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# Qualitative & Multi-Method Research

## Contents



## *Letter from the Editors*

This issue is devoted to a symposium on "Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies," guest edited by David Collier and Gerardo Munck. The concept of a critical juncture—an historical moment during which much greater change is possible than during the preceding and subsequent periods of high and often long institutional stability—has played an important role in historical institutionalist and other macro-comparative scholarship since it was introduced half a century ago. It also is invoked rather liberally, even after Capoccia and Kelemen's 2007 article offered valuable conceptual and terminological clarity. Collier and Munck seek to go further, spelling out a "critical juncture framework" in their introductory essay, which is followed by a rich collection of articles, exploring in various substantive and geographic domains a variety of methodological challenges for research adopting this framework.

In the symposium's concluding essay, Thad Dunning examines the understandings of causality on which critical-juncture arguments are premised. In particular, he takes issue with the deterministic notion of causation posited by some as a defining characteristic of qualitative work. Dunning labels this insistence on causal necessity and sufficiency the "inevitability framework." Drawing on several prominent works, he argues that probabilistic causal ideas play a much more important role in comparative macro-analysis than is typically acknowledged. He calls on scholars to consider both deterministic and probabilistic causal patterns instead of simply assuming one or the other.

For the upcoming APSA Annual Meeting in San Francisco, QMMR Division Program Chair Katerina Linos has put together a terrific set of panels and roundtables. You can find

*continued on p.47*

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# Symposium on Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies

David Collier and Gerardo L. Munck, Editors

## *Building Blocks and Methodological Challenges: A Framework for Studying Critical Junctures*

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**Gerardo L. Munck**
University of Southern California

The study of critical junctures and their legacies—a tradition of research launched by Lipset and Rokkan[1]—has been an abiding concern among scholars engaged in macro-comparative analysis. The critical juncture framework yields valuable insights into trajectories of political change in which major episodes of innovation are followed by the emergence of enduring institutions.

This essay introduces a symposium that explores methodological challenges faced by research in this tradition. The project originated in a roundtable at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, convened to recognize the 25th anniversary of the publication of *Shaping the Political Arena*.[2] However, the initiative quickly became much more than that. Discussion at the roundtable itself—and ongoing exchanges at the APSA meetings—sparked important questions and disagreements, and other scholars joined the debate. The result is the present collection of essays.

These nine contributions address diverse substantive domains, from state formation and political regimes to party systems, neoliberal transformation, religion, law, economic growth, and colonial rebellion. Most focus on Latin America, but some discuss Europe and the United States. Some analyze developments since the 1980s, while others reach back to the 19th century. Some authors reflect on their own previously published research, others present new research, and still others debate issues raised within the symposium.

The symposium has been guided by what we will call a critical juncture framework. This framework has been highly productive—for many scholars over several decades. As noted, it originated in the pioneering work of Lipset and Rokkan,[3] and many years later Collier and Collier offered an approach to synthesis.[4]

This framework is appropriate for studying domains where institutions are self-perpetuating, as they sometimes are, for example, in the areas addressed by the two studies just cited—party systems and trade union movements. At one level, the guiding questions are straightforward: (1) Why do these institutions come into existence—i.e., what happens at the critical juncture? (2) How does their self-perpetuating character operate—i.e., the legacy of the critical juncture? The goal of the framework is to clarify the analytical claims made in explanations of this particular dynamic of discontinuity, followed by continuity. It is not intended as a general model of political change, but rather as an approach especially helpful in understanding this common—yet hardly ubiquitous—trajectory of innovation and stability.

This introduction to the symposium offers an overview of the framework. It presents the core idea of a *critical juncture* and turns next to the *antecedent conditions* and the *cleavage or shock* that precede a critical juncture. It then addresses the *mechanisms of production* that yield the legacy, and finally the *legacy* proper. The two fundamental components are the critical juncture and its legacy, and we discuss those steps in more detail than the others. For every step, the discussion explores key issues and debates, drawing attention to the distinct methodological challenges involved in assessing critical juncture hypotheses. It draws on a running example, *Shaping the Political Arena*, as well as many illustrations from the nine essays in the symposium.[5] Table 1 summarizes key points.

### Critical Juncture

A critical juncture is (1) a major episode of institutional innovation, (2) occurring in distinct ways, (3) and generating an enduring legacy. It may occur in distinct ways either in the sense of contrasts among cases in comparative analysis, or based on comparing outcomes in a single case with counterfactual alternatives. All episodes of institutional innovation are potentially of interest to social scientists, but the focus here is on those that leave an enduring legacy.

The critical juncture in *Shaping the Political Arena*, for example, is the "incorporation period" in eight Latin American countries, defined as the first sustained and at least partially successful attempt by the state to support and shape an institutionalized labor movement. Major innovations include legalization of unions, creation of an industrial relations system that structures the activities of unions, and institutionalization

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[1] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.

[2] Collier and Collier 1991.

[3] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.

[4] Collier and Collier 1991. The study of critical junctures is one component of the larger enterprise of comparative-historical analysis. For overviews, see Skocpol 1984; Collier 1998; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; and Mahoney and Thelen 2015.

[5] I.e., Tarrow, Roberts, Kaufman, Boas, Scully, Domínguez, Mazzuca, Gould, and Dunning. In the footnotes, the contributions of these authors to the symposium are all dated 2017.

**Table 1: Critical Juncture Framework**

| | Antecedent Conditions | Cleavage or Shock | Critical Juncture | Mechanisms of Production | Legacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview** | Diverse features of economy, society, and politics. May include the legacy of prior critical junctures.<br><br>Source of rival hypotheses for explaining outcomes attributed to subsequent critical juncture. | Critical juncture routinely seen as growing out of a fundamental societal or political *cleavage*: center-periphery, church-state, land-industry, owner-worker.<br><br>In some cases should be called a shock: debt crisis of the 1980s, 9/11 attack in 2001. | Major episode of institutional innovation that generates an enduring legacy.<br><br>Examples: Neoliberal transformation, innovation in legal system, restructuring of church-state relations, boundary-definition in new states, creating new institutional structures for labor unions. | Steps through which the legacy emerges.<br><br>In some cases, the features of the critical juncture map directly onto legacy. In others, complex reactive sequence.<br><br>Increasing returns as causal mechanism. | Durable, stable institutions.<br><br>Mechanisms of reproduction. i.e., sources of stability that sustain the legacy. Relevant causal concepts include self-replicating causal structure, freezing, lock-in, stickiness, and path dependence.<br><br>Rival hypotheses: "Constant causes." A distinctive kind of rival hypothesis. |
| **Issues and Debates** | (1) Contingency v. determinism. Can "critical antecedents" strongly shape the distinct forms taken by the critical juncture? Challenge to idea that critical juncture itself is characterized by contingency. | (1) Danger of conflation. Distinguishing between cleavage or shock and the critical juncture itself. E.g., not the "9/11 critical juncture" in the U.S., but the "post-9/11 critical juncture."<br><br>(2) Cleavages and shocks do not necessarily produce a critical juncture. Likewise, a critical juncture could occur without a prior cleavage or shock. | (1) Contrasts in the critical juncture. What are the different ways in which a critical juncture occurs?<br><br>(2) Establishing equivalence among diverse historical episodes.<br><br>(3) Synoptic versus incremental change.<br><br>(4) Contingency v. determinism. Contingency a defining feature of critical junctures? | (1) The question of hindsight. How much is needed to evaluate a reactive sequence? What research strategies are appropriate if hindsight is insufficient? | (1) Danger of conflation. When is a juncture "critical"?<br><br>(2) The question of hindsight. How much time is needed to evaluate the legacy?<br><br>(3) Can chronic political *instability* be interpreted as a *stable* legacy?<br><br>(4) Contingency v. determinism. Is the self-replicating causal structure of the legacy inherently deterministic? |

of distinct types of relations between unions and political parties.

Other critical junctures discussed in this symposium include neoliberal transformation in Latin America,[6] restructuring of church-state relations in 19th century Europe,[7] fundamental innovation in the U.S. legal system following the 9/11 attack,[8] boundary-definition of new states in 19th century Latin America,[9] and wars of independence in Spanish America.[10]

Analysis of transformations such as these raises four issues.

(1) *Contrasts in the Critical Juncture*. A key idea is that the critical juncture takes distinct forms in different cases. In analyzing the incorporation periods, *Shaping the Political Arena* compares cases that saw demobilization and control under an authoritarian regime, as opposed to political mobilization and a progressive/left orientation under a democratic regime. Among these latter cases, key further contrasts emerged in the role of the peasantry and in traditional versus populist parties. In this symposium, Roberts contrasts conservative-led neoliberal reforms to those led by populist or center-left parties,[11] Gould juxtaposes liberal reforms that attacked or promoted Protestant and Catholic religious authorities,[12] and Domínguez distinguishes between insurrectionary and loyalist behavior toward the Spanish Crown. In these four studies, the contrasts are of interest in themselves and play a key role in explaining contrasts in the legacy.

(2) *Bounding the Concept of Critical Juncture*. The fact that the critical juncture occurs in distinct ways in different cases can pose a challenge to maintaining conceptual equivalence. It is essential to map out the critical juncture in a precise way, such that, notwithstanding contrasts in how it occurs, it

[6] Roberts 2017.
[7] Gould 2017.
[8] Tarrow 2017.
[9] Mazzuca 2017.
[10] Domínguez 2017.
[11] Roberts 2017.
[12] Gould 2017.

is still plausibly the *same* critical juncture. This requires careful delineation of concepts and sensitivity to contrasting historical contexts.

The challenge of establishing equivalence among diverse historical episodes is illustrated by the comparison of incorporation periods in *Shaping the Political Arena*. Close attention must be given to definitions, and in that book many definitions are presented in a Glossary. One central issue is the difficulty of comparing episodes that occur in three different decades, depending on the country, and in quite different national contexts. Another challenge results from conflicting historical interpretations. For example, specialists in Argentine politics raise the question of whether the incorporation period actually began in the 1930s, rather than the 1940s under Perón. In parallel, the initial two years of the second Leguía administration in Peru, 1919 to 1920, also saw significant state initiatives toward labor, raising again the question of whether an incorporation period was occurring. On balance, the evidence suggested that neither of these was an incorporation period.[13] The careful weighing of evidence in light of clearly-established conceptual boundaries again and again proves to be crucial.

In tackling these tasks, Collier and Collier employ an elaborate cross-case comparison of eight countries. However, the book also takes very seriously a large number of analyses focused on single cases, each involving only one of the eight countries. These studies make what is in effect (without using the term) a single-case critical juncture argument.[14] The non-comparative studies are a key source of insight for the eight-country analysis of the critical junctures and nicely demonstrate the interconnection between single-country and multi-country work on this topic.

(3) *Synoptic versus Incremental Change*. The critical juncture may be a *concentrated* episode of "synoptic" policy innovation, as with some of the episodes of neoliberal transformation over the past few decades. Alternatively, the change may occur over a more *extended* episode and be incremental, consisting of smaller steps that eventually add up to a major transformation.[15]

The contrasting emphasis on change that is synoptic and concentrated, versus incremental, might appear to reflect a major analytic divide among scholars. However, unsurprisingly, this may be more a matter of gradations between these alternatives. What is essential here is close empirical attention to the direction, scope, and pace of change.

Overall, the following points can be made about synoptic versus incremental change. (a) Obviously, both are important. (b) If change is synoptic, key questions are: *when* do these policy breakthroughs occur, *why* do they occur, and *what* immediate events trigger them? (c) The goal of the critical juncture framework is to address these questions of *when*, *why*, and *what*. This is not a general model of political change, but rather a model of a particular type of change. (d) Scholars must avoid naïvely imagining that they are analyzing synoptic change, when in fact it may be incremental. (e) The main focus of the critical juncture framework is indeed on synoptic change, as illustrated by *Shaping the Political Arena*.[16] (f) However, as Tarrow and Kaufman argue,[17] incremental change also opens up many possibilities for research on critical junctures, and Roberts emphasizes that the relationship between discontinuous and incremental change is an area that calls for further exploration.[18]

(4) *Contingency versus Determinism*.[19] Some scholars view the uncertainty of outcomes and substantial degrees of freedom in actor choices as a defining feature of critical junctures.[20] For them, it is precisely this contingency that is seen as making the critical juncture a point of inflection. For example, in this symposium, Kaufman argues that "demonstrating the contingency of actions is central to the identification of critical junctures."[21] Other scholars view critical junctures more deterministically.[22]

In the concluding essay of this symposium, Dunning considers these issues of contingency and determinism to be a central challenge in research on critical junctures.[23] He argues that this challenge is best addressed by avoiding preconceived notions that favor either contingency or determinism. Scholars should make inferences about these alternatives based on carefully executed comparative-historical research, using tools such as process tracing.

## Leading Up to the Critical Juncture

We now examine the two steps that precede the critical juncture: the *antecedent conditions* and the *cleavage or shock*.

### Antecedent Conditions

Antecedent conditions encompass diverse features of economy, society, and politics that set the parameters for subsequent change. Some antecedents that are especially salient derive from earlier critical junctures. In Lipset and Rokkan[24] and in Scully,[25] this involves the structure of the party system as it evolved across multiple critical junctures. In parallel, Mazzuca's critical juncture of state formation in the mid-19th century created antecedent conditions that are important for other scholars who study critical junctures in the 20th century.[26]

[13] Collier and Collier 1991, 142-143, 155.

[14] Collier and Collier 1991, 4, n. 1, cites several dozen such studies.

[15] Tarrow 2017.

[16] Collier and Collier 1991, 11-12, 27-28, 36.

[17] Tarrow 2017; Kaufman 2017.

[18] Roberts 2017.

[19] The meaning of contingency intended here is in key respects parallel to that of Mahoney (2000, 514). His definition encompasses both the agency of particular individuals, and also situations involving explanations of "events that are too specific to be accommodated by prevailing social theories."

[20] Mahoney 2000, 507-508, 510-511; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 343, 348; Roberts 2014, 6-7; Bernhard 2015, 978; Capoccia 2015, 147-148, 150-151.

[21] Kaufman 2017.

[22] Slater and Simmons 2010.

[23] Dunning 2017.

[24] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.

[25] Scully 2017.

[26] Mazzuca 2017.

Mazzuca's critical juncture yields sharp contrasts in the relative predominance within each country of dynamic core areas and backward peripheries. These contrasts, in turn, have major implications for the degree to which "labor surplus" economies emerge—which is a key issue in studies by Scully, Collier and Collier, and Roberts that are concerned with trade union politics.[27]

Antecedent conditions are an important source of rival hypotheses for explaining the outcomes attributed to the critical juncture. For example, Gould offers a detailed discussion of competing explanations vis-à-vis his critical juncture hypothesis.[28] In parallel, *Shaping the Political Arena* treats the structural attributes of Argentine society and economy both before and after the incorporation period as a rival explanation in explaining the legacy.

(1) *Contingency versus Determinism*. Antecedent conditions play an important role in debates about contingency versus determinism in the critical juncture. Slater and Simmons use the label "critical antecedents" to underscore the influence of this earlier phase on subsequent developments.[29] They argue that such critical antecedents both affect the options that are confronted during critical junctures and condition the long-term outcomes that follow. They explicitly present this suggestion as a counterweight to arguments that contingency is a defining feature of critical junctures.[30] Other authors, by contrast, argue against determinism, but as a substantive finding rather than a question of definition. Gould emphasizes that some analyses of critical junctures may be "overly deterministic,"[31] and Mazzuca explores contingency in the critical juncture of state-formation and national boundary demarcation in 19th century Latin America, involving "paths not taken," yet almost taken.[32]

This idea of critical antecedents can be explored by reviewing arguments in *Shaping the Political Arena* about the earlier "structure of the oligarchic state," i.e., the contrasting degree of rural elites' control over work relations in the rural sector, along with their varying leverage within the state. Some cases began to see the loss of such control and widespread peasant mobilization, whereas in others traditional control of property and work remained firmly in place. Collier and Collier found that, to a substantial degree, these contrasting antecedent conditions could be mapped onto differences in the incorporation period.[33] They make no claim of a deterministic relationship, but maintain that this is an important source of insight into why labor incorporation occurred the way it did in each country.[34]

"Antecedent conditions" might possibly be seen as a dangerously broad category that encompasses too much. However, knowledge of antecedent conditions is essential for explaining the distinct ways the critical juncture occurs across cases, addressing debates about contingency and determinism, and identifying potential rival explanations.

**Cleavage or Shock**

Critical junctures are routinely seen as growing out of a fundamental societal or political *cleavage*. Lipset and Rokkan's four cleavages are center-periphery, church-state, land-industry, and owner-worker.[35] These cleavages are likewise important for many other authors: center-periphery is pivotal for Mazzuca,[36] church-state for Gould and Scully,[37] and owner-worker for Scully.[38] However, in some cases the precipitating event should be called a *shock*, as with the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s,[39] and the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States.[40]

(1) *Danger of Conflation*. It is important not to conflate the cleavage or shock with the critical juncture itself, the latter being specifically an episode of institutional innovation. For example, one might think of 9/11 as a major critical juncture in modern U.S. history. But instead, in Tarrow's analysis,[41] 9/11 is a shock the *triggers* a critical juncture, which in his view involves major innovation in the legal system. One would refer not to the "9/11 critical juncture," but rather to the "post-9/11 critical juncture."

An extended illustration of a cleavage is provided in *Shaping the Political Arena*. With varying timing across countries, we observed rising class conflict in urban areas and modernized enclaves of export production—along with the emergence of an organized labor movement and the radicalization of many worker organizations, accompanied in several countries by dramatic episodes of insurrectional strikes. These developments led to ongoing debates on the "social question," i.e., how to accommodate this new political and economic actor, and these debates laid some of the groundwork for the later initiatives of the critical juncture—i.e., the incorporation period.

