can dispense with the latter. Foreign trade is the fundamental source of rent, whereas international capital is an unnecessary source of conditionalities.

The economic and political bases of rentier populism define its structure of accountability. Vertical accountability is the most affordable way of staying in power because the informal sector's vote is the least expensive to buy. The alternative of ignoring the majority and ruling through repression has higher costs with more uncertain political benefits. Like any other dominant coalition, rentier populism has no spontaneous reasons to set checks and balances on presidential authority. The groups most interested in horizontal accountability are those least likely to become partners in the dominant coalition and are most worried about discretionary use of political power. These include individuals who have made heavy investments in physical and human capital, require long maturation periods, and present the most appealing targets for expropriation. The effectiveness of groups demanding horizontal accountability is a function of their relevance within the political economy of the dominant coalition. When rentier populism rules, the effectiveness of demands for horizontal accountability is negligible. Rentier populist rulers do not need the minorities in the formal economy to sustain themselves, and the informal majority only requires the plebiscitarian mechanism to secure the uninterrupted flow of transfers. Plebiscitarian hegemony is a structure of accountability that is tailored for rentier populism: complete deactivation of horizontal controls (the hegemonic component) and high frequency of vertical ratifications (the plebiscitarian component). The rentier populist coalition causes plebiscitarian hegemonies.

Rentier populism and plebiscitarian hegemonies appear undefeatable. They are, so long as initial conditions hold: high prices for the natural resource, low exploitation costs, and substantial size of the informal sectors. A small change in any of these conditions places a lot of pressure on the viability of the coalition and can provoke the collapse of the regime. If the international prices of the commodity fall below the threshold required for revenues to match the costs of the coalition or the size of the informal sectors shrink so that they can no longer secure electoral success, it will be the end of the political regime. A new coalition replaces the old one, or the hegemonic president expands the coalition to sectors in the formal economy that demand institutional insurance against predation, for instance, effectiveness of legislatures in the economic policy process. Finally, if the costs of the technology for exploiting the natural resource become higher than the savings rate of the economy, rentier populism will be forced to end its isolation from international financial markets and, in exchange for fresh capital inflows, accept conditionalities that will curb the hegemonic features of the regime. Strong while the conditions for rentier populism last, plebiscitarian hegemonies are—to reiterate—extremely fragile in the face of small variations in the parameters of its political economy.

Rentier Populism II: Comparative Political Origins

At the end of the twentieth century,² rentier populism was an unimaginable phenomenon in Latin America. One of its components, the informal sectors, was available, but the other, the rent from

natural resources, was politically irrelevant. The commodity boom of the early twenty-first century contributed the remaining piece of the rentier populist alliance. However, only Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina built it. The reason for the divergence is that between the availability of the basic economic and demographic inputs and the effective construction of a new dominant alliance, a constellation of local economic and political conditions refracted the coalition-building process, preventing populism in some cases and encouraging it in others.

The critical political decision in the process of building a rentier-populist coalition is whether or not to expropriate the booming natural resource. In the ruler's cost-benefit analysis, the international price of the commodity, the scale of the national endowment, and the size of the informal sector define the potential reward. The costs, on the other hand, are determined by the damage to the country's reputation in international capital markets, and the resistance of national political forces that fear the risks rentier populism involve for their survival. These costs are shaped by financial markets and part systems, which are also structural constraints. These structures, however, are substantially more malleable and unstable than the ones that define the incentives, the rather fixed physical structure of the economy and the slow-moving social structure of the underlying population. Party system volatility in fact became endemic in the Andes and Argentina by the turn of the century.

Financial reputation costs are especially high in countries with a long track record of receptiveness to foreign investment and debt repayment. All Andean countries are endowed with enough reserves of mineral wealth for expropriation to be a tempting political option in boom times. In three of them, Colombia, Peru, and especially Chile, the financial reputation costs have provided anti-populist immunization: flows of foreign investment are considerably higher than the expected gains of capture. This condition has been crucial in the Peruvian case, for in contrast to Colombia and Chile it meets all the other requirements for the rise and consolidation of the plebiscitarian hegemonic variant of the left. President Ollanta Humala, who would otherwise be a natural architect of a rentier populist coalition, probably concluded that he had received too precious a legacy of financial reputation from the orthodox governments of Alejandro Toledo (2001–2006) and Alan García (2006–2011), which managed to achieve and keep investment grade status.