Do cleavages and shocks always produce a critical juncture? Scholars might run the risk of assuming that a dramatic cleavage or a strong shock will necessarily do so. Yet this is not the case. For instance, Collier and Collier argue that the Great Depression of the 1930s—as dramatic as it was—did not directly contribute to the political dynamics analyzed in their book.[42] Kaufman likewise suggests that the Great Recession of 2008-2009 might not have as important an impact as is sometimes imagined.[43]

[27] Scully 2017; Collier and Collier 1991; Roberts 2017.

[28] Gould 2017.

[29] Slater and Simmons 2010.

[30] Slater and Simmons 2010, 888-892.

[31] Gould 2017.

[32] Mazzuca 2017.

[33] Collier and Collier 1991.

[34] Along similar lines, other scholars have argued that critical junctures combine structure and agency. See Thelen 1999, 396; Thelen 2004, 30-31; Soifer 2012; and Conran and Thelen 2016, 62.

[35] Lipset and Rokkan 1967, 47.

[36] Mazzuca 2017.

[37] Gould 2017; Scully 2017.

[38] Scully 2017. Going beyond Lipset and Rokkan's four cleavages, Scully also addresses the landlord-peasant cleavage.

[39] Roberts 2017.

[40] Tarrow 2017.

[41] Tarrow 2017.

[42] Collier and Collier 1991, 769-770.

[43] Kaufman 2017.

Overall, cleavages and shocks play a key role in this framework. They are closely connected with the critical juncture, but should not be confused with it. Dramatic shocks may or may not lead to institutional innovation that would constitute a critical juncture.

## From Critical Juncture to Legacy

A key claim in the critical juncture framework is that this major episode of institutional innovation generates an enduring legacy. In short: no legacy, no critical juncture. The credibility of a critical juncture hypothesis hinges in part on how well this claim can be supported.

### Mechanisms of Production

The legacy often does not emerge directly from the critical juncture. Instead, we observe steps that occur in-between and are important in shaping the legacy. The concern here is with the *mechanisms of production* that generate the legacy.

Sometimes, in fact, the character of the legacy may flow directly from the critical juncture. In the Latin American experience with state formation analyzed by Mazzuca,[44] the settling of national borders both brought the critical juncture to a close and immediately produced the legacy: distinctive territorial configurations of dynamic core regions and backward peripheries.

Yet in many cases we observe complex steps between critical juncture and legacy. As discussed in the example of labor incorporation, sometimes the critical juncture involves a move to the left or to the right of the political spectrum. This may be followed by a sequence of what Collier and Collier refer to as "reactions and counter reactions,"[45] and what Mahoney more elegantly calls a "reactive sequence."[46] For example, a move to the left under a more-or-less democratic regime might be followed by a move to the right under an authoritarian regime, followed in turn by a move to the center or center-left under a new democratic regime.

In the literature on critical junctures, the causal mechanisms in this step have not been conceptualized as elaborately as those accounting for the ongoing stability of the legacy (see below). However, Pierson's idea of *increasing returns* is highly relevant here, because it is specifically about change and not about stability—i.e., about the process through which patterns come to be locked in.[47]

(1) *Hindsight*. A pattern of reactive sequences produces important methodological challenges. If the legacy emerges not directly but in zig-zag steps, how is one to know when the reactive sequence has been completed? Might the analyst misinterpret one step in the sequence as an enduring legacy? A major debate in this symposium, between Roberts and Boas,[48] focuses precisely on this issue: how much hindsight is needed before the analyst can conclude that an enduring legacy has been established, and what research strategies are appropriate if hindsight is insufficient?

The issue of hindsight can be illustrated with *Shaping the Political Arena*. If the incorporation period involved authoritarian rule and is to a great degree control-oriented, it was followed by a political opening and complex changes in government and regime. These changes in turn shaped and reshaped union-party-state relations. In another pattern, if incorporation involved a move to the left and mobilization, it might be followed by a move to the right and subsequently a shift back to the center-left. Given when their book was written, Collier and Collier benefitted from extended hindsight in analyzing these shifts. By contrast, in his discussion of Roberts' book,[49] Boas points out that Roberts has more limited hindsight in analyzing reactive sequences.[50]

Overall, these reactive sequences are not found in all cases. Still, the possibility that they may exist places an extra burden on the analyst in terms of judging how much historical perspective is needed for adequate analysis.

### Legacy

The legacy is an enduring, self-perpetuating institutional inheritance of the critical juncture that persists and is stable for a substantial period. If a legacy in this sense does not emerge, then the prior episode is not considered a critical juncture.

In parallel with *mechanisms of production* that generate the legacy, scholars also analyze *mechanisms of reproduction* that account for its stability. This analysis involves a distinctive conceptualization of causation. In social science, many causal factors are seen as producing a specific, often short-term, effect that occurs soon after the hypothesized cause. By contrast, in analyzing the legacy of a critical juncture scholars focus on factors that yield a self-reinforcing outcome over a longer time horizon. In a pioneering formulation of this perspective, Stinchcombe called it a *self-replicating causal structure*, involving a specific type of historical cause.[51]

Other scholars have used additional terms to underscore the distinctive character of this causal pattern: "freezing,"[52] "path dependence" and "lock-in,"[53] "stickiness,"[54] and "sensitive dependence on initial conditions."[55] Paul David, seeking to underscore the highly predictable unfolding of causal processes, observed that this is a pattern in which "one damn thing follows another,"[56] and Stinchcombe added the term "sunk costs."[57]

Stinchcombe contrasts these *historical* causes to *con-*

[44] Mazzuca 2017.
[45] Collier and Collier 1991, passim.
[46] Mahoney 2000, 509.
[47] Pierson 2000, 251.
[48] Boas 2017; Roberts 2017.
[49] Roberts 2014.
[50] Boas 2017.
[51] Stinchcombe (1968, 101-129) calls these both "historical" and "historicist" causes. For present purposes, historical is more appropriate.
[52] Lipset and Rokkan 1967, 3.
[53] David 1985, 332, 334.
[54] Greer 2008, 219.
[55] Gleick 1987, 8.
[56] David 1985, 332.
[57] Stinchcombe 1968, 120.

*stant* causes.[58] This other type of cause operates on an ongoing basis, for example year after year, with the result that one may observe relative continuity or stability in the outcome. However, this continuity is due to the ongoing effect of the constant cause, and this is *not* the pattern of causation posited by the critical juncture framework. Instead, the constant cause is a rival explanation.

It is beyond the scope of this brief introduction to probe the causal mechanisms that underlie these self-replicating causal structures. Clearly, this is a central task for scholars who wish to make claims about critical junctures.

To illustrate the idea of a legacy, in *Shaping the Political Arena* it consists of contrasting relationships among unions, parties, and regime types—relationships that grew out of the critical juncture itself and the reactive sequence that followed. Key questions concerning the partisan affiliation of unions include: Was the union movement organizationally linked to parties of the center or the left? Did these parties hold a majority position in the electoral arena? Were they allowed to win elections and to govern? These patterns were manifested in different types of party systems, including integrative, stalemated, and multi-party polarizing. These political relationships were sustained for a considerable period and had major implications for regime stability. In this example, we definitely observed an enduring legacy, and by that standard the incorporation period was indeed a critical juncture.

An example of the framing of rival hypotheses is provided by *Shaping the Political Arena*—specifically its treatment of alternative explanations for differing levels of strike-proneness and militancy within the labor movement. On the one hand, this is seen as part of the legacy of incorporation. On the other hand, a constant cause is also relevant. Latin American workers employed in isolated export "enclaves"—mines and oilfields, for example—commonly had a high propensity to strike. In some but not all countries, these enclaves were a major part of the export economy. To the degree that there was continuity in this propensity to strike, it could be hypothesized that in some countries it was in part due to the ongoing influence of the enclaves on workers' strike behavior. This constant cause is a rival explanation vis-à-vis the hypothesis that this outcome is a legacy of the critical juncture.

Gould's analysis of liberal reforms in 19th century Europe offers another example of this framing of rival hypotheses.[59] He shows how the strength of liberal parties and the nature of the political regime were a legacy of liberal reform, and he offers a detailed discussion of constant causes that are competing explanations for this legacy.

Additional issues also arise as scholars seek to analyze the legacy.

(1) *Danger of Conflation.* The problem of finding "too many" critical junctures is crucial. As Domínguez has noted, scholars may come up with "wannabe" critical junctures that do not fit the framework.[60] The credibility of claims about critical junctures depends on having clear criteria for bounding the concept. To reiterate, if a sustained legacy is not found, then the prior episode of change is *not* a critical juncture. It may be an interesting "juncture," but one that is not "critical." As Kaufman puts it, some episodes of institutional innovations might better be characterized as "great transformations" but not as "critical junctures."[61]

(2) *Hindsight*. Given that an enduring legacy is a defining characteristic of a critical juncture, how much historical perspective is needed to establish that it has in fact endured? How long must the legacy last to count as the legacy of a given critical juncture? We must also consider the length of the legacy in relation to the length of the critical juncture.[62]

The contributors to this symposium disagree about interpreting critical junctures that have occurred in the recent past. Tarrow makes the case that 9/11 triggered a critical juncture in the United States.[63] Roberts—advancing a parallel argument but addressing a longer time frame—defends the thesis that market reforms in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s constituted a critical juncture that shaped key features of subsequent party systems.[64]

By contrast, Boas and Kaufman point out that future developments might weaken the case for Roberts' substantive argument, and they suggest that it is too early to identify the market reforms in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s as a critical juncture.[65] These debates highlight the challenge of finding an appropriate time horizon for studying processes of change that may still be unfolding.

(3) *Chronic Instability*. Can chronic instability be stable? Given that the stability of the legacy is a key idea, how should analysts evaluate presumed legacies that entail chronic instability? Bernhard has raised this question,[66] and the issue is doubly important because finding a stable legacy is a requisite for establishing that the prior episode is in fact a critical juncture.

Insight into this issue is found in *Shaping the Political Arena*. The book's analysis of Argentina suggests the answer can potentially be "yes." The book draws on O'Donnell's argument about the legacy of Peronism in Argentina—i.e., the legacy of the Peronist critical juncture. O'Donnell characterizes Argentine politics from the 1950s to the 1970s as an "impossible game."[67] He focuses on a specific form of political instability that was highly structured and deeply embedded in political relationships entailed in the Peronist legacy. In this example, the stable legacy did indeed entail chronic instability. Certainly, this issue calls for ongoing attention.

(4) *Contingency versus Determinism*. Some researchers view the critical juncture in terms of contingency, but use a framework of determinism for studying the self-perpetuating

[58] Stinchcombe 1968, 101-103.
[59] Gould 2017.
[60] Domínguez 2017.
[61] Kaufman 2017.
[62] Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 360-363.
[63] Tarrow 2017.
[64] Roberts 2017.
[65] Boas 2017; Kaufman 2017.
[66] Bernhard 2015.
[67] O'Donnell 1973, Chap. 4.

character of the legacy.[68] On one level, this makes good sense, given that the ideas of causation employed in discussing the legacy—self-replicating causal structure, freezing, path dependence, and lock-in—certainly suggest a deterministic pattern.

Yet it is possible that the legacy entails causal patterns that are strong enough to yield a substantial interval of persistence, yet are not fully deterministic. Dunning's discussion of Lieberson's interesting argument about path dependence is relevant here.[69] The legacy consists of a series of self-replicating causal steps; and even if the probability of self-replication at each step is quite high, the cumulative probability quickly drops with each additional step. The field must recognize that these issues demand careful thought and, as Dunning emphasizes, require analytic frameworks that are fully open to discovering both contingency and determinism.

For illustrating these issues of contingency versus determinism *Shaping the Political Arena* can again serve as an example. The domains of trade union politics and political parties—central to the book's argument—are certainly areas where ideas of freezing and sunk costs are routinely applied. Issues of determinism are certainly relevant here, yet one might hesitate in making a strong case that the legacy operates deterministically.

The issue of contingency versus determinism also raises the question: How much is included in the legacy? In *Shaping the Political Arena*, for the purpose of delineating the legacy one might distinguish between (1) the core issues of the multifaceted political relationships involved in the partisan affiliation of unions; as opposed to (2) the implications of these relationships for regime stability during the 1960s and 1970s. Based on the large literature on this period of regime crises and coups, one should definitely hesitate in calling this second set of outcomes inevitable. Thus, No. 1 above might be treated as a central feature of the legacy that has a tighter—though probably not deterministic—causal relationship with the critical juncture, and No. 2 as a secondary feature whose connection with the legacy is of great interest, but should definitely not be treated deterministically.

## Conclusion

The critical juncture framework is a road map for analyzing a familiar—but hardly ubiquitous—political phenomenon: episodes of political innovation that leave a sustained and substantial legacy.

This framework encourages a focus on sequence, specifically the steps that lead up to the period of innovation entailed by the critical juncture, and likewise the steps between the critical juncture and the legacy. The framework directs attention to rival explanations and to the possibility that there is no enduring legacy—in which case, by definition, one is not dealing with a critical juncture. The period of innovation may involve incremental change that gradually adds up to substantial innovation, and scholars debate the synoptic as opposed to incremental character of the innovation. They also ask whether, with sufficient incrementalism, the episode of innovation is not a critical juncture, as conventionally understood. Issues of contingency versus determinism also arise: in analyzing the influence of antecedent conditions on the critical juncture; in conceptualizing the critical juncture itself; and in interpreting the mechanisms of reproduction that account for the stability of the legacy.

The overall merit of this approach can be summarized quite simply: it seeks to bring methodological rigor to the study of large-scale research questions like those addressed by the contributors to this symposium. As scholars look to the future of the critical juncture framework, sustaining and increasing methodological rigor in analyzing such questions is a central priority.

[68] Mahoney 2000, 507-508, 510-511; Roberts 2014, 6-7; Bernhard 2015, 978.

[69] Dunning 2017; Lieberson 1997.

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# Part 1. Challenges of Identifying Critical Junctures Without Benefit of Hindsight

## *"The World Changed Today!" Can We Recognize Critical Junctures When We See Them?*

**Sidney Tarrow**
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On the morning of September 11, 2001, while it was still early on the west coast, I placed a phone call to David Collier to discuss a matter of departmental business at Cornell. He has recently reminded me that the first thing I said in this conversation, prior to getting down to business, was "David, the world changed today!" This conversation raises an important question: *Can we recognize critical junctures when they occur? Or must we await the long or medium-term changes that they institute?*

In his book on critical junctures in Latin America, my colleague Kenneth Roberts has emphasized that recognizing critical junctures routinely requires the astute, 20-20 vision of hindsight.[1] In that framework, the answer to my question would have to be "no; critical junctures cannot be recognized when they occur." How enduring they will turn out to be depends on the mechanisms that are triggered in their wake. Drawing on a research site distant from both Roberts and from Collier and Collier[2]—America post-9/11[3]—this note will support that idea with evidence from the "spillover" of low-level, and even "submerged" mechanisms, in the American legal system.[4]

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### On Critical Junctures and Incremental Change

My argument about the possibility of recognizing critical junctures as they occur relies on certain assumptions about what constitutes a critical juncture and how it brings about change. Indeed, what follows relies on three assumptions, all of them compatible with the Colliers' work,[5] but perhaps going beyond it, based on subsequent work in the "new" field of comparative public policy:

· *First*, at times, sometimes as the result of exogenous change and sometimes through internal developments, states go through phases of major earthquakes—*critical*

[1] Roberts 2014.
[2] Roberts 2014; Collier and Collier 1991.
[3] Tarrow 2015.
[4] Mettler 2011.
[5] Collier and Collier 1991.

*junctures*—i.e., "moments in which uncertainty as to the future of an institutional arrangement allows for political agency and choice to play a decisive causal role in setting the institution on a certain path of development, a path that then persists over a long period of time."[6]

· *Second*, for most of the time in most places, institutional change occurs through what Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen call "gradual transformations": "institutional discontinuity caused by incremental, 'creeping' change."[7]

· *Third*, during critical junctures, "far-reaching change can be accomplished through the accumulation of small, often seemingly insignificant adjustments."[8]

Streeck, Thelen, and their collaborator, Jacob Hacker, suggest five ways in which gradual processes can have potentially transformative effects:

· *Displacement*: This is what happens "when new models emerge and diffuse which call into question existing, previously taken-for-granted organizational forms and practices."[9]

· *Layering*: This is a mechanism "in which proponents of change work around institutions that have powerful vested interests."[10]

· *Policy Drift*: "Drift describes a shift in the context of policies [often through demographic change] that significantly alters their effects."[11]

· *Conversion*: "Conversion describes changes in implementation that occur without formal policy revision,"[12] leading to the redirection of institutions to new goals, functions, or purposes.[13]

· *Exhaustion*: This is a mechanism that leads to institutional breakdown rather than change—though the process is gradual rather than abrupt.[14]

These assumptions are not shared by all researchers who analyze critical junctures. Most notably, in a glancing blow aimed at Thelen and her collaborators,[15] Giovanni Capoccia sees no relationship between critical junctures and what he calls "piecemeal reform and reinterpretation." He argues that "if institutions are constantly vulnerable to piecemeal modification and reinterpretation and their shape changes continuously in accordance with shifts in power and influence among the relevant actors…then there is little reason to study in detail the politics of their origins."[16]

Yet I think that Capoccia has erected an artificial boundary between critical junctures and incremental change, for there is no reason to declare that the incremental changes resulting from critical junctures cannot bring about institutional change. On the contrary, to the extent that such junctures produce disequilibria in the relations among key actors and sectors of the system and create new combinations of actors, incremental mechanisms are more than likely to take hold.

**On Post-9/11 as a Critical Juncture in American Politics**

Based on this conceptualization, the case for considering 9/11 as a shock that precipitated a critical juncture is strong. Indeed, there is good evidence to claim that 9/11 was an earthquake that loosened up institutional routines and gave the American political elite the power to use the policy instruments at their disposal to carry out the small, often seemingly insignificant adjustments that have cumulated into fundamental changes in American institutions.

Scholars like David Cole and Kim Scheppele have identified a number of major threats to liberty in American politics that result from the shock of 9/11,[17] but I am also struck by the incremental changes that may be having transformative results on American institutions. For example, both "drift" and "conversion" are evident in post 9/11 institutional practices.[18] I have investigated the mechanism I call "spillover": *the extension of institutional change from one institutional sector to another in which the implications of the extension are not immediately obvious either to observers or even to policymakers*.[19]

Consider the increased use of secret evidence outside of national security law: it "is seeping into the criminal justice system," according to legal scholar Ellen Yaroshefsky.[20] The claim of the government's use of secret law "has been most famously levied in recent years against classified opinions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) and against classified or otherwise unreleased Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) opinions on interrogation, surveillance, and detainees…and targeted killings."[21]

But there has also been a growth of secrecy in areas that are only tangentially connected to national security. For example, Laura Donahue found that the state secrets doctrine has come to be used in a wide variety of ways to protect private actors with government contracts from revealing information that might hurt their interests. She found that the state secrets doctrine has evolved into a powerful litigation tool, "wielded by both private and public actors…to undermine

[6] Capoccia 2015, 148. For the Colliers' formulation of the concept of "critical junctures", see Collier and Collier 1991, Chapter 1. For subsequent formulations, see especially Capoccia and Kelemen 2007 and Capoccia 2015.

[7] Streeck and Thelen 2005, 9.

[8] Streeck and Thelen 2005, 8.

[9] Streeck and Thelen 2005, 19.

[10] Hacker 2005, 48.

[11] Hacker 2005, 45.

[12] Hacker 2005, 46.

[13] Streeck and Thelen 2005, 26-29.

[14] Streeck and Thelen 2005, 29.

[15] Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen 2015.

[16] Capoccia 2015, 174-75.

[17] Cole 2003; Scheppele 2006.

[18] For an enlightening investigation of these two mechanisms, see Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen 2015.

[19] Tarrow 2016.

[20] Yaroshefsky 2006, 1010.

[21] Rudesill 2016.

contractual obligations and to pervert tort law, creating a form of private indemnity for government contractors in a broad range of areas. Patent law, contracts, trade secrets, employment law, environment law, and other substantive legal areas have similarly been affected."[22] Even defense contractors being sued in civil litigation have been permitted to use the claim that evidence against them cannot be used in court because it might expose classified information.

I cannot claim that I foresaw such developments on the morning of 9/11 when I declared to David Collier that "the world changed today," a claim that was based more on the horror of the twin towers falling than on detached analysis. But this is exactly the point: incremental mechanisms triggered by an external shock cannot be predicted ahead of time. Had I been more cautious, I would have proposed that Collier and I investigate more deeply the changes triggered by that event, changes that would only have been evident by tracing the mechanisms it produced in American politics, which is why they are so invidious. They are like the "loaded gun" that Justice Jackson warned would be silently aimed at Americans' civil liberties in the wake of a much earlier shock—Pearl Harbor.[23]

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[22] Donahue 2010, 91.

[23] See Justice Jackson's dissent in the case of Koramatsu v. U.S., 323 U.S. 214 (1944).

# *Pitfalls and Opportunities: Lessons from the Study of Critical Junctures in Latin America*

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I first taught *Shaping the Political Arena*[1] in a graduate seminar in the Fall of 1994, when I was a relatively new assistant professor. I still remember the class ending with a vigorous debate about whether or not the institutional legacies of the labor-incorporating critical junctures studied by Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier—including populism, corporatism, and state-led development—had run their course in Latin America and been eclipsed by a new era whose defining features were political and economic liberalism.

Convinced that a new political era had in fact dawned in Latin America, I left the class determined to write a sequel to *Shaping the Political Arena*, with a focus on party system transformation during the critical juncture of neoliberal reform. Filled with a mixture of naiveté and hubris, I thought I could tell the story of how the debt crisis and market reforms in the 1980s and 1990s had reversed the process of labor incorporation, undermined the labor-based populist parties studied by Collier and Collier,[2] and generated a new critical juncture that realigned Latin America's social, economic, and political fields.

Twenty years later, following a series of false starts, missteps, and detours, I finally published that book—*Changing Course in Latin America*[3]—as a somewhat chastened (and much grayer) senior professor. My central argument was that the crisis-induced transition from state-led development to market liberalism had programmatically aligned and stabilized some party systems—namely, those where market reforms were imposed by conservative political actors and resisted by a major party of the left in opposition—while de-aligning and destabilizing others, where structural adjustment policies were adopted by traditional center-left or labor-based populist parties. Under this latter, de-aligning pattern, party systems converged around variants of market liberalism that left them highly susceptible to destabilizing "reactive sequences"[4] in the post-adjustment era, when societal resistance to market orthodoxy intensified. Lacking institutional outlets in established party systems, this societal resistance found expression in extra-systemic outlets, from mass social protest to mass electoral protest, culminating in the demise of mainstream party systems and the rise of new left populist or "movement" parties.

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[1] Collier and Collier 1991.

[2] Collier and Collier 1991.

[3] Roberts 2014.

[4] Mahoney 2000.

Looking back, I am struck by two things. On the one hand, I believe I made an original contribution to our understanding of a complex, region-wide process of political and economic change in a decisive period of institutional transformation. On the other hand, the intellectual journey was indeed circuitous, and I would like to think I learned a few lessons along the way about pitfalls and opportunities in developing critical juncture arguments. This essay addresses the most important of these lessons.

### First Lesson: The Importance of Historical Hindsight

Perhaps the most obvious lesson concerns the role of historical hindsight in a critical juncture analysis. Collier and Collier wrote their classic book nearly half a century (or more, depending on the case) following the critical junctures associated with labor incorporation and the rise of mass politics. This historical hindsight made it possible for them to analyze not only the aftermath period immediately following the critical junctures, but also their divergent, long-term institutional legacies.

In my case, I began research when it was clear that the old order had broken down in much of the region, but the new order was still in gestation.[5] That is, I believe, a common occurrence. It is surely easier to identify why some type of exogenous shock or endogenous strain leads to the breakdown of a given institutional order than it is to explain how divergent patterns of institutional transformation emerge from the strategic responses of specific actors to that breakdown. Indeed, considerable time may pass between the demise of the old order and the consolidation of the new. The further challenge is that the demise of the old order, on its own, may not constitute a critical juncture; neither does the consolidation of new institutions, unless one can demonstrate that other institutional choices or outcomes were possible, and that something *systematic* occurred in the critical juncture that propelled a case along one path as opposed to another. In the recent Latin American experience, some of the most important institutional changes in party systems played out not during the critical juncture of structural adjustment, but rather in its aftermath or post-adjustment period, when societal resistance to market liberalization strengthened—in the classic Polanyian sense[6]—and the region began to "turn left" politically. The divergent institutional trajectories were not fully identifiable, therefore, until the region had gone through a series of "reactive sequences" in the early aftermath period that were driven by this societal resistance. Until I could identify the full range of variation on the outcome of interest—party system transformation—my explanatory leverage was severely truncated.

Notably, the reactive sequences that I studied in Latin America's post-adjustment era were parallel to, but pushed in the opposite direction from, those analyzed by Collier and

[5] For this reason, I began the book with an epigraph from Antonio Gramsci's (1971, 276) *Prison Notebooks*: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in the interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

[6] Polanyi 1944.

Collier in the aftermath to labor incorporation. Where labor-incorporating critical junctures pushed political systems to the left, reactive sequences were triggered by right-wing actors who pulled political systems back in a more conservative direction. In my study, by contrast, critical junctures entailed the political exclusion or marginalization of labor and popular sectors, moving politics in a rightward direction. Reactive sequences, therefore, involved a rearticulation of popular sectors—albeit with organized labor playing a diminished role—and a strengthening of new or established leftist alternatives, depending on the alignment or de-alignment of party systems around the process of market liberalization.

**Second Lesson: The Locus of Causal Attribution**

Another lesson, building on the first, concerns the locus of causal attribution in a critical juncture argument. The first draft of my book analyzed a watershed moment in different countries, i.e., the transition to market liberalism, when some combination of exogenous shock (the debt crisis) and endogenous strain (the exhaustion of statist development policies) posed severe threats to party systems embedded in the state-centric matrix of development. This draft attributed varied patterns of institutional change to distinct "antecedent conditions" that were in place prior to the onset of the critical juncture—specifically, the differences between "elitist" and "labor-mobilizing" party systems and the broader developmental matrices in which they were embedded during the era of state-led development. As such, institutional change during the critical juncture of neoliberal reform was, in this initial account, largely predetermined by what existed beforehand; no causal nexus during the juncture itself was decisive for explaining party system outcomes. Even the gravity of the exogenous shock was in large part a function of antecedent conditions, since more severe economic crises occurred in countries with labor-mobilizing party systems and ambitious state-led development models.

As the research moved on, however, my assessment of the locus of causal attribution shifted in significant ways once the reactive sequences of the aftermath period began to unfold and differentiate alternative institutional trajectories. Cross-national comparisons suggested that the strength and character of reactive sequences were heavily conditioned by political alignments around the process of structural adjustment *during* the critical juncture itself; they were not, in other words, predetermined by antecedent conditions. "Critical antecedents" may have predisposed cases to experience a shared critical juncture in particular ways,[7] but an important element of political contingency—the configuration of political actors around the process of reform—was present in national critical junctures and decisive for understanding their impact on institutional change. In short, the "juncture" itself was truly "critical," though its effects were often delayed, and its institutional outcomes were only identifiable in the aftermath period.

What, then, made the juncture a critical moment of institutional change? Structural adjustment either aligned or de-aligned party systems programmatically, depending on whether conservative actors directed the process of market reform and whether a major party of the left was available to channel societal resistance to market orthodoxy. As mentioned above, this societal resistance strengthened over time, driving the reactive sequences of the post-adjustment or aftermath period. These reactive sequences were moderated where conservative-led reforms aligned party systems programmatically, stabilized partisan competition, and channeled societal resistance toward institutionalized leftist parties. In countries like Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, these parties strengthened and won national elections in the post-adjustment era, leading to relatively moderate "left turns" (see Figure 1). In countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina, however, where traditional center-left or populist parties implemented structural adjustment policies, the critical juncture de-aligned party systems programmatically. In so doing, it left them vulnerable to highly disruptive reactive sequences driven by social and electoral protest against market orthodoxy, culminating in the rise of more radical alternatives on the left flank of traditional party systems.

Reactive sequences, therefore, produced electoral shifts to the left across much of Latin America in the post-adjustment era, but they spawned very different types of left turns in aligned and de-aligned party systems. Although it might have been more consistent with Collier and Collier's analysis to treat the left turn of the 2000s and its reincorporation of popular sectors as the new critical juncture, the conditioning of the left turn by political alignments during the process of market reform led me to identify this earlier period as the decisive juncture. And indeed, I suggested above a quite different way in which the left turn could be seen as analogous to Collier and Collier's argument—i.e., as a reactive sequence that restructured party systems along a left-right axis of programmatic competition following the neoliberal convergence of the late 20th century. That axis—the most important institutional legacy of neoliberal critical junctures—is likely to endure even as the "left turn" fades and conservative actors return to the forefront across much of the region.

These differences in the temporal location of causal attribution have important implications for the conceptualization and theorization of critical junctures. In *Shaping the Political Arena*, Collier and Collier viewed antecedent conditions related to the strength of the oligarchy and patterns of labor mobilization as major sources of variation in critical junctures and their outcomes. In my work, antecedent conditions predisposed cases to experience a critical juncture in particular ways, but they did not determine institutional outcomes; instead, outcomes were shaped by more contingent alignments or configurations of actors during the critical juncture and the strategic choices they made to support or oppose market reforms. The different timing of causal attribution—i.e., whether variation is determined early or late in a complex causal chain—is thus closely tied to the degree of contingency that exists in a given critical juncture.

[7] Slater and Simmons 2010.

**Figure 1: Neoliberal Critical Junctures in Latin American Party Systems**

| | Cases | |
|---|---|---|
| | Brazil, Chile, Uruguay | Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina |
| **Critical Juncture** | *Aligning*<br>Conservative-led neoliberal reforms | *De-aligning*<br>Neoliberal reforms adopted by populist or center-left parties |
| | Major party of the left in opposition | No major party of the left in opposition |
| | ↓ | ↓ |
| **Reactive Sequences** | Electoral strengthening of established left party | Mass social and electoral protest |
| | Stabilize partisan competition along left-right axis | Weakening of traditional parties |
| | | Rise of new populist or movement alternative on left flank of party system |
| | ↓ | ↓ |
| **Institutional Legacies** | *Moderate left turn*<br>Institutionalized partisan competition, alternation in office | *Radical left turn*<br>Partial or complete party system breakdown; restructure programmatic competition among new actors |

**Third Lesson: Alternative Models of Institutional Change**

A final lesson concerns the model (or models) of institutional change associated with a critical juncture approach. The conventional wisdom associates critical junctures with abrupt, discontinuous, and path dependent institutional change, whereby specific institutional outcomes or trajectories, once established, are reproduced over time. According to Pierson, such path dependency is secured through social processes of increasing returns that are self-reinforcing and generate positive feedback effects.[8] In some formulations, this model of institutional change approximates a punctuated equilibrium, whereby a given institutional equilibrium is disrupted and actors coordinate around a new equilibrium that achieves stasis by means of self-reproducing mechanisms.[9]

It should be recognized, however, that critical junctures may occur across a range of cases subjected to similar kinds of exogenous shocks or endogenous strains, and they can produce highly divergent institutional legacies. Some of these institutional legacies may approximate the path dependent logic of discontinuous, self-reproducing change, but others may look more like the alternative models of incremental or cumulative change analyzed by Kathleen Thelen,[10] or the fluid forms of "serial replacement" analyzed by Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo.[11] In this latter pattern, institutional arrangements are continuously reconfigured and no stable new equilibrium is reached. All three of these patterns are readily apparent in Latin American party systems as distinct institutional legacies of the turbulent transition from state-led development to market liberalism. The comparative historical perspective offered by a critical juncture approach can shed light on the political alignments and reactive sequences that produced all three of those legacies, not just those that culminate in a new, self-reinforcing institutional equilibrium. Critical juncture approaches, then, may be applicable to the study of a wider range of institutional transformations than is conventionally understood.

**Critical Junctures and Comparative Historical Analysis**

In light of these lessons, what is the value-added of using a critical juncture approach and macro-level comparative historical analysis to explain change and continuity across national party systems? Party system change in contemporary Latin America can be effectively studied with other kinds of tools and methods, as seen in the important work of scholars like Jana Morgan, Jason Seawright, and Noam Lupu.[12] Using more micro-analytic approaches, these authors reached many of the same conclusions that I did about the uniquely destabilizing effects of market liberalization policies adopted by traditional labor-based populist or leftist parties. They illuminate pieces of the puzzle, particularly micro-level preferences and mechanisms, that my book glosses over.

But I believe the critical juncture approach offers unique insights as well. It sheds light on the longer-term historical and

[8] Pierson 2000.
[9] Krasner 1988.
[10] Thelen 2004.
[11] Levitsky and Murillo 2014.
[12] Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012; Lupu 2016.

deep socio-structural contexts in which micro-level political processes are embedded. It helps to explain why party systems throughout the region encountered similar political and economic challenges at a particular historical stage of capitalist development; how the demise of state-led development and the transition to neoliberalism disrupted representative institutions that were embedded in the old order; and why this disruption was more thorough in some countries than others, depending on an identifiable set of antecedent conditions. Most important, perhaps, it explains why the *structural imperative* of market liberalization—*every* country in the region adopted structural adjustment policies by the late 1980s or early 1990s—produced *politically contingent* effects that could *not* be accounted for by preexisting institutional conditions (such as the strength of traditional party systems) or structural variables alone (such as the depth of the economic crisis or market reforms). This political contingency—the alignment of actors around the process of neoliberal reform—was what made the juncture critical, as it generated divergent, path dependent institutional trajectories. These trajectories only unfolded and crystallized over time, however, and they were not fully identifiable until the reactive sequences of the aftermath period had exerted their effects.

Such divergent effects can only be fully understood when viewed comparatively, across a significant number of cases, and when studied historically, such that temporal sequences and dialectical processes are identifiable. The macro-level comparative historical approach makes it possible to theoretically integrate processes of change across multiple social fields; we can see, for example, how economic crisis and reform alter the array of actors and interests on the social landscape, which then transforms the social bases of political representation and policy choice. Such integration may also spawn unexpected new theoretical insights. Although my book began as a study about party system change and continuity, its critical juncture approach ultimately generated theoretical propositions regarding variation in the severity of economic crises in Latin America, the levels and effects of social protest, the determinants of different types of "left turns" in the post-adjustment era, and the stability of "third wave" democracies in the region (propositions that I have explored elsewhere).

A macro-analytic approach is also sensitive to the positioning and relationships of actors within a larger strategic environment. Lupu's concept of party "brand dilution," for example, is closely related to my notion of "programmatic de-alignment," but whereas brand dilution is a unit-level effect (i.e., operating at the level of an individual party organization), programmatic de-alignment is a systemic effect (i.e., it captures the systemic consequences of a major party diluting its brand). A specific party brand not only provides a basis for appealing to core constituencies; it may also provide a rationale for opponents to support a rival party organization, as captured in the notion of "negative partisanship."[13] For this reason, perhaps, "bait-and-switch" market reforms in Latin America not only undermined the party that diluted its brand, but also tended to weaken their rivals as well. Programmatic de-alignment, therefore, contributed to larger patterns of party system decomposition beyond the demise of individual parties that diluted their brands.

[13] Abramowitz and Webster 2016.

## Conclusion

The insights outlined above have been hallmarks of critical juncture approaches since the pioneering work of Collier and Collier. As this essay suggests, their classic study has inspired a wide range of scholarly efforts over the past quarter of a century to apply, refine, and amplify critical juncture arguments in a number of different institutional domains. These arguments are intrinsically complex, and their development encounters innumerable challenges and stumbling blocks. Their payoff, however, is well worth it at the end of the day, as critical juncture approaches are vital to our understanding of the sources and dynamics of institutional change.