At the opposite extreme, the physical structure of the Argentine economy is considerably less attractive for rentier political ventures. Nevertheless, by the time commodities started to boom, the financial reputation costs of capture had become negligible. In 2001, the Argentine government defaulted on a gigantic volume of foreign debt and doomed the country to years of abysmal credit ratings. For Néstor Kirchner, refraining from the rentier populist temptation would have only meant taking the first steps in a necessarily long process for rebuilding reputation, the dividends of which would have started to flow well beyond the politically relevant horizon. When Morales and Correa became presidents, credit ratings in Bolivia and Ecuador fell to all-time lows. For the fiscal needs of their coalitional projects, expropriation was much more effective than patient reconstruction.

Party systems, the other source of costs for the leader considering the construction of rentier populism, prevent expropriation if the incumbent party has a solid constituency in the formal economy or the opposition parties have enough organizational strength.¹⁸ The economic

¹⁸ Levitsky and Roberts (2011b; 2011c), Madrid (2011), and Flores-Macías (2010) have also traced variations within the left turn to differences across parties and party systems. They explain policy variations, not coalitional or regime outcomes.

recession of 1998 to 2002 was a watershed moment for party systems in South America. The political parties that had implemented neoliberal reforms lost vital reserves of political capital. Only two established left wing parties had remained in the opposition during the era of market reforms: the Brazilian PT and the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*. Free from blame for the countries' economic pains, they supplied a fresh but institutionalized post-neoliberal option to the public. In Chile the economic crisis was very mild (the recession was over by 2000); neoliberal reform did not cause disappointment, and although they were partners in the ruling coalition, the Socialists also became a credible post-neoliberal choice.

Once the PT, the *Frente Amplio*, and the Chilean Socialists gained power, the price for the creation of a rentier populist alliance would have been the destruction of their historic ties with formal labor. A more profitable course of action was the gradual incorporation of the informal sectors as an extra layer to their established constituencies. In Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, when the economic slowdown began, party systems were already experiencing a deep and protracted crisis caused by cartelization and corruption. In Argentina, the representation crisis actually followed economic recession. In all four cases, however, party system volatility peaked and, with the exception of the Argentine *Peronistas*, stable political parties virtually disappeared.¹⁹ From that moment on, whoever became president would rule without organized opposition. Political barriers to the emergence of rentier populism vanished as parties lost the strength to resist expropriation. In Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the flip side of party de-institutionalization under economic dislocation was mass praetorianism, especially informal sector mobilization. Massive street protests presented Kirchner, Morales, and Correa with a unique opportunity for moving beyond the strictly economic incorporation adopted in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, to try the *political* incorporation of the informal sectors. These sectors became key allies in the electoral coalition, providing the base for plebiscitarian ratifications, as well as in the government coalition, supplying control of the streets and intimidation of the opposition.

Cases and Mechanisms of Rentier Populism

In 2001, the Chávez government decided that the state-owned *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA) should be the majority shareholder in all Venezuelan oil fields, which affected thirty-three multinational companies with operations in the Orinoco Basin. Two of them, *Total* and *Eni*, left the country. A year later, Chávez raised royalties on private oil companies from 1 percent to 30 percent and taxes from 34 percent to 50 percent. A presidential decree of 2007 raised the floor of PDVSA's share in exploitation joint ventures from 51 percent to 78 percent. Increased control over the flow of oil rents allowed for the creation of the *Misiones Bolivarianas*, Chávez's strategy of informal sector incorporation. In fact, PDVSA, rather than state ministries, has administered the missions. The programs created between 2003 and 2004 included *Misión Robinson* and *Misión Ribas*, which target literacy and basic education; *Misión Barrio Adentro*, which provides health services; and *Misión Mercal*, which provides subsidized food.