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# *Great Transformations but no Critical Junctures? Latin America in the Twenty-First Century*

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The theme of the 2016 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association was a call for us to think about "Great Transformations," so this is a very good time to revisit Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier's masterwork on critical junctures and their aftermath.[1] There is no doubt that during the past thirty years, Latin America has experienced "great transformations." The debt crisis and neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s arguably constituted a new critical juncture. But Latin American political life has been shaken in the twenty-first century as well by a succession of new global shocks: the Great Recession; the rise (and decline) of China as a *demandeur* of Latin American exports and a source of investment; and the challenges to global democracy posed by the profound tremors in the European Union and the dysfunction of democratic politics in the United States.

What are the implications of these shocks for understanding change in Latin America? Do they constitute new critical junctures? In addressing this question, it is important to note the Colliers' words of caution at the very end of their book.[2] They observe that the global shock of the Great Depression did less to reshape the political arena than is commonly thought. The critical junctures that *they* identify—the challenges to oligarchical domination and the incorporation of labor organizations into the political system—were a product of domestic conflicts that came at widely different points in time.

One lesson to draw about the current period is that not all crises—whether international or domestic—necessarily constitute critical junctures. The turmoil that we are now experiencing in the international system may have profound effects on longer-term patterns of democracy, representation, or popular sector incorporation in some countries and relatively little in others. Moreover, these differences may have less to do with contingent choices at the moment of crisis than with differences in the relative weight of key structural factors and "antecedent conditions."

Let me add a few other points of caution.

First, it is important to distinguish between a "micro" focus on a specific institution or set of institutions and "macro" focus on broader systemic changes. Paul David's classic essay on the QWERTY keyboard illustrates the first of these.[3] On the other hand, the landmark works in the more macro comparative historical tradition—including Collier and Collier[4]—deal with a much wider range of causal variables and, as a consequence, face much greater challenges in untangling the impact of antecedent conditions from the consequences of choices made in allegedly less constrained circumstances.

Demonstrating the contingency of actions is central to the identification of critical junctures and crucial to assessing their causal significance. Comparing cases that respond differently to analytically similar challenges is a partial solution to this challenge. This is what the Colliers do, and Kenneth Roberts' book on changing party systems in Latin America is also an excellent example.[5] Each of these works identify breaks with "antecedent conditions" that appear to generate quite different cross-national paths of institutional change.

But I do not think that comparisons of this sort fully elide the need for counter-factual thinking about what might have happened if the actors in the critical juncture had made different "choices." As Jack Levy points out, counter-factual analysis is most useful when it adheres to a "minimal rewrite rule"—that is, when it focuses on the effects of small and easily imaginable changes from the real world and on sequences of theoretically plausible short-term responses.[6] Perhaps we can usefully speculate, for example, about how a failure of the attempted assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand might have affected the actions of competing countries and the prospects of a European War. But it is far more difficult to pose such questions about critical junctures that are defined in terms of the intersecting behaviors of multiple actors in different political arenas. How much weight do you attach to contingent choices of the actors in the "moment" of change, and how much to antecedent factors, at least some of which cannot be fully identified?

Finally, critical juncture analysis gains its greatest leverage when it can look backward, as well as forward. Critical junctures, as Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen argue, should provide "temporal leverage"—that is, the duration of the impact should be substantially longer than the critical juncture itself.[7] Collier and Collier's analysis meets this criter-ion.[8] The incorporation periods that they identify stretch over one or two decades during the first half of the 20th century, but the resulting aftermath stretched until at least the 1980s.

But this is not always the case. Even when contingent decisions seem important in the short-term, they may not have a causal impact on longer-term developments. In hindsight, for example, there is not much evidence for the once widely-held view that pact-making in democratic transitions would affect the future stability of new democratic regimes. Similarly, in attempting to make sense of the still unfolding and highly confusing changes of the 21st century, we cannot be sure if they will be enduring, if they will be altered by new shocks, or

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[1] Collier and Collier 1991.

[2] Collier and Collier 1991, 772-774.

[3] David 1985.

[4] Collier and Collier 1991.

[5] Roberts 2014.

[6] Levy 2015.

[7] Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 360-363.

[8] Collier and Collier 1991.

even if political and institutional arrangements might return to an older equilibrium.

So, what are the alternatives in dealing with all the explosive changes going on around us?

One option is to scale back to a more "micro" approach instead of focusing on broad socio-political change: concentrating, for example, on relatively limited institutional arenas such as legislatures or judicial and criminal justice systems, or on specific policies such as those related to pensions, health, or education. Even taking into account the possibility of spillover effects, a critical juncture with respect to one institution may not constitute a fundamental change in others. This opens up a variety of questions and analytical opportunities. Some institutions—for example, party systems—may have reached a new equilibrium, while new cleavages and modes of incorporation may still be emerging around gender, ethnic identities, or regional differences.

We may also get considerable leverage focusing on the "mechanisms of reproduction"[9] that might cause some institutions and behaviors to change only incrementally, despite the shocks and turmoil of the 21st century. Roberts' analysis of changes in Latin American party systems during the 1980s and 1990s, for example, provides a bookend for the Colliers' analysis.[10] But it remains to be seen if the new alignments that he identifies will persist beyond the first 10 or 15 years of the 21st century. We can begin to gain traction here by examining incentives of political actors to persist or change course.

Attention to incremental forms of political change may also be relevant to other major aspects of contemporary political systems. "Layering and conversion"—"the introduction of new rules on top of or alongside existing ones" and "the changed enactment of existing rules due to their strategic redeployment," respectively[11]—seem to provide important tools for understanding why some democracies in Latin America—as well as in the EU and Turkey—have slid backward toward competitive authoritarian regimes. Perverse incrementalism may also be useful for understanding the increasing dysfunctions of democracy in the United States.

Finally, it is important to recognize that in many important respects we may be living in an era of long-term disequilibrium, where old behaviors have changed, but no stable new patterns have emerged. I believe this is what we are currently witnessing in the international system and, at least to some extent, in Latin America as well. Ruth and David Collier, as well as Kenneth Roberts, identified a new equilibrium (incorporation of labor, party realignment) which marked the end of a critical juncture and the onset of an "aftermath" period. As of now, however, it is difficult to conceptualize similar "end points" for current struggles—whether in the international system, among various groups seeking access to the political system, or over even broader issues of economic development and democracy. Our approach to such issues calls for some humility: an empirical mapping of changes and continuities within and across countries, an identification of the relevant actors, and an analysis of actors' goals, resources, and political incentives.

[9] Collier and Collier 1991, 30-31.

[10] Roberts 2014; Collier and Collier 1991.

[11] Mahoney and Thelen 2010, 15-16; Streeck and Thelen 2005, 18-29.

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# *Potential Mistakes, Plausible Options: Establishing the Legacy of Hypothesized Critical Junctures*

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When I was studying at Berkeley with David and Ruth Collier in the first decade of the 2000s, a recurring question on our minds was whether the shift to neoliberalism constituted a "new critical juncture" for Latin American politics. In graduate seminars, we frequently debated the political consequences of neoliberal reforms and how to make sense of the ensuing transformations of party systems and political representation. Meanwhile, others outside of Berkeley were pursuing similar themes. Most prominently, Kenneth Roberts began developing the "new critical juncture" argument in detail, both in a 2002 article and also in the draft book manuscript—circulating *samizdat*-style among Berkeley graduate students at the time—that eventually became *Changing Course in Latin America*.[1]

In exploring critical junctures, we sought to ask big questions about substantively important outcomes in Latin American politics, but also to answer these questions through a careful application of the comparative method. And while I enjoyed debating the *new* critical juncture question in seminars and hallway conversations, I had significant doubts at the time as to whether it could be answered in a similarly definitive fashion as Collier and Collier had done for the *old* one.[2] My concern centered on the inherent difficulties in analyzing recent or ongoing transformations with a method and theoretical model that presupposes temporal distance from the events in question. Looking at the panorama of Latin American politics and party systems more than a decade later, I think many of these misgivings were justified.

In this essay, I reflect upon the challenges of using the critical juncture framework to analyze the political and party-system consequences of the shift to neoliberalism in Latin America. I do so primarily by examining the work of Roberts.[3] I should state at the outset that I consider *Changing Course in Latin America* to be a masterful analysis of the transformation of Latin American party systems over the past several decades, as well as a particularly careful application of the critical juncture framework, which is often invoked much more casually. Moreover, as both Roberts' book and his contribution to this symposium make clear,[4] we agree on the importance of hindsight in developing a critical juncture argument.

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[1] Roberts 2002; Roberts 2014.

[2] Collier and Collier 1991.

[3] Roberts 2002; Roberts 2014.

[4] Roberts 2014; Roberts 2017.

Yet I would stress a further point. Rather than merely taking stock of the present as an outcome to be explained, a critical juncture argument requires making the case that a definitive legacy has emerged. Absent such a clear dividing line between the hypothesized legacy and the present day, one risks making an analytical mistake. The outcome being explained might ultimately prove to be just one step in a larger sequence of reactions and counterreactions to the critical juncture.

## The Importance of Temporal Distance

Collier and Collier define a critical juncture as "a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries (or in other units of analysis) and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies."[5] A critical juncture argument thus constitutes a causal hypothesis linking a major societal transformation to a temporally distant dependent variable that represents the culmination of a process of change, not merely something that happened along the way. Connecting the critical juncture and legacy by means of process-tracing is necessary for evaluating this hypothesis. In order to advance a critical juncture argument, therefore, one needs to specify the legacy *a priori* and describe how countries vary with respect to this legacy. Doing so is crucial not only for establishing that there are distinct legacies produced by the critical juncture, but also for connecting cause and effect.

Given the need to score cases on the outcome when applying a critical juncture framework, it is essential to adopt specific criteria for identifying the end of the legacy, while also remaining open to some ambiguity about its duration.[6] Collier and Collier had the advantage of a clear analytical endpoint for five of their cases: coups in the 1960s-70s that ushered in long-term military rule and fundamentally interrupted party-system dynamics. More generally, however, the change in Latin America's economic environment brought on by the debt crisis and neoliberal reform radically altered the conditions that had facilitated the class compromises of the incorporation period and underlain party system dynamics throughout the legacy. In Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela, therefore, Collier and Collier were able to argue that the legacy had sufficiently crystalized by the 1980s to allow for analysis, despite important elements of continuity in these countries' subsequent party system development.

The critical junctures framework is typically used to make arguments about processes that are hypothesized to play out over long periods of time, so extended analytical time horizons are crucial. The point of departure for a critical juncture is typically a cleavage or crisis that calls into question the political status quo. Yet the critical juncture is analytically distinct from this cleavage or crisis, and it is often temporally removed as well. The emergence of the legacy may also be temporally removed from the critical juncture itself. This is particularly true if "the critical juncture is a polarizing event that produces intense political reactions and counterreactions." These are intervening steps that constitute the "mechanisms of produc-

[5] Collier and Collier 1991, 29.

[6] Collier and Collier 1991, 33-34.

tion" of the legacy one seeks to analyze.[7]

In the conclusion to *Shaping the Political Arena*, and in their Authors' Note in the 2002 edition, Collier and Collier pose the question of a new critical juncture for Latin American politics stemming from the collapse of the state-centric economic model and the ensuing shift to neoliberalism.[8] Though this economic transformation had many distinct causes, and the height of neoliberal reform happened at different times in different places, for the purpose of analysis we can identify the 1982 debt crisis as playing a key role in the move towards reform efforts in many countries, and in placing the issue on the table in others.

Given the timing of neoliberal reform, contemporary efforts to develop a "new critical juncture" argument face major challenges. Across the eight cases analyzed in *Shaping the Political Arena*, the average onset of the reform period was the year 1921, or seven decades prior to the book's publication.[9] If Collier and Collier had attempted to assess the long-term impact of labor incorporation in the 1940s or 1950s, they would have fundamentally mischaracterized the outcome in most countries. Even if the analyst is convinced that political transformations play out on a faster scale in the contemporary period, analyzing the political legacy of a neoliberal critical juncture only two to three decades after the debt crisis implies a significant challenge. Characterizing this legacy and scoring cases on the dependent variable are obviously difficult when one may be in the midst of the reactions and counterreactions that are producing the legacy itself.

Temporal distance is helpful not only for applying the critical junctures framework but also for making available the sort of data and scholarly sources that are routinely used for comparative-historical analysis. Writing a half-century after the events in question, Collier and Collier drew upon a massive bibliography of country-specific monographs covering various historical episodes. Work of this sort takes time to produce, and less of it will be available to present-day scholars analyzing a more recent transformation.[10] In sum, the lack of temporal distance between the period of neoliberal reform and the present raises serious challenges in assessing the outcome that is being analyzed, and in judging whether it will endure.

### Assessing the Legacy of a New Critical Juncture

These reflections on temporal distance have implications for assessing Roberts' work. In the first published formulation of his argument,[11] Roberts maintains that the critical juncture stemming from the 1982 debt crisis fundamentally altered labor-mobilizing party systems by undermining their class-based character, transforming them into something much more similar to their elitist counterparts. The result, Roberts argues, is a "re-oligarchization" of politics, in which party competition across the region revolves around individual politicians and patronage networks that do little to promote class identities.

This re-oligarchization of politics is an accurate characterization of what Roberts treats as the legacy of the neoliberal critical juncture—the landscape of Latin American party systems at the time. Yet, as Roberts acknowledges in his contribution to this symposium,[12] and as his 2014 book makes abundantly clear,[13] the year 2002 in no way constituted the endpoint of the party system legacy of neoliberal reform. On the contrary, the early 2000s marked the beginning of a series of reactions to neoliberalism that brought left-wing, class-mobilizing parties to power in much of Latin America, fundamentally altering the political landscape that had prevailed at the turn of the millennium.[14]

Moreover, while the re-oligarchization of politics had involved growing similarities among previously diverse party systems, Roberts identified distinct, divergent trajectories that depended on the type of party implementing neoliberal reform.[15] His argument may be summarized concisely. Where conservative parties led these reforms and a strong left party could provide consistent opposition, party systems stabilized along a programmatic axis of competition—as exemplified by Brazil. Where leftist opposition to conservative-led reform was weak, or where independents or labor-based parties themselves were the ones to implement such reforms, the major players in the political system all converged on support for neoliberalism, opening the door to social protest, populist challenges from the left, and high electoral volatility—as exemplified by Venezuela. In these latter cases, Roberts argues, the party system legacy of the new critical juncture was an unstable equilibrium, given the polarizing "reactive sequences"[16] spawned by neoliberal reform.

How confidently can we conclude that the ultimate party system legacy of neoliberal reform is as Roberts describes it in 2014?[17] Is there a reason for greater certainty in 2014 than in 2002? As noted above, Collier and Collier had a strong basis for arguing that the legacy of labor incorporation had crystalized by the time of their analysis: long-term military rule interrupted party-system dynamics in five of eight countries, and an exogenous shock, the debt crisis, fundamentally altered state-society relations in all of them.[18] In the present era, by contrast, we may still be in the midst of ongoing change. Political competition throughout the region continues to be driven by reactions and counterreactions to neoliberal reform and its consequences, as the campaign rhetoric of left-wing candidates often made abundantly clear. As a result, analyzing

[7] Collier and Collier 1991, 37.

[8] Collier and Collier 1991, 772-774; Collier and Collier 2002, xv.

[9] Collier and Collier 1991, 164.

[10] The problem is compounded by the fact that new methodological trends and changing standards in comparative politics have made the single-country dissertation based on extensive fieldwork less common than it was a generation ago.

[11] Roberts 2002.

[12] Roberts 2017.

[13] Roberts 2014.

[14] Levitsky and Roberts 2011.

[15] Roberts 2014.

[16] Mahoney 2000.

[17] Roberts 2014.

[18] Collier and Collier 1991.

the legacy of a new critical juncture is inherently more tentative than it was for Collier and Collier. Reactive sequences that had yet to begin in 2002 are clearly in play, but we cannot be certain that they have concluded.

Indeed, recent developments suggest that stable patterns of competition might yet emerge in some of the party systems where Roberts had identified unstable equilibria.[19] One scenario that may be playing out is seen in the right-wing victories by Mauricio Macri in Argentina's 2015 presidential election and the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) in Venezuela's 2015 legislative elections. In these cases, once-fragmented conservative forces may be unifying in order to take on powerful leftist incumbents. If these trends continue, party competition in both countries could eventually stabilize around a populist versus anti-populist axis. Indeed, there is historical precedent for such a transformation. Peronism in Argentina and Democratic Action (AD) in Venezuela were highly disruptive to prior patterns of political competition; "unstable equilibrium" would have been an apt description of Venezuelan politics in the late 1940s and of Argentine politics for several decades at mid-century. Yet both of these new populist movements served to anchor their party systems going forward, generating durable new patterns of competition. If the same happens today in Venezuela and Argentina—and, much more tentatively, in Ecuador, Bolivia, or even Peru—the ultimate legacy of a neoliberal critical juncture will look very different than it did in 2014.

The hypothesis that populist vs. anti-populist cleavages might emerge out of unstable equilibria in Latin American party systems may ultimately prove to be wrong. But critical juncture analysis works best when there is little need for such speculation. If researchers have a strong basis for arguing that a definitive legacy has emerged, they are in a better position to conclusively score the outcome and assess the consequences of a new critical juncture.

### Studying Critical Junctures Before the Dust Settles

Roberts' analysis makes clear that, even without a strong basis for arguing that a definitive legacy has emerged, there are still productive ways of using the critical juncture framework. Even in 2002, i.e., even before the "dust had settled," it was evident that the party system consequences of neoliberal reform qualified as an instance of significant, discontinuous change with distinct immediate consequences across countries. The debt crisis and demise of the protectionist model of industrialization placed on the table fundamentally new political questions that were not merely an outgrowth of dynamics from the 1970s. Party systems had converged on more elitist forms as of 2002 with the counter-reactions to "re-oligarchization" yet to occur, but the *paths* that different countries took to this outcome clearly differed cross-nationally.

In other words, some key criteria for a critical juncture were satisfied. Although Roberts could not yet specify a definitive political legacy of neoliberal reform, the evidence at least did not falsify a critical juncture hypothesis. Thus, he could rule out claims that this transformation did not constitute a critical juncture, which might have been made either on the grounds that (a) change was merely incremental or (b) it occurred in a similar fashion across countries.[20]

A practical suggestion flows from this discussion. Rather than waiting for one or more decades to justify delving into questions of a "new critical juncture," my suggestion is that, if a definitive legacy has not yet crystallized, scholars can nonetheless focus on criteria such as (a) and (b) above, that do not require positing an enduring legacy. In the short to medium term, there is ample opportunity to debate alternative explanations about antecedent conditions and constant causes, and to look for evidence of both reactive and self-reinforcing sequences.[21] Doing so will surely lay the groundwork for subsequent, more conclusive research on critical junctures and their legacies.

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[19] Roberts 2014.

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[21] Collier and Collier 1991, Chapter 1.

# *A Fourth Critical Juncture? Chilean Politics after Military Rule*

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The Chilean party system has been a legacy of three fundamental social and political watersheds in the 19th and 20th centuries. At each watershed, *two-sided* cleavages generated a *tripartite* configuration of parties. Thus, two poles emerged representing antagonistic positions with respect to a fundamental axis of cleavage, and a politically significant center occupied the space between them. In a comparative Latin American framework, this political configuration is distinctive, resembling more closely patterns in some Western European party systems.

Working in the tradition of Lipset and Rokkan, and Collier and Collier,[1] I argued in my book *Rethinking the Center* that these three watersheds were driven by generative cleavages that yielded critical junctures, shaping and reshaping the national party system and creating institutional patterns that endured for long periods of time.[2]

This essay extends my earlier analysis by asking whether—in the wake of authoritarian rule and neoliberal transformation in the 1970s and 1980s under Pinochet—Chile has now experienced a fourth critical juncture. To provide a baseline for analyzing this new episode, I present a brief overview of criteria for identifying critical junctures, along with a synoptic summary of the three prior episodes.

In the present framework, a critical juncture is said to occur if it leaves a distinctive legacy. It is interpreted as a *critical* juncture not just because of the scope of conflict involved—for example class or religious conflict—but because it generates an enduring legacy. According to standard criteria, in observing a critical juncture we expect to see a fundamental, new conflict and line of cleavage, followed by change in the key issues around which parties cluster and over which they fight. The party system shifts on its axis, and this new line of cleavage cuts across the electorate. Change also occurs in the identity of parties, the party attachments of voters, and the attitudes and predispositions of party identifiers. Given the distinctive trajectory of the center in Chile, one must likewise ask: what happens to the center? How is it reproduced or transformed? Given that each of these three prior cleavages in a sense bifurcated the political system, how did a stable center party emerge each time?

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[1] Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Collier and Collier 1991.

[2] Scully 1992.

Overall, we rely on these criteria and questions to judge whether the presumed critical juncture indeed generated a distinctive legacy that structured party alliances in Chile for years to come. And to reiterate, affirmation of this legacy provides the basis for concluding that the juncture is indeed critical.

### Three Critical Junctures in Chile

Against this standard for evaluating a critical juncture, we delineate three such episodes.

First, in the mid-19th century, the clerical-anticlerical cleavage produced a political "space" between the contending parties at opposing ends of the spectrum, the anti-clerical Radicals versus the Conservatives. The dispute between these two contending factions centered around a profound divide between those who sought to elevate the role of the Republican state in providing critically important services such as health, education, and birth registries, versus those who wished to retain these functions in the hands of the Catholic Church. By avoiding identifying themselves with either side of the dispute, the Liberal Party established itself as a non-ideological, pragmatic center that came to serve as a coalitional fulcrum, periodically occupying the presidency. The result was a well-institutionalized party system that persisted for more than five decades.

Second, in the initial decades of the 20th century a new, defining axis of political opposition emerged. We observed the emergence of an organized working class and the corresponding rise of worker-owner conflict in the modern sector—i.e., in urban areas and modernized export enclaves, above all, mining. In this context, two major new parties appeared on the left, Socialist and Communist. The Radical Party, like the pragmatic and non-ideological Liberals before them, established itself as the mediating center party, playing the role of broker between the right and the left and periodically holding the presidency. This pattern persisted for roughly four decades.

Third, in the mid-20th century another dimension of class conflict emerged, between an organized peasantry and the elite of the traditional rural sector. This conflict generated a blood feud between the forces of the traditionalist conservative Catholic right and a newly energized progressive Catholic, but equally anti-communist and anti-socialist, center-left. A different kind of center party then inserted itself into the middle-position of the political spectrum, i.e., the Christian Democrats (PDC). In contrast to the previous center parties, PDC was a non-pragmatic *positional* center as it related to the central axis of class conflict in the urban and rural sectors. It was in important respects an ideological party, opposed to the traditional Conservative right, and opposed to the statist left, drawing inspiration from the wider tradition of Catholic social thought that comprised the wellspring of Christian Democratic parties in many countries.

Whereas for the first two critical junctures the duration of the legacy is well established, for this third critical juncture its duration remains an open question. How long did this third constellation of parties persist? That question can only be answered by examining the hypothesized fourth critical junc-

ture that occurred under Pinochet. Did the Pinochet dictatorship, in fact, leave a distinctive party legacy, one defined by a democracy versus authoritarianism cleavage? (1) If the answer is yes, then the legacy of the third critical juncture lasted less than two decades, until the coup in 1973. (2) If the answer is no, then the party legacy of the third critical juncture still persists today, having thereby lasted six decades, but interrupted for sixteen and a half years by the political hiatus created by the dictatorship. According to the interpretation advanced in this essay—that the underlying structure of the party system was not changed by the Pinochet period—then it would be argued that the legacy of this third critical juncture has indeed persisted for six decades.

### A Fourth Critical Juncture?

The Pinochet coup of 1973 set in motion dramatic change in Chile that represented a great victory for the political right and a massive defeat for the left. Pinochet launched highly repressive authoritarian rule, accompanied by a suppression of the preexisting party system and an assault on the political organizations of the working class and the left—in both the urban and rural sectors. This period likewise saw a fundamental transformation of the Chilean political economy: wide-ranging neoliberal reform, partial dismantling of the state-centric model of development, and internationalization of the economy. In terms of the magnitude of sectoral and class conflict, as well as the scope of policy innovation, this new episode is certainly equivalent to the second and third critical junctures discussed above.

The question to be considered here: was this a critical juncture in the sense that it fundamentally restructured the Chilean party system? Alternatively, were the effects less profound and less permanent—such that the critical juncture framework does not fit here?

Writing two-and-a-half decades ago, from the perspective of the early 1990s, I expressed skepticism that the Pinochet episode, despite his efforts, represented a new critical juncture. In my concluding chapter in *Rethinking the Center*, I argued that "for a critical juncture to occur, the changes experienced by the party system during a specified period of time must be lasting, that is, they must endure well beyond the period of transformation....As a result, any conclusions...must necessarily remain tentative."[3] Within that framework of caution, I suggested that despite the "significant change as a consequence of the experience of authoritarianism, it is unlikely that a new generative cleavage has reorganized the basic contours of the political landscape."[4]

Today, 25 years later, it is productive to revisit this question of a fourth critical juncture. With the benefit of hindsight, we can now examine the *political* legacy of the Pinochet years as it has played out since 1990, during the more than two-and-a-half decades of competitive democratic politics. This assessment must be carried out with care, because persuasive arguments have been made both for and against the claim that a major discontinuity in the party system has occurred.[5] Further, as will become clear, the analysis is made more complex by substantial changes that have occurred within this 25-year period.

### Arguments for Discontinuity

Several analysts have argued that major changes within the party system took root in Chilean politics as a result of the Pinochet interlude. These scholars suggest that the Pinochet period generated a distinctive legacy in the form of a new party system, and correspondingly that it was indeed a critical juncture.

The new party system has two key features. First, the prior tripartite division of left, center, and right has been transformed into two contending blocs, the Alliance on the right and the Concertación on the left, and it appears that a center is no longer a basic force in Chilean politics. Second, these scholars argue that a fundamental shift in political cleavages has also occurred. The base line for this shift was earlier patterns of religious and class cleavages—including a profound left-right division on issues of political economy and public policy. By contrast, they argue that the post-dictatorship period saw a shift to an "authoritarian versus democratic cleavage."[6]

These two dimensions of change are clearly evident in the national plebiscite of 1988, which was the founding election for the new democratic regime. A *yes* vote mandated that Pinochet remain in power for an additional eight-year term, whereas a *no* mandated that he step down the following year. The vote for *no* became a rallying cry for the opposition, which dramatically won the plebiscite: 56% no and 44% yes.

Obviously, the plebiscite was a one-time event, rather than an ongoing electoral cycle. Yet at the very beginning of the democratic period it was a key step in structuring political conflict. First of all, parties that had previously aligned themselves along a *left versus right* political economy spectrum now regrouped around the choice presented by the plebiscite: *Pinochet versus anti-Pinochet*. Second, given the binary, *yes-no* structure of the plebiscite, it provided no opportunity for a centrist alternative. This was the first of many steps through which the Christian Democrats were drawn into an alliance with the parties of the secular left.

The salience of this democratic-authoritarian cleavage was dramatically reflected in a 1995 *Latinobarometro* survey, which revealed a striking divergence across the political spectrum. Voters who identified with center and left parties strongly preferred democracy: 75% for both the PDC and the Party for Democracy (PPD). By contrast, relatively few voters who identified with right-wing parties preferred democracy: only 17% for supporters of the Union of Independent Democrats (UDI), and 36% for backers of National Renewal (RN).[7] This is a stun-

[3] Scully 1992, 191.

[4] Scully 1992, 191.

[5] The debate over this argument is complex and ongoing. For some of the key contributions to this debate, see the references in Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully forthcoming.

[6] Tironi and Agüero 1999; Torcal and Mainwaring 2003.

[7] Torcal and Mainwaring 2003, 76.

ning contrast.[8]

Along with this dramatic contrast among party identifiers, the Chilean right has undergone a fundamental transformation. In the 1969 election for the lower chamber (the last election before Allende's electoral victory), the right won 20% of the electorate; after the plebiscite of 1988, the right doubled its vote share to over 40%. Its parties are new—in particular UDI—having been created by allies of the Pinochet government with the goal of preserving its legacy.[9] UDI developed new linkages to a variety of different constituencies. While it initially had strong ties to elites and business leaders, it began to seek broader support from the popular sectors through clientelism.[10]

Coalitional relationships on the center-left have also been transformed.[11] The campaign for the 1988 plebiscite yielded a marked reduction in the historical enmity between the Christian Democrats, on the one hand, and the Communists and Socialists, on the other. The left parties, which had formerly considered the Christian Democrats to be class enemies, took a more moderate stance in order to peel away popular support from the military regime. In particular, the Socialist party shifted its political discourse from class appeals to appeals based on democracy.[12] During the 1988 plebiscite, there was a change in political tone and a tendency towards moderation, which has remained an ongoing feature of Chilean politics.[13] This moderation stands in stark contrast to the more ideological and polarizing appeals made by the left prior to 1973. The result was an entente between the Christian Democrats and parties of the left that crystallized as a center-left coalition, the Concertación. This coalition is unprecedented, and represents an alliance that only the traumatic experience of the Pinochet regime could have forged.[14]

The Christian Democrats' alliance with the left, which has dominated Chilean politics since the democratic transition, had important implications for the normative positions adopted by this party. The very nature of this alliance between the more religiously oriented Christian Democrats and the secular left has meant that religious perspectives on issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion have been somewhat muted. This has caused defections by some PDC supporters who have shifted their support to the right. From the standpoint of party loyalists it has resulted in a damaging "brand dilution."[15] The resulting steady decline in PDC vote share in recent years represents a significant marker of party system discontinuity.

**Binomial Electoral System**

The binomial electoral law that went into effect in 1989 was a driving force in party system change. This system of proportional representation played a key role in eroding the political center, both by weakening the Christian Democrats and by creating a coalitional imperative in which the PDC was pushed to form an alliance with the left, rather than operating as an independent center. These consequences of the law were not accidental. Indeed, Pastor maintains that the binominal system reflects a deliberate effort on the part of the Pinochet government to reshape the party system.[16]

This unusual electoral system was carefully designed to achieve two key goals. The first was to strengthen the right within the national legislature, giving it the capacity to veto constitutional reforms that might have weakened the prerogatives of the Pinochet loyalists, as well as to block other policy initiatives advanced by the center-left. Given the results of the 1988 plebiscite, if the electoral system had instead used a simple plurality formula (with one representative per district), right-wing parties would have had a difficult time competing, since they could only mobilize about 40% of the electorate.[17] By creating a system in which two seats were in play in each district, in order to win both seats, a party needed to double the percentage of the vote of the nearest competitor. This meant that a party needed only 33% of the vote to win one seat within a given district. These rules made it possible for the right to win roughly 50% of the legislative seats with only 40% of the vote.

The law's second goal was to offer strong incentives in favor of a bimodal system, in which the Christian Democrats had to ally with either the left or the right. By limiting candidate lists to only two per district, the binomial rules provided a powerful incentive to group party alliances into two large electoral coalitions. The resulting pattern of competition has led some observers to view Chilean politics through the lens of a contest between multi-party coalitions, rather than between the parties that formed them.

The actual consequences of this electoral system have been uneven. Critics argued that it was designed to increase the legislative representation of the right, yet this effect was small.[18] The Concertación did not succumb to infighting among coalition partners. Rather it remained cohesive during elections in 1989 and 1993, winning majorities in the lower house while the right fell short of what it had expected. However, because the nine appointed Senators who were appointed for

[8] The wording of the questions posed by the 1995 survey may lead to problems with the interpretation of these data, but the findings, even if exaggerated, certainly point to a wide breach between the two positions. For my view on the salience of the democratic-authoritarian cleavage, see Valenzuela, Scully, and Somma 2007.

[9] Loxton 2016, 6-7.

[10] Luna 2010, 343-353.

[11] It should be noted that other factors unrelated to the critical juncture also played a role in the transformation of the left. The collapse of the Soviet Union of course had a dramatic effect on Communist parties throughout the world, and was very significant for the Chilean left. Another factor was indirectly related to the Pinochet experience. Many of Chile's political leaders lived in exile in Northern Europe, contributing to an increased commitment to the democratic component of democratic socialism. See Lagos 2013, 390; Ortega Frei 1992; and Walker 1990.

[12] Torcal and Mainwaring 2003, 81-82.

[13] Boas 2016, Chapter 2.

[14] Munck and Bosworth 1998, 480-482.

[15] Lupu 2016, Chapter 1.

[16] Pastor 2004, 28.

[17] Siavelis 1997, 657.

[18] Polga-Hecimovich and Siavelis 2015; Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully forthcoming.

the 1990-1998 period were all sympathetic to the military regime, the right was able to block any reforms to the constitution that would have weakened their own position.[19]

The biggest electoral loser in the binomial system was the Christian Democrats. This system created coalitional dynamics that tended to over-represent small parties that received fewer votes, imposing a greater cost on the PDC in terms of lost representation and local party activation. Along with the "brand dilution" noted above, this feature of the electoral system contributed powerfully to the Christian Democrats' slow attrition of its electoral support over the years.

Another major consequence of the binomial system was its contribution to a growing crisis of representation in Chile. Under this electoral law, the party system was in one sense stable, given the low volatility in the national vote share of the two contending party blocs. Yet parties also appeared to have low levels of legitimacy and rootedness in society, as well as weak grassroots organizations.[20] Electoral rules increasingly gave elites, not voters in party primaries, control over candidate selection. The creation of electoral lists involved pact-making, horse-trading, and backroom deals among party leaders. Electoral rules promoted conflicts within coalitional blocs, rather than between them.

This elitist character of Chilean democracy has led to widespread disaffection with the parties, and Luna reports a significant crisis of representation that is reflected in a number of surveys.[21] These trends mark a significant departure from the past, when party politics was characterized by the intense engagement and identification from the grassroots.

**Arguments for Continuity**

Notwithstanding these changes, there is strong evidence of continuity, suggesting that the Pinochet period was not a critical juncture that transformed party politics. In fact, along with my co-authors, I argue that the party system has retained its predisposition to divide in a tripartite fashion among right, center, and left.[22] The two earlier lines of fundamental cleavage, religion and class, continue to be the major forces shaping the structure of the party system. The two contending blocs are in fact coalitions of convenience, and the parties that constitute these blocs have—notwithstanding the dynamics of coalitional-formation—by and large retained their distinctive identities.

These continuities will certainly be reinforced by the elimination in 2015 of the binomial system. The law had long been opposed by the center and left. It was finally rescinded when fragmentation within the right enabled smaller parties to achieve the four-sevenths majority needed in both houses of congress.[23] The key vote to reach that majority in the Senate was provided by *Amplitud*, a breakaway party from RN.

The 2015 electoral law introduces an open list proportional representation system using a d'Hondt formula. This was much like the law that had been in effect before 1973, except that voters are not able to cast a straight party list vote. All parties can present one more candidate than there are seats to be filled, and overall, the new law will encourage coalitional patterns more similar to those before the Pinochet period.

The new electoral law may also be expected to assist the centrist PDC in recovering the electoral losses it sustained in recent years. It will permit the party to present its own full slate of candidates in all lower house legislative districts where it has considerable electoral support. This will allow the PDC to reassert its identity, irrespective of the coalitions it enters with other parties, and to win back supporters who had defected to the right.