In Bolivia, Morales nationalized the country's hydrocarbon resources four months after assuming the presidency. In a primarily symbolic action, he sent troops to occupy the Tarija gas fields, the second-largest reserves in Latin America. Petrobras, the Brazilian oil giant, was the

¹⁹ For measures of party system volatility in the 1990s and 2000s see Flores-Macías (2010: 423) and Coppedge (2007). Calvo and Murillo (2013) provide an in-depth analysis of party system volatility in Argentina.

most affected firm as its facilities came under the control of the Bolivian state company *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Bolivianos* (YPFB). At the same time, Morales repurchased the remaining privately held shares of YPFB and transformed the various drilling projects from joint ventures, in which private firms received a proportion of profits, to service contracts based on flat fees. Taxes also rose from 18 percent to 82 percent, reversing the division of earnings between the state and private firms. In relative terms, no government benefited as much from nationalization and the commodity boom as that of Bolivia. Revenues from mineral royalties grew 929 percent from 1997 to 2007, and hydrocarbon taxes 626 percent. The key political consideration behind hydrocarbon nationalization was the incorporation of the informal sector. Revenue from gas rents has financed the creation of the *Bono Juancito Pinto*, a family allowance of \$29 for each child enrolled in primary school (October 2006); the *Renta Dignidad*, a payment of \$340 to all seniors (April 2007); and the *Bono Juana Azurduy*, which gives \$257 to pregnant women and mothers who undergo periodic medical checkups (May 2009).

Despite the country's large oil deposits, the government of Ecuador was not dependent on mineral rents in the 1990s. Oil companies paid an average 20 percent of their revenues in taxes, which was far from enough to sustain a populist coalition. Yet, first as Finance Minister of Alfredo Palacio's transitional government (2005–2006), and later as president, Correa raised hydrocarbon taxes, which reached 50 percent in 2006 and 80 percent in 2007. As a result, Petrobras decided to gradually leave the country and almost every other multinational firm stopped new investment. The new taxes strengthened the Correa government's fiscal position and allowed it to launch the *Bono de Desarrollo Humano*, a redistribution program that covers 1.5 million households or 45 percent of the population.

With much smaller reserves, Bolivia and Ecuador cannot reach the degree of rentierism of Venezuela. With an economy more diversified than Venezuela's and larger than those of Bolivia and Ecuador, Argentina remains the least dependent on rents. Further, its main resource—land—has natural barriers against state expropriation and exploitation. Yet the state can still extract massive rents by setting up a monopsony for agricultural products, as it did under Perón in the late 1940s, or by taxing exports. Although President Carlos Menem eliminated export taxes in the 1990s, transitional president Eduardo Duhalde reinstated them in March 2002 under the name *retenciones*. Originally set at 5 percent for processed soybeans and 10 percent for unprocessed, the *retenciones* quickly rose to 20 percent in order to fund unemployment benefits for almost two million people. President Néstor Kirchner maintained the tariff levels and the allocation of revenues almost until the end of his term. Ahead of the 2007 presidential elections, Kirchner raised duties to 24 percent for processed soybeans and 27 percent for unprocessed to subsidize consumption in low-income sectors. After his wife Cristina won the race in October, tariffs rose again to 32 percent and 34 percent to cover the debts incurred during the campaign. Soybean rents, which the central government has refused to share with the provinces, have brought Argentina closer to a rentier state than ever before.

No case perfectly fits the ideal type of rentier populism. During the commodity boom, however, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela have moved closer to the ideal type, while Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay have moved away. Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela also differ amongst themselves in terms of proximity to the extreme case. The key point from the perspective of causal inference is that the degree of rentier populism in each case is concomitant with the extent of plebiscitarian hegemony. Venezuela, the case that best approximates rentier populism, is also the closest to plebiscitarian hegemony. Argentina is the case with the most tenuous attributes of both types, while Bolivia and Ecuador are intermediate cases. But

correlation is not causation. Since the number of cases is too small for statistical analysis, it is crucial to find causal mechanisms, that is, processes that connect rentier populist coalitions to the generation of the institutional features of plebiscitarian hegemony.

Mechanisms that generate plebiscitarian hegemony can be distinguished into two types, depending on whether the rentier populist coalition is still fighting to control natural resources, or it has already consolidated as the dominant group. If rentier populism is in the formative process, rulers will treat institutions—legislatures, courts, laws—that block their path as an enemy threatening the coalition’s viability. Although the Argentine constitution grants taxation power only to Congress, the two increases in export duties on soybeans in 2007 were decided by presidential decree. The economic crisis was over, but the financial needs of a plebiscitarian year persuaded the president to resort to emergency powers outlined in the *Código Aduanero*, a legacy of the military dictatorship.

The construction of rentier populism requires hegemonic powers. Once rentier populism is consolidated in power, two mechanisms generate the features of plebiscitarian hegemony. The rising living standards of the informal sectors made possible by the boom and redistribution encourage presidents to intensify the use of plebiscites. In turn, popular ratification emboldens presidents to wrest remaining powers away from the other branches of government and portray resistances to hegemony as anti-democratic conspiracies. The string of ratifications dispels any doubt about the validity of the majority’s verdict. Frequent plebiscitarian consultations extend a blank check for the use of hegemonic powers.