With these new rules, the continuities in party politics will likely become more evident. The party system has between six and eight main parties: two on the right, two on the left, and an evolving number of smaller formations. The party system's ideological tendencies are related to the two historic axes of differentiation, religion and class, which remain guideposts for party identities. The left side of the spectrum continues to be framed by Socialist and Communist parties that draw their symbols and trace their ancestry back to the formative decades of the labor movement. A secular versus religious difference still emerges over value-laden issues such as marriage, abortion, and education policy. Finally, the old split between the social Christians and traditionalist Conservatives is still reflected in the differences between the more socially progressive Christian Democrats and the more socially conservative parties of the right, in particular UDI. This party system bears a strong resemblance to the party system in place before 1973.

In addition to the importance of electoral rules, a strong sense of party identification among voters—along with intergenerational continuity in party identities—are also important features of contemporary Chilean politics. It is a mistake to think that, in the past, Chilean voters identified more intensely with parties; indeed, within a complex multiparty system, Chilean voters have always had low levels of identification with specific parties.[24] These identities are defined by their subcultural sensibilities along the original axes of cleavage: religion and class. In a survey, socio-economic and religious factors strongly influenced voters' attachments to parties, while attitudes toward regime type shifted decisively in favor of democracy for voters not only on the left, but also on right. In addition, on a spectrum of closeness to the Church and to the rich, voters were able to locate parties correctly. This suggests a deeply embedded social rootedness of parties that is often overlooked. The democratic-authoritarian cleavage has been subsumed by the prior set of cleavages, which continue to structure Chilean politics.

Finally, as of the second decade of the 21st century, the major legacies of authoritarian rule have largely been eroded. Moreover, institutional protections, such as the appointed Senators, were eliminated in 2005, and Pinochet, who was designated as Senator for life, stepped down in 2002. Even parties

[19] Siavelis 1997, 657-658.
[20] Luna and Altman 2011, 3.
[21] Luna 2016, 129-130.
[22] Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully forthcoming.
[23] Campos 2009.
[24] Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully forthcoming.

of the right supported the elimination of protective institutions created by the outgoing military regime. Moreover, revelations of corruption during the Pinochet period further discredited the authoritarian regime, and various surveys have shown a broadly negative assessment of Pinochet himself. While the legacy of authoritarian rule cast a shadow over party politics during the 1990s, increasingly Chilean politics appears to follow more closely the older pattern of class-based and religious cleavages.

**Assessment**

Assessing whether post-Pinochet politics is fundamentally different, and hence whether a fourth critical juncture has occurred, requires a nuanced interpretation of ongoing change. The bimodal distribution of the electorate at the national level, generated in large part by the binomial formula, has certainly been an important feature of party competition. The crisis of representation noted by various scholars is also significant, and these along with other features can be interpreted as marking a discontinuity with the past.

Nonetheless, I argue that these shifts do not suggest a fundamental change in the underlying constellation of parties. Rather, the essential morphology of parties continues to reflect the long-standing divisions in Chilean society along religious and class lines. These divisions were created, and recreated, by the three critical junctures of the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The remarkable persistence of parties that were founded long before 1973 suggests that the criteria for identifying a new critical juncture have not been met. I am convinced that as we achieve even greater historical distance, the continuities will become even more clear.

To conclude this discussion, some further observations should be made about the importance of historical distance in evaluating critical junctures and their legacies. These observations are relevant as a general comment on the study of critical junctures, thereby making a connection with other essays in this symposium. They also contribute to interpreting the Chilean case by placing it in comparative perspective.

In evaluating the importance of historical distance, one might posit both a *reactive sequence* criterion and a *regime persistence* criterion. Regarding the first, Boas' discussion of Roberts in this symposium considers the challenge of analyzing cases where the legacy of a critical juncture is formed through a sequence of reactions and counter-reactions[25]—sometimes consisting of a three-step "reactive sequence."[26] For example, a critical juncture involving (1) a major opening to the left, might be followed by (2) a strong conservative reaction, which may in turn be followed by (3) a new shift in a more progressive direction. Alternatively, a critical juncture involving (1) a major move to the right, might be followed by (2) a "left turn" in politics, which is subsequently followed by (3) a shift back in a more conservative direction. As Boas emphasizes, major analytic mistakes may arise if the heritage of a critical juncture is evaluated before the final step has occurred. Hence, the reactive sequence criterion can be decisive in pointing to the need for historical distance.

By contrast, for Chile the alternative criterion of *regime persistence* is decisive in underscoring the need for historical perspective.[27] Hunter has pointed out, drawing on the "modes of transition" literature, that Chile stands at the extreme end of a spectrum: a high degree of military control of the democratic transition, and also the persistence of military power well after the transition had taken place. This regime persistence contrasts sharply, for example, from the dramatic collapse of military authority with the democratic transition in Argentina in 1983.[28]

Applying this regime persistence criterion to Chile places in a wider perspective key features of the authoritarian experience that were sustained far into the post-Pinochet period. The constitutional protection of military prerogatives lasted into the new millennium, until 2005. The democratic-authoritarian cleavage, which was in part a reaction to the very intensity of Pinochet's authoritarianism, was a key feature of politics for many years, though it is now eroding. The binomial electoral law carefully crafted by Pinochet's advisers was only abolished in 2015.

Based on this regime persistence criterion, two distinctive challenges emerge in analyzing Chile: the imperative of adopting a long time horizon and the problem of false positives. Thus, it can readily be argued that key observations needed in evaluating the legacy of the hypothesized critical juncture can only be made in the years after 2015—following a full 25 years of competitive democratic politics. Researchers must be patient in waiting for the evidence to come in. Further, for scholars seeking to demonstrate that Chilean politics and the party system have indeed changed, this delay in the emergence of crucial evidence substantially increases the risk of a *false positive*. There is a danger of incorrectly confirming the hypothesis of change, simply because the relevant evidence for continuity is not yet available.

In this framework, this essay has cautiously argued for the hypothesis of continuity, recognizing that in the coming years, further evidence is likely to emerge that even more strongly undermines the argument that fundamental change has occurred.

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[25] Boas 2017; Roberts 2014.

[26] Mahoney 2000, 509.

[27] The reactive sequence criterion is also relevant to Chile, but is less crucial for the issues addressed in this essay.

[28] Hunter 1997, 454-455.

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# Part 2. Benefits of Hindsight and a Focus on Diverse Critical Junctures

## *The Wars of Independence in Spanish America as a Point of Inflection*

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Research on Latin America has generated numerous critical-juncture wannabes, and potentially too many transitions can be viewed as major points of inflection. Analysts need to focus on a smaller subset of candidates for critical-juncture status, and a valuable place to look is shocks that, in their origin, were entirely external to the region. The worldwide depression of the 1930s, the North Atlantic industrial revolution in the late nineteenth century that first lifted the demand for Latin America's commodities, and the Iberian conquest in the sixteenth century exemplify such exogenous shocks. These events have led to excellent work in the social sciences and the emergence of a remarkable historiography.

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### A Common Exogenous Shock, Contrasting Responses

One exogenous shock was distinctive, however, because a single process triggered it over a relatively short period of time. In 1807, the Portuguese monarchs had fled to Brazil just ahead of the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal. In April 1808, King Charles IV and his son Ferdinand abdicated the Spanish Crown in favor of Napoleon, and by early 1810, French troops occupied nearly the entire Iberian Peninsula. Spain's peninsular and overseas subjects knew that they were living in the midst of a critical juncture. Thus, anticipating the question Lenin made famous a century later: when our world has collapsed, what is to be done? There was a range of choice for individual and collective response, but the polar alternatives were *Insurrection or Loyalty*.[1]

Unlike other exogenous shocks, 1808-1810 generated a vast historiography but little work in the social sciences. The work of historians on this period has been excellent; their un-

[1] Domínguez 1980.

derstandable focus has been to account for the specific outcome of independence. For the social sciences, however, a more interesting challenge was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of various plausible explanations by focusing on a stark contrast: why some chose insurrection while others remained loyal to the Crown, notwithstanding the same international context.

This reframed focus deploys comparative methods to assess the outcomes. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, Spanish rule on mainland America had ended. Yet that uniformity of outcomes resulted from variation in process. South America's most powerful state, the Viceroyalty of Peru, had to be forced to be free (to borrow from Rousseau), invaded by armies from north and south. Peru's first independent presidents became traitors in their new state, defecting to Spain even as the empire was reaching its end. Cuba, southernmost Chile, and western Venezuela remained bastions of Spanish rule until the very end. Viceregal Mexico City in the north and viceregal Lima in the south remained command posts for the defense of Spanish rule, Lima more impressively so.

**Explaining Contrasting Responses**

The historiography produced an array of potential explanations for these contrasts. These encompassed the ideas of the Enlightenment and the American and French Revolutions, the economic pressures from domestic circumstances and international war, the delayed effects of slow-moving imperial policies that were seeking to turn "co-kingdoms" into "colonies," thereby constraining the range of autonomy of American-born Creoles, and so forth.

To assess such varied explanations, in *Insurrection or Loyalty* I chose to study four dependencies. From those at the vortex of inter-imperial conflict, I chose Cuba, whose affairs were most often discussed by imperial authorities in Madrid; and also Chile, which, according to the record, seems never to have been discussed. I also chose New Spain (which encompassed today's Mexico), the viceroyalty that had been Spain's principal source of American revenue. If Cuba and New Spain were central, I added the non-central case of Venezuela to compare with Chile. Overall, these cases included dependencies with a range of agricultural, mining, and industrial production as well as representation of the major population groups. These four dependencies featured a range of insurrectionary and loyalist behavior. Cuban elites pledged allegiance to Spain's Bourbon King and Council and never wavered in their loyalty, even during the Napoleonic years when this required a powerful and imaginative faith. In contrast, civil war broke out in Chile, New Spain, and Venezuela; in all three, loyalist forces defeated the insurrections by the mid-1810s. Independence was not a foregone conclusion. It had to be problematized.

One task was to set aside plausible but ineffective explanations, that is, those that did not sort out the choice between insurrection and loyalty. Among these are social and economic factors. Levels of literacy, media exposure, and urbanization were too low to explain the choice of one path versus another. Spain's restrictions on international trade were often resented, yet significant elite factions in Chile and Mexico City opposed freer trade, but they would in the end support independence; Madrid in turn accommodated the loyal Cuban elites' preference for freer trade. In material terms, Cuba did not rebel even though the value of its foreign trade had declined before 1810, and New Spain was not immune to rebellion even though the value of its exports had been increasing before 1810. Economic growth had not disrupted Chile, which did revolt, and it had disrupted Cuba, which did not.

Ideological and political factors likewise do not align with the outcomes. "Modern" intellectual ideas had spread everywhere and did not sort out the rebels from the loyalists. Dislike of Spaniards was as keen in Coro, Maracaibo, and Cuba, which did not rebel, as it was in rebellious entities. Formation of national consciousness was in evidence in Cuba and Chile but not in New Spain, thereby not sorting outcomes well. Inter-elite competition was also pervasive across types of dependencies. The empire did not collapse because it was rigid; impressive innovations had been adopted and skillful accommodation of demands, from masses as well as elites, was commonplace, including social mobility for many blacks (manumission, purchases of patents of whiteness, etc.). "Precursor" events that occurred before 1810 likewise do not explain the cases; the empire had dealt effectively with protests through repression or accommodation. Institutionalized safety valves had also been in place across the empire, for example, enabling well-off black freedmen to purchase a patent of whiteness (*gracias al sacar*) and to join the military establishment.

Two explanations seemed persuasive. First, where there were credible fears of a mass uprising, as in Coro, Maracaibo, and Cuba, Creole elites did not rebel; Coro and Maracaibo had to be compelled to join independent Venezuela. Second, where a broadly-encompassing elite political coalition had been created (Spaniards and American-born Creoles, the local government, and even wealthy black freedmen), loyalty prevailed. The secondary comparisons pointed to these same conclusions. Brazil did not experience a war of independence and its politics aligned with these explanations; it would become independent peacefully through a dynastic separation. Lima remained the empire's strongest South American bastion, featuring also broad intra-elite consensus in its loyalty and fear of triggering the upheaval that had within memory led to the Túpac Amaru rebellion.

**Consequences**

The continuity or transformation of political order may be traced to the experience of the critical juncture, namely, what did we do when Napoleon invaded Spain? The Cuban elite remained loyal and never ruptured; for decades it sustained dazzling prosperity and shameful albeit successful slave suppression. The Chilean central valley elite, crushed by Lima yet rescued by Buenos Aires, both times remained sufficiently cohesive to lead political reconstruction and build independent South America's first successful state.

Venezuela, torn through a race war that defeated the first attempt at independence, had to permit freedmen access to

power and promise slavery's abolition to accomplish independence. Yet Bolívar also set the foundations of the Republic on a racialized bedrock, that is, political organization by nonwhites on the basis of race was prohibited; and in October 1817, Bolívar had General Manuel Piar executed for the crime of seeking to represent Venezuelans of African descent. Independent Venezuela, poor, unequal, and authoritarian, endured for the balance of the century.

New Spain (then ranging from Costa Rica to northern California and encompassing all of today's Mexico) was born again as an independent empire under Emperor Agustín de Iturbide, committed to the establishment of Roman Catholicism and the protection of the existing property regime and other elite privileges, albeit conceding formal civil equality. Iturbide had sought to paper over the inherited cleavages; he lost his Crown, Mexico lost its empire (Central America seceded quickly, Texas did so later, and the United States seized half of an already rump Mexico), and it would become the first failed state in the Americas, wracked by civil war, economic decline, and eventual French conquest in the 1860s.

Within the present framework, Peru is a case of loyalty, yet this outcome was overridden by a different set of international factors. Peru seemed ripe for independent rebellion on many accounts. Yet, it was not. Economic decline and overbearing Spaniards were insufficient to yield insurrection. The Viceroy in Lima appointed Creoles to the presidency of Cusco and the intendancy of La Paz, abolished the *mita* (coerced labor by indigenous peoples) and the capitation tax on indigenous peoples, and enlisted Peruvian Creoles on the militant mission to restore imperial order in South America. The viceroyalty reconquered Chile. It required a massive invasion from the north and a massive invasion from the south to defeat Peru—the last time in the past two centuries when the Peruvian state was so competent. As for the mass of Peruvians, as late as 1824 the pro-independence armies in Peru could still not recruit enough Peruvians to replace those killed in combat, that is, to the very end, troops had to be imported from outside Peru to make Peru "free." The shattered Peruvian viceregal state had retained the loyalty of its people. Independent Peru was born to fail, bereft of state capacities, bereft of elite loyalties through defections to the Spanish side, even when that no longer seemed a "rational" act, and bereft of mass support.

## Patterns and Legacies

An exogenous shock shattered Spain's American empire in 1808-1810 and compelled decision-making across the now-acephalous empire. In the entities where local Spanish and American Creole elites had reason to fear the high risk of a mass uprising by subaltern peoples (Peru, Coro, Maracaibo, Cuba), such elites remained loyal to their idea of a Spanish empire. Where Madrid had long accommodated the local Creole political and economic demands, as in Cuba, the local elites remained loyal and united. Where such loyalty-inducing factors were absent, local rivalries would escalate to major disputes; notwithstanding impressive suppression of the first wave of efforts at independence in Chile, New Spain (Mexico), and Venezuela, recomposed coalitions brought independence across these entities by the 1820s, while the pro-independence forces from Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile invaded and defeated South America's hitherto strongest state (Peru).

The specific historical events never recurred, but the patterns established during the critical juncture (the response to the Napoleonic invasion of Spain) shaped politics and the state through the aftermath, which would last for about a half century for all, and longer for Cuba and Chile. For most of the nineteenth century, Cuba and Chile became and remained strong elite-driven competent states, one a prosperous colony, the other South America's new main military power. The two viceroyalties long headquartered in Mexico City and Lima were dismembered and dramatically weakened. Through secession and defeat in international war, Mexico City had lost half of its former empire by mid-nineteenth century, and Peru would be thrice defeated militarily by Chile in the nineteenth century. Mexico and Peru found it difficult to reconstruct competent states; the Mexican state became stronger only during that century's last quarter while the Peruvian state took even longer. That critical juncture and its aftermath decisively shaped the collective histories of these peoples.

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# *Critical Juncture and Legacies: State Formation and Economic Performance in Latin America*

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### Dysfunctional Combinations: The Territorial Basis of Economic Performance

In South America, income per capita, the standard measure of material prosperity, is five times larger than in tropical Africa but five times smaller than in the advanced economies of the North Atlantic. If we applied the distinction that economists usually draw between geography and politics—as opposite fundamental factors of long-run development—a simple but powerful picture about the division of the causal labor would emerge. Geography would explain why South American economies are ahead of the African ones, whereas politics would explain why they are behind those of the United States and Western Europe. All relevant geographic factors in South America, including proportion of fertile land, number of navigable rivers and disease environment, are far superior to those in Africa. By contrast, political factors, including state capacity, types and stability of public institutions, viable political coalitions, and social and economic policies, are far inferior in South America to those in Western Europe and North America.

What the picture based on the geography vs. politics distinction misses is the crucial role of a hybrid combination, namely, political geography. Some countries in South America could have followed the economic path that Australia and New Zealand initiated in the mid-19th century. Such a path was not followed because of the way in which national boundaries were demarcated. The key legacy of the process of border demarcation was twofold: on the one hand, the creation of two territorial colossuses, Argentina and Brazil, that were *dysfunctional combinations of subnational economies*; on the other, the emergence of smaller countries that were not powerful enough to become the engine of development for South America as a whole. Even though some small countries originally had viable economies, as was the case of Chile and Uruguay, they were in fact hurt by the dysfunctional economic nature of their giant neighbors.