The other mechanism is fiscal. When prices are sufficiently high, rents from natural resources cover all of the coalition’s expenses. State ownership means the government has to negotiate with no one to secure the flow of revenue, and it grants rulers independence from any group, national or international, that might otherwise demand institutional quality in exchange for taxation. The relative simplicity of the rentier populist coalition and political economy explains the absence of demands for checks and balances on executive authority.

The coalition of classical populism, by contrast, was a more heterogeneous construction and its partners were more organized. Its political economy encouraged more sophistication of policies and institutions. The factory workers of classical populism were incorporated into unions that organized members along functional lines and on a permanent basis. The solidarity of the informal sectors is intermittent and, at most, territorially based. Organization provided industrial workers with tools, like strikes, that could inflict real damage on the political economy. The informal sectors can, at most, take to the streets, but they cannot threaten the exploitation of natural resources or the fiscal position of the government. To maintain power, classical populist governments had to worry about productivity while balancing the interests of workers and national industrial firms. To survive, classical populism developed complex institutions—labor codes, collective bargaining mechanisms, technical institutes, and the expanded welfare state. In contrast, rentier populism relies only on plebiscites and the minimalist welfare state.

Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador are more extreme cases of plebiscitarian hegemony than Argentina precisely because of differences in the complexity of the underlying coalition and political economy. While Chávez and Morales have organized their supporters along territorial lines, the Kirchners revived collective bargaining between management and formal labor, thus enhancing institutional quality. While traditional political parties disappeared in the Andean countries, Peronism in Argentina survived the 2002 crisis and maintained its dominance. The crisis, however, marked the beginning of the party’s incorporation of the informal sector as a central partner. Under Menem, the informal sector was a peripheral, purely electoral member of

the coalition and incorporation was based on decentralized clientelism. Under the Kirchners, the party has become an amalgamation of classical and rentier populism. Due to the diversity of the economy and the strength of unions, Peronism has retained some of its industrial character, an antibody against extreme forms of plebiscitarian hegemony. Further, the fact that the natural resource in Argentina is land, which is privately held and very fragmented, has forced the Peronists to engage in battles over rents that the Andean rentier populists could avoid. With the stroke of a pen, Chávez and Morales gained full control of hydrocarbon rents by converting joint venture drilling contracts into service contracts with fixed payments. The functional equivalent in Argentina, the 2008 presidential decree raising export duties on soybeans, not only met with a level of resistance that the Kirchners could not overcome, but reinvigorated the Congress, which until then had been a rubber stamp for the executive by the admission of Peronist and opposition legislators alike.

Conclusion

The natural resource boom in the first decade of the twenty-first century has been a blessing for all South American economies. For some political regimes, however, it was an institutional curse. In Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina, the boom prompted the emergence of rentier populism, a new type of political coalition based on the economic and political incorporation of the informal sector and funded by windfall gains from commodity exports. Based on a new fiscal structure, rentier populism in turn fostered the intensification of plebiscitarian mechanisms of vertical accountability and neutralized constraints of horizontal accountability.

At the end of the twentieth century, Latin American countries faced the twin challenges of economic growth and poverty reduction. The left turn in South America has centered on the incorporation of informal sectors through minimalist welfare states based on conditional cash transfers. Incorporation marks the recovery of social rights that had been lost during long decades of crises and structural reform. The transfers of the minimalist welfare state partially address the problem of growth by incentivizing education and health, thus raising productivity. These improvements, however, are not sufficient to achieve sustained economic growth. Growth requires large investments in infrastructure, modern technology, and physical capital. In Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, the left turn, in addition to minimalist welfare states, sponsored institutional improvements to attract the necessary investments. In contrast, in the cases of rentier populism, the commodity boom has enabled governments to ignore the complex task of institution building. Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and to a lesser extent Argentina, have constructed minimalist welfare states without addressing the problem of productivity. Barrels of oil and good harvests have postponed the agenda of sustainable growth. In the process, they shut off one of the most powerful sources of political accountability. Rentier populism also endangers the long-term prospects of social citizenship. Under rentier populism, social rights last only as long as the boom. And if economic history has taught anything, it is that no boom lasts forever.

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