The national territories of Argentina and Brazil included vast economic areas for which international trade promised enormous material rewards. The Pampa Húmeda of Argentina—similar to the American Midwest in size and natural productivity—and the Paraíba Valley in Brazil—the undisputed world-leader in coffee production—would under most circumstances be sources of growth with enough power to set in motion a process of economic modernization that would eventually produce a high-income national economy and potentially a prosperous continent. However, both subnational regions were united in the same country with a larger backward periphery that thwarted the path towards prosperity. The interaction between the regional economies within each country can be characterized as "perverse." In this interaction, the periphery, through political means, became an insurmountable burden for the development of the center; the center, through unintended economic mechanisms, prevented the periphery from finding a comparative advantage that would help them upgrade their development chances (more below). Perverse relations are worse than parasitic relations. Whereas in parasitic relations one of the units is negatively affected by the interaction with the other, in perverse relations the damage is reciprocal.

A dysfunctional territorial configuration not only caused the failure of Argentina and Brazil to fulfill their takeoff potential as individual countries. Because of their continental influence, it also caused the underdevelopment of the entire subcontinent. If Argentina and Brazil did not become Australia, Chile and Uruguay did not become New Zealand. Both Chile and Uruguay had similarly productive core areas, the Central Valley and the agricultural hinterland of the Montevideo port-city, respectively. However, these areas were too small compared to the Argentina Pampas or the Brazilian Paraíba Valley to play the role of South American dynamos. Eventually the small economies, especially Uruguay, suffered from recurrent economic crises that originated in their giant neighbors. Regional economies outside the Southern Cone of South America, with the exception of Antioquia and the *Eje Cafetero* in Colombia, lacked the natural endowments with which to initiate sustained economic growth. Hence, two specific subnational economies, the Argentine and Brazilian peripheries, had extraordinary repercussions. Their perverse effects scaled up from the purely local dimension to the continental one, as they stalled the two national economies with the potential to lead the entire region toward mature economic development.

An imaginary South American country combining the Argentine Pampa Húmeda, the entire territory of Uruguay and the state of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil—all three were world leaders in the production of cereals and cattle—would have been an economic powerhouse similar to Australia, and perhaps even stronger, and it would be free from the drag of a backward periphery. Such a country was not in the plans of any political elite, although at different times a combination of Uruguay and the Pampas on the one hand, and of Uruguay and Rio Grande do Sul on the other, were seriously considered. The Australia of South America, although fictional, illustrates how important borders and the associated composition of national economies are for long-term development. The fact that large countries in South America were economically dysfunctional combinations of subnational units, and the fact that small countries were not endowed with sufficiently strong regional economies to change the developmental fate of the continent, are both a direct outcome of the demarcation of national

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borders during the state formation process.

This brief essay traces the sources of economic underdevelopment in South America to the critical juncture of state formation in the mid-19th century, the period during which the physical space of the national economic and political arenas was defined, and countries emerged as distinct combinations of subnational regions. The first section specifies the main *legacies* of state formation, connecting the outcomes of the process of state formation in South America to the long-term economic performance of the region. The second section takes a step back and accounts for the *critical juncture* of state formation through an analysis of commonalities and differences in the solutions to the process of border demarcation in South and Central America. The concluding section summarizes the argument and contrasts it to two common historical explanations of economic underdevelopment in Latin America.

## The Legacies of State Formation: From Border Demarcation to Economic Performance

The process of state formation in Latin America yielded three legacies. The main legacy of state formation was the demarcation of national borders. Two subsidiary legacies, created jointly with the national borders and affecting especially the large countries of South America, were the formula of territorial power sharing and the type of national administration. Finally, the ultimate legacy was the trajectory of economic development, a combined effect of the national borders, the formula of territorial power sharing and the type of national administration.

### National Borders

National borders are the most prominent legacy of the state formation process. State formation was a true *critical juncture*, the solution to which had different timings and exhibited different patterns across different countries.[1] The state formation process in South America, like in all Latin America, took place between the Wars of Independence (1810-1825) and the first decade of the 20th century.[2] Although state formation is customarily defined as a process of violence monopolization, an analytically distinct but intimately connected process is border demarcation, that is, the definition of the regions included and excluded from the emerging national territory. If the rise of mass politics can largely be viewed as a process of labor incorporation, the state formation process can be seen as a process of periphery incorporation into (or exclusion from) national borders.

Rather than shaping national arenas, the demarcation of borders *created* them, at least in a physical sense, for it produced the geographic space within which a national economy and a national polity would emerge. From an economic perspective, border demarcation defined countries as specific combinations of regional economies and associated endowments. Whether a dynamic region was included and a backward periphery was excluded, the relative size of the regions, as well as the relations of complementarity, competition, and conflict among them—these were all at stake during state formation and subsequently became root causes shaping the prospects of national economic development. State formation in Latin America produced a variety of territorial outcomes. Compared to the Western Europe pioneers in state formation, contrasts across Latin American countries in terms of size and composition of the national economic arena are staggering. The range spans from mini-republics like El Salvador and Costa Rica, where most productive land is best suited for plantation ventures, to geographical colossuses like Brazil and Argentina, which combine multiple urban centers, dynamic agrarian hinterlands and large, relatively unproductive peripheries. Nevertheless, the variety of sizes and compositions of economic arenas in Latin America did not include a single case that combined a large dynamic sector and a vast periphery in a sustainable long-run relationship.

From a political perspective, border-demarcation shaped almost every component of subsequent dynamics. Crucially, it circumscribed the population on the basis of which future coalitions would be built through political entrepreneurship, cleavage activation, and alliance making. Variations in size and composition of political arenas across Latin American countries are among the largest in the world, ranging from countries like Chile and Uruguay that are largely dominated by the capital city, to countries like Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, where a coalition among multiple oligarchies in distant peripheries are an inescapable component of any ruling alliance, both under democracy and dictatorship.

The national borders that were the primary legacy of the state formation juncture in Latin America have been distinctively durable. For at least half a century after Independence, most national political arenas in Latin America had been fluid, ill-defined spaces. In some cases, like Argentina and Colombia, the juncture was still open in 1870 and 1900. However, the travails of the state formation juncture in Latin America left an extremely resilient legacy of political borders. State formation was a watershed for Latin American history, and its durable legacy stands in sharp contrast to the pioneering experience of Western Europe, where borders suffered substantial changes until as recently as 1991. Once national borders were defined in Latin America, no posterior shock, no matter how big, ever altered them—not even the deep economic crises that in part were the perverse effect of the very composition of the territorial units defined by such borders.

Contrasts in size and composition of national territories are a reflection of the variety of solutions to the state formation juncture adopted by the emerging national ruling elites in different contexts. The variety of solutions to the state formation process, coupled with the enduring legacy of stable borders, makes state formation a true critical juncture. As we will see, solutions to the state formation process in Latin America were ultimately rooted in the economic revolution that shocked

[1] See Collier and Collier's (1991, 29) definition of "critical juncture."

[2] Chile was an exceptionally early case of state formation (1830s) by Latin American standards, and Colombia was the latest one (1900s). Brazil consolidated its state around 1850, and Argentina's critical juncture spanned from 1850 to 1880.

the region, especially its temperate areas, around the mid-19th century. A new economic scenario dramatically changed the balance of power between central elites and peripheral oligarchies. The economic revolution provided central elites with new resources and created new opportunity costs to continued conflicts with peripheral regions. In different contexts, central elites combined different packages of co-optation, repression and exclusion in order to settle the political and economic arena of the emerging countries. In the process, in addition to the physical legacy of national borders, two subsidiary institutional legacies were created.

**Rentier Federalism and Patrimonial Administration**

In large countries like Argentina and Brazil, in addition to borders, state formation produced a *formula for territorial governance*, that is, a division of political power between subnational governments and the central state, as well as among the subnational units. The geographic legacy of borders and the institutional legacy of the formula for territorial governance are joint creations. Boundary demarcation depended on the specific terms of territorial governance. A region's decision to accept or resist incorporation into a broader territory was a function of its expected position within the formal and informal hierarchies established by the emerging state. A major novelty of the process of state formation in Argentina and Brazil (as well as in Mexico) was the creation of a unique structure of territorial governance: "rentier federalism." In contrast to the "competitive" type of federalism of the United States, rentier federalism involves a distinct set of incentives and induces a peculiar dynamic to the interaction among subnational governments. Instead of competing for private investment, subnational units in rentier federalism collude with each other and with national leaders in search of financial aid from the central government.

The second subsidiary legacy of the state formation process is the rudiments of a *national administration*, which is relevant to countries of all sizes but is especially consequential in the large ones. With few exceptions, public administrations in Latin America have been marked since inception by the twin features of low "infrastructural power," and a high propensity to "patrimonial rule." The former is the ability of the state to provide public goods and build social infrastructure in an economically efficient and territorially even manner, and the latter is the probability that the state will be captured by patronage machines and predatory rulers. State formation in South America produced two large countries, Argentina and Brazil, that were fundamentally underequipped to produce effective rule over their vast territories (beyond South America, the same applies to Mexico). Peripheries in both countries had been ruled by local elites in a patrimonial fashion since times immemorial. The participation of peripheral rural oligarchies in national ruling coalitions transmitted patrimonialism from the local level to the emerging national level. The privileged position that peripheral oligarchies were able to secure for themselves in national coalitions are a reflection of the concessions that state builders found necessary to make during the critical juncture of state formation in order to stabilize the national borders and pacify the territories within them.

**Long-Run Economic Development**

Rentier federalism, patrimonial rule and low state capacity are important political outcomes in their own right. However, in the cases of Argentina and Brazil they combined with the dysfunctional nature of their territories to create large obstacles to the economic development of the entire continent.

As a result of the way national borders were demarcated, Argentina and Brazil (and to a lesser extent Mexico) combined economic regions with very different endowments of natural resources, which in turn induced a wide variety of local productivity rates. During decades after state formation, the central regions of Argentina and Brazil could produce between three and six times more output per capita than the Northern regions. Monetary union, a direct corollary of territorial unification, meant that the dynamism of the central regions, by strengthening the exchange rate, hurt the international competitiveness of the backward regions, in a pattern that a century later, in a different context, economists would call "Dutch disease." The sugar and cotton industries of the Brazilian Northeast, once the jewel of Portuguese imperial finances, never recovered from the emergence of the coffee economy in the Paraíba Valley around the mid-19th century.[3] Similarly, the manufacturing potential of the Argentine Northwest (textiles) and Northeast (shipyards, woodworks) was largely aborted after the string of export-booms produced in the Pampas (wool, beef and finally wheat) starting in the mid-1840s. At the moment of their formation, the territories of Argentina and Brazil included large backward areas. Subsequently, due to the stark contrast with the dynamic regions with which they shared the national economic arena, these backward areas were not able to find their productive profile. The Dutch disease, a structural consequence of the physical space occupied by the new states, hurt the economies of the periphery in Argentina and Brazil.

The institutional legacies of rentier federalism and patrimonial rule were harmful both to the peripheries and the central economic regions. Rentier federalism was the main channel through which peripheral oligarchies secured regular transfers of economic resources from the dynamic center to the poor interior regions. Given the underlying local economy, peripheral oligarchies had a short-run incentive to grow the local bureaucracy so as to generate an implicit unemployment insurance for their followers in exchange for clientelistic/partisan support. The long-run effect of this choice for peripheral regions was a low quality trap that combined political inefficiency and poor economic productivity. Thus, in the peripheries, relatively unproductive employment opportunities in provincial governments crowded out private investments, further increasing the natural productivity gap between the sectors of the national economy. In turn, from the perspective of the center, redistribution to the periphery simply syphoned off the resources necessary to upgrade the economy beyond the level

[3] Leff 1982.

afforded by its natural advantages.[4]

Finally, patrimonial rule and low infrastructural power contributed to economic failure because the lack of administrative capacity and the use of public resources for private or partisan gain led to an undersupply of growth-enhancing public goods, from contract enforcement to communications infrastructure. In both Argentina and Brazil, the engineering of winning political coalitions in the context of Dutch disease, rentier federalism and subnational patrimonialism resulted in the transformation of the national state into a large-scale patronage machine, which was remarkably resistant to posterior economic shocks, regime changes and other large-scale transformations. Hence, the original effects of the economic dysfunctional nature of the territories of Argentina and Brazil was aggravated and perpetuated by the joint institutional legacies of rentier federalism and patrimonial rule.

## The Critical Juncture of State Formation: Contrasting Solutions to Border Demarcation

The process and outcomes of the state formation process in Latin America can be analyzed through two sets of contrasts. First, factors that are shared by Latin American countries explain (i) the transition from ill-defined and unstable political units in the 1820s and 1830s to clearly demarcated, stable national political arenas in the 1890s and 1900s; and (ii) the contrasts between Latin America and the pioneering cases of Western Europe in terms of the formula of territorial govern-ability (the incidence of rentier federalism in Latin America) and the type of national administration (much weaker and more patrimonial in Latin America). Second, crucial differences in antecedent conditions across South and Central America explain variations within Latin America, especially contrasts across countries in terms of size and composition of the national territory.

### Contrasts Between Latin America and Western Europe

State formation in Latin America and Western Europe occurred in drastically different political and economic international contexts. Politically, whereas Western European states formed in a context of international anarchy, Latin American states were built under an international hierarchy, at the peak of which were Great Britain and France. Adapting Gerschenkron's argument, the latecomer states in Latin America came into existence in an international arena already populated by the Western European pioneers.[5] Latin American latecomer states faced a new set of opportunities and constraints. The existence of well-established global powers outside the region attenuated the weight of security considerations in state formation ventures. Great Britain's role was key. Concerned about disruptions in its trade relations with the region, Great Britain was a virtual referee in, and a strong sponsor of peaceful solutions to, disputes between Latin American countries. An informal outside umpire was an unimaginable form of conflict resolution in the original European setting of state formation.

Economically, whereas states in Western Europe were built before the rise of modern capitalism, states in Latin America were formed when capitalism, already half a century old in Western Europe, was quickly expanding throughout the Western hemisphere. A different context provided state builders in Latin America with an option not available to their European counterparts. In a capitalist world, international trade could provide governments with the revenues that in a pre-capitalist world could only be obtained through politically costly and contentious efforts at domestic extraction. More specifically, Latin American elites could count on the customhouse close to the main port to fund their state formation projects and, indeed, with very few exceptions (Bolivia, Paraguay and to a lesser extent Mexico), all states in Latin America were built on the revenues generated by a seaport. Thus, in direct contrast to the main cases of state formation in Continental Europe (France, Prussia and Spain), where the political center that took the initiative of state formation was an interior city, the vast majority of state formation centers in Latin America were port-cities (Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio de Janeiro) or cities closely connected to a major seaport (Santiago/Valparaíso and Lima/Callao). Very much like in Smith's *doux commerce* thesis, the role of foreign commerce in state formation in Latin America further attenuated the weight of geopolitical considerations, as military conflict would disrupt trade and interrupt the regular flow of revenues.

These differences played a key role in outcomes of state formation process in Western Europe and Latin America. In Early Modern Europe, geopolitical pressures from foreign powers forced every central ruler into a direct clash with a large array of local powers. In order to mobilize the necessary financial and human resources to wage war, European state builders incorporated the surrounding peripheries by building state capacity throughout the territory. The emerging central state penetrated the countryside, destroyed recalcitrant local oligarchies, and upgraded public administrations, making the transition from patrimonial to bureaucratic rule. As a result of a Darwinian geopolitical game, Western European countries converged on the formation of modern bureaucratic states. Rulers who failed to engineer this political modernization were simply absorbed by those who succeeded. State formation in Western Europe also set in motion a reactive sequence by which future generations of the subject population, in exchange for sustaining the central state, would obtain different forms of political representation and a relatively uniform supply of public goods and services.

Although war and preparation for war had been the main occupation of the inchoate Latin American sovereignties for the first two to three decades after Independence, starting around 1840 the relatively sudden rise of big economic opportunities in international trade drastically changed the political priorities of the emerging national elites. These new economic opportunities originated in a sustained boom in the demand for primary commodities, especially from temperate areas, and a massive reduction in transportation costs, due to the replacement of vessels for steamboats in transatlantic naviga-

[4] Sawers 1996.

[5] Gerschenkron 1962.

tion. From Buenos Aires to Mexico, Latin American political and economic elites correctly began to see that a commercial revolution would provide the basis for a distinct political economy of state formation. Trade switched the state formation track that Latin American countries had originally taken. By the middle of the 19th century, Latin American rulers were responding to the incentives offered by world capitalism and relying on the tariffs on foreign commerce to pursue a novel strategy of state formation, quite unconceivable in Early Modern Europe.

Latin American state formation was a distinct process. Instead of fighting against local powers resisting the emergence of the territorial state, central rulers in Latin America could co-opt them, an option that in Western Europe would have meant the loss of international sovereignty. Decisive military penetration of the peripheries in Latin America became not only unnecessary, as it would have yielded little revenue compared to international trade, but also counterproductive, as it would have disrupted the peaceful environment needed to engage in world capitalism. If incorporation of peripheries into the national territory resulted in the destruction of local oligarchies in Western Europe, incorporation of peripheries preserved and usually reinforced the power of local oligarchies in Latin America. Patrimonial rulers in backward areas in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico offered their support to national projects of state-formation in the center in exchange for a wide variety of concessions, including institutional power, economic transfers and informal favors.

Creatures of war and preparation for war in a pre-capitalist, Hobbesian international context, the pioneering states of Western Europe transformed their peripheries, enforced strict rules for territorial governance, and created highly professionalized national administrations, which were originally designed to maximize domestic extraction and eventually mutated into highly efficient agencies of public good provision. Creatures of trade and preparation for trade in a capitalist, post-Hobbesian international context, the latecomer states of Latin America incorporated their peripheries without transforming their patrimonial institutions, creating states with low capacities to provide public goods and social infrastructure in a territorially even and economically efficient fashion, and, in the case of the three large countries, fostered the emergence of the rentier type of federalism.

**Contrasts Within Latin America**

The commercial revolution of the mid-19th century did not have uniform effects across Latin American countries. The boom helped all of them build or consolidate national states. Yet when the shock of prices hit the region, pre-existing local conditions, rooted in geography and politics, led to differences in the process of state formation and the eventual size, composition and capacity of the new countries. Geography is enough to explain the emergence and evolution of the small states with simple economies, including Chile, Uruguay and the five Central American republics. Political factors need to be added to understand the emergence of more complex states, encompassing diverse regional economies, such as Argentina and Brazil.

The key geographic factor for successful state formation, both in small, medium and large states, was the availability of a seaport from which to draw the essential fiscal resources. However, seaports varied along two key dimensions: proximity to a major producing regional economy, and separability from a backward, relatively unproductive periphery. The role of ports in Latin American state formation is revealed by the fact that, with only the two partial exceptions of Bolivia and Paraguay, every new state had a major seaport, which in almost every case was the main source of public revenue.[6] Availability of ports during the commercial revolution was far more important than borders inherited from colonial times in creating new states and defining their territorial jurisdictions. It is not an exaggeration to claim that seaports became a necessary condition for successful state formation. Bolivia and Paraguay did not have important seaports and are the only two countries that, after state consolidation in Latin America, suffered serious territorial losses to other Latin American countries.

Seaports were the main driver of state formation in what became the small countries of the region, including Chile and Uruguay, as well as the five original Central American republics. The seven cases share two common features. First, the proximity of the seaport to a large export-producing region secured the finances of state formation. Exports of cereals in Chile, wool and hides in Uruguay, and bananas and coffee in the Central American republics formed the economic basis that consolidated the rudiments of a government into a fully formed national state. A second commonality was the absence of a less productive economic region within "predatory distance" of the port or its productive hinterland. Isolation from potential attackers exempted elites in Chile, Uruguay and Central America from major security considerations, and allowed them to focus on the virtuous cycle of market formation and state formation. In Chile, isolation was a direct consequence of a physical barrier, the Andes mountain chain. In Uruguay, it was a mix of a physical barrier, the Uruguay River, and geopolitical protection afforded directly by Great Britain and indirectly by the balance of power between Argentina and Brazil. In Central America, the closest neighbor to each mini-republic was another mini-republic with an almost identical productive profile. The availability of an export outlet for each of the five republics generated a regional equilibrium in which all preferred growing their own state and economy to the military risks of attempting to capture the wealth from the others.

To understand the state formation process in what eventually became the largest countries of South America, political factors need to be added to raw geography. Brazil and Argentina combined economic regions that benefitted greatly from the commercial revolution and vast peripheral areas characterized by low economic productivity and entrenched patrimonial

[6] Bolivia had a minor seaport but lost its maritime coast in the War of the Pacific, decades after the core of its state was formed. Paraguay had a major river port in Asunción, from which it gained easy access to the South Atlantic.

domination of local oligarchies. Why did the centers in Brazil and Argentina incorporate into their national territories large backward peripheries? In a post-Hobbesian geopolitical context, country size was not a relevant consideration. Periphery incorporation cannot be attributed to international security motives. It cannot be attributed to the search for material prosperity either, given the large productivity differences between the regions, and the fact that, from a fiscal point of view, peripheries were net beneficiaries of incorporation. Indeed, to answer this question we must look beyond geopolitical competition and economic advantage to strictly political considerations of the state builders.

The peripheries of Brazil and Argentina were not separated from the center by large natural barriers. Peripheries could threaten, with military power, to disrupt the process of economic modernization undertaken by the center. However, neither the Paraíba Valley nor the Pampa Húmeda chose to build a physical or military border against the Brazilian and Argentine peripheries. On the contrary, oligarchic elites in the peripheries became active political players in the national arena. The reason for incorporation was, most likely, *coalitional*. Divisions in the center in both Brazil (Conservatives versus Liberals) and Argentina (Buenos Aires versus Entre Ríos) prompted an "arena expanding" type of conflict. Local conflict for primacy *within* the central area led opposing factions to search for allies *outside* it, sponsoring in the process the incorporation of peripheral oligarchies into a national arena. In exchange for their support, peripheral oligarchies not only were able to secure a range of short-term material rewards. Crucially, they were also able to lock in a variety of institutional privileges that were vastly out of proportion to their underlying economic strength. Paradoxically, local conflict caused national unification. National unification provided short-term allies to factions in the center at the cost of patrimonial concessions and, ultimately, long-tern economic stagnation.

There were also some differences in the process of state formation in Brazil and Argentina. The process of incorporation of the backward periphery was completed in Brazil around 1830, when the commercial revolution was only showing the first signs of its potential magnitude, whereas in Argentina it occurred four decades later, when economic modernization in the center was advancing at full steam. This difference in the timing of the state formation process helps explain why Brazil is larger in size than Argentina. Moreover, Brazil provides an exception to the rule of "one port, one state" that characterizes Spanish America. In addition to the backward periphery of the Northeast, the central elites of Rio de Janeiro also incorporated a dynamic periphery in the South, Rio Grande do Sul. In contrast to the Paraíba Valley, the center of coffee, Rio Grande do Sul was ideally endowed for cattle ranching activities, comparable in size and productivity to neighboring Uruguay. Additionally, Rio Grande had its own Atlantic coastline, and could easily build a customhouse from where to derive the resources for independent state formation. Indeed, when the commercial revolution of the mid-century hit the continent, ranching elites in Rio Grande do Sul strove for secession in order to secure an autonomous trade, monetary and fiscal policy. For an entire decade (1835-1845), Rio Grande do Sul was a separate country, the *República de Piratini*. Thus, whereas the commercial revolution provided central elites in Brazil and Argentina with the incentives and resources to incorporate backward peripheries through co-optation, in Brazil it also created a dynamic periphery that had its own state formation aspirations and that threatened territorial unification. For the first and only time in Latin American history, in Brazil in the mid-1830s, a dynamic periphery challenged territorial union and the center had a firm economic and fiscal incentive to fight back. Rio de Janeiro responded to secession with a combination of military action—of a scale and duration unimaginable in Spanish America—and massive policy, institutional and economic concessions. The eventual success of the Rio elite was due in part to the fortunes of war, but also to the fact that Brazil had settled its dealings with its backward periphery to the North at an earlier stage, and had secured the rudiments of a consolidated central civil and military bureaucracy by the time of the commercial revolution.

## Conclusions

This essay traced economic underdevelopment in South America to the juncture of state formation, which created two large countries that were dysfunctional combinations of subnational economic regions, and several countries whose economies were not big enough to produce the economic takeoff of the continent. State formation in Argentina and Brazil created national territories with the birth defect of structural Dutch disease, which in turn was deepened and perpetuated by the joint institutional legacies of rentier federalism and patrimonial rule. The two areas with the potential to become continental economic engines, the Pampa Húmeda and the Paraíba Valley, were strangled by political subsumption within a wider economic and political arena, marked by systematic fiscal transfers from economically dynamic subnational regions to economically unproductive but politically profitable peripheries.

This perspective about the long-run development of South American countries in part complements, and in part rectifies, two dominant historical visions. The dominant visions attribute foundational power either to the colonial period of institution building in the 17th and 18th centuries,[7] or to the emergence of mass politics and labor mobilization in the mid-20th century.[8] However, the sources of underdevelopment in South America are younger than colonial legacies and older than mass politics. To a large extent, independence revolutions wiped away the colonial institutional legacy, and the rise of mass politics in Latin America occurred in a context where obstacles to economic takeoff were already formidable. By emphasizing the role of the political and economic geography, this essay also advances one way of integrating root causes of long-run development, which economists usually divide into competing institutional and geographic factors. As we have seen, the fundamental geographic features of Argentina and Brazil, in

[7] Sokoloff and Engerman 2000; Mahoney 2010.
[8] Germani 1971; Dornbusch and Edwards 1993.

cluding centrally the demarcation of natural assets contained in the national arena and the configuration of subnational economies, were political creations. National economic and political arenas were defined during the crucial state formation juncture of the mid-19th century.

State formation in South America, as well as in Latin America more generally, was a fundamental episode of change over time, which transformed ill-defined political units into durable sovereign territories. Although state formation showed different patterns in the different emerging national contexts, the unique international context of the mid-19th century furnished Latin American countries with a number of commonalities that were unimaginable in the pioneering cases of Western Europe. Latin American states were formed when the international geopolitical arena had already crystallized into a hierarchy of national powers, led by Great Britain and France, as well as after the Western economy became dominated by capitalism. Faced with much less demanding international security constraints, and much more attractive opportunities for international trade, state building rulers in Latin America had the incentives and the resources to forego investments in Weberian meritocratic administrations and infrastructural capacities, and constructed instead the minimal territorial and political institutions required to take advantage of international commercial opportunities.

Contrasts within Latin America in terms of size and composition of national territories are much larger than in Western Europe. In Latin America, every region endowed with the assets for a primary-export economy and a viable seaport was willing and able to create an independent state—the cases of Chile, Uruguay and the Central American republics. What set apart Argentina and Brazil was not only the existence of the largest and most powerful subnational economies, but also the proximity between the dynamic regions and backward peripheries dominated by patrimonial rulers. Argentine and Brazilian state-builders did not deal with peripheral powers as the Western European state-builders did. Instead of transforming or repressing peripheral powers, they co-opted them into emerging national coalitions. Short-term coalitional gains were obtained at the cost of heavy obstacles to economic development for generations to come.

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## *Religion and Critical Junctures: Divergent Trajectories of Liberalism in Modern Europe*


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The study of cleavages, critical junctures, and resulting trajectories in the evolution of politics and party systems was launched by Lipset and Rokkan in their classic study of Western Europe.[1] They focused on fundamental societal cleavages: center-periphery, church-state, land-industry, and owner-worker. According to their argument, the resolution of these cleavages crystallized in critical junctures, which in turn set countries on distinctive historical paths. In the intervening decades since 1967, numerous studies have extended, refined, and in some ways corrected their arguments about Western Europe, and a substantial body of research has applied this framework to other regions.

This essay discusses my work on critical junctures, presented in *Origins of Liberal Dominance: State, Church, and Party in Nineteenth-Century Europe*.[2] This study focused on the politics of liberalism in France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany from the restoration of conservative monarchies in 1815 to the outbreak of continental war in 1914. In this historical context, liberals sought to build representative and constitutional government, to develop national economic systems, and to confine clerical authority to religious affairs.[3] Most scholars viewed 19th-century liberals through a prism that emphasized battles over private property and socialism; my work took the religious implications of liberalism as equally decisive.

This brief article traces the lines of influence that shaped my book, emphasizing among other points how the critical juncture framework provided a fresh, powerful, and most welcome new perspective on the study of religion and politics. This framework helped to move the discussion beyond what was too often a rather limited analysis of secularization in the context of modernization. Attention shifted instead to how, at


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[1] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.

[2] Gould 1999.

[3] Gould 1999, 3.

critical junctures, religion played a crucial and complex role in shaping European politics.

**Lines of Influence**

Institutional ties played a key role in keeping Lipset and Rokkan's work at the forefront of my thinking. My book began as a dissertation at Berkeley, where David and Ruth Collier were leading scholars of comparative politics. Their work on critical junctures, eventually published as *Shaping the Political Arena*,[4] influenced many graduate students in comparative politics, including those of us outside the Latin American field. In 1982, Berkeley hired the young scholar who became my principal academic mentor, Gregory Luebbert. He had done his graduate work with Lipset, at Stanford, and he situated his research squarely in the critical juncture tradition. This influence is clear in his first book, *Comparative Democracy: Policymaking and Governing Coalitions in Europe and Israel*, where he acknowledges his "great intellectual debt" to Lipset and Rokkan.[5] Their cleavage theory became the core of Luebbert's own account of how policy preferences shaped party leaders' decisions about whether to participate in coalition governments.[6] In Luebbert's analysis, party leaders cared primarily about the policies at the core of a party's programmatic profile, and this profile was interpreted to be determined by the societal cleavage that was most salient when the party was founded. This was a classic Lipset and Rokkan analysis: commitments undertaken at a critical juncture had long-lasting consequences that set parties on different paths into the future.

Luebbert offered a deterministic view of critical juncture theory. In *Comparative Democracy*, he argued that parties acquired profiles "by translating societal cleavages into lines of party conflict during the years before and just after the adoption of universal suffrage and, especially, the introduction of proportional representation."[7] In this framework, the metaphor of translation implied that the actions of political leaders simply reflected the underlying social and economic conflicts. The details of politics did not play a key role: cleavages had "precipitated" parties, and social and economic disputes "had given rise to the parties."[8]

In using such formulations, Luebbert understated the roles of specific people. Indeed, though Luebbert did hint that choices were involved,[9] his analysis emphasized patterns more than people. Luebbert asserted that parties used social cleavages to their advantage whenever that cleavage involved socioeconomic issues—as opposed to cleavages that concerned "constitutional, producer-consumer, cultural-ethnolinguistic, regional or center-periphery, ethical-religious, and foreign policy" issues. This also occurred whenever two cleavages reinforced each other.[10]

To summarize, societal cleavages gave parties policy profiles, and then leaders struggled to maintain their positions of privilege on the basis of that profile. As stated in the book's closing paragraph, Luebbert found an "almost complete absence of evidence that the skills, ideologies, and aspirations of individual politicians made any difference in the final coalitional outcome."[11] In other words, the key to predicting which parties would form a coalition was knowing which issues party leaders needed to prioritize in order to retain their positions as leaders.

My own project was even more closely connected to Luebbert's second book, which he was writing as he advised me on my choice of dissertation topic. In *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*,[12] he noted that European countries which acquired liberal regimes by the outbreak of World War I—that is, the United Kingdom, France, and Switzerland—retained those regimes throughout the tumultuous years leading up to World War II. Those were the countries that developed neither social democratic regimes nor successful home-grown fascist movements. This observation set the stage for Luebbert's main argument, which sought to explain why some countries developed social democratic regimes, as in Scandinavia and Czechoslovakia, while others fell to fascism, as in Germany and Italy.

His central concern was working-class politics. Thus, the explanation for different political regimes focused principally on the national political coalitions that emerged out of a "fundamental historical transition: the emergence of the organized working class as a major contender in national politics," as David Collier and Lipset put it.[13] The transition from elite to mass politics was the critical juncture *par excellence*; choices made as the franchise expanded would shape party systems,[14] coalition formation,[15] and even political regimes.[16]

In advising me on the choice of a research question, Luebbert proposed that I investigate why liberal regimes were successfully established in some countries but not in others. He saw an opportunity to add crucial nuance to his argument by exploring the idea that "where liberal movements were successful before 1914, their appeal was reinforced by a religious

[4] Collier and Collier 1991.

[5] Luebbert 1986, xiii.

[6] Luebbert 1986, 53-60.

[7] Luebbert 1986, 53.

[8] Luebbert 1986, 54.

[9] For instance, he stated that not all societal cleavages became lines of party opposition in every society. Which cleavages became politically relevant, he argued, "has depended on their relative intensity in the society at large, the historical sequences of mass mobilization, and considerations of organizational and electoral strategies, especially the payoffs of alliances and mergers and the costs of splits and lost support" (Luebbert 1986, 55). In this passage, the terms "strategies," "payoffs," and "costs" suggested that leaders were making choices. These choices could of course be viewed fairly deterministically within some choice-theoretic frameworks, or they could be understood less deterministically as depending centrally on the skills of party leaders and/or somewhat idiosyncratic characteristics of specific countries.

[10] Luebbert 1986, 55.

[11] Luebbert 1986, 246.

[12] Luebbert 1991.

[13] Collier and Lipset 1991, v.

[14] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.

[15] Luebbert 1986.

[16] Luebbert 1991.

cleavage."[17] He gave this advice just weeks before his death—a shock to everyone, as he was just 32 years old when he drowned in a white-water canoeing accident. His colleague Giuseppe Di Palma shepherded Luebbert's nearly completed manuscript to publication; he also became my advisor. Collier and Lipset wrote the preface to the resulting book.

In following the advice that Luebbert had given me, it became my task to develop a systematic account of how conflicts over religion yielded different political dynamics, once mass-based political competition had emerged. The proposed study opened the possibility of reinforcing the conclusions of Lipset and Rokkan, as well as of Luebbert, that liberal movements could gain or lose supporters depending on the configuration of religious cleavages. At the same time, it might offer a rival perspective—for example, potentially challenging the argument that liberals took religious cleavages as political givens that they themselves could not influence.

My efforts to frame a research project on religion in European political history coincided with new uncertainties in the discipline of political science. Long-standing accounts of liberalism as a movement of rising middle classes seemed wedded to modernization theory. Such an approach came under strong attack in the 1970s and 1980s due to several shortcomings, among them failing to explain dictatorships in advanced societies such as Germany, Italy, Argentina, and Brazil. What could explain the evolution of liberalism in Europe? The literature no longer offered a convincing answer.

In the realm of real-world politics, moreover, religion had in fact not faded away, as naïve secularization theory predicted. By the 1990s, for example, Islamic clergy commanded a revolutionary regime in Iran; the Catholic Church helped to open paths to democracy in Iberia, Latin America, Poland, and the Philippines; and Christian leaders in the United States crafted a new alliance with a resurgent Republican party. The political relevance of religion had thus been recast in many ways, including the reality that religious movements made alliances with both democrats and dictators.

In this context, my new project on early episodes of liberalization promised novel insights into how religion shaped modern politics. The critical junctures approach changed the question from "which factor is most important?" to "what happened first?", and "with what consequences?" Lipset and Rokkan's emphasis on the sequencing of formative moments opened the way to trace the impact of religion on politics over time.

## How Religion Shaped Political Regimes

In the course of my research, a crucial insight began to emerge: the political significance of religion changed as the franchise expanded. In the period of elite-dominated politics in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, clerical support for liberal reform hinged mainly on whether clerical authority would be curbed in a reconfigured state. However, as mass political support became increasingly decisive for the success of parties in the 1870s and after, the middle-classes and peasants weighed in as voters or potential voters. Liberal reform now challenged not just the role of a church in the highest offices of the state, but also clerical authority over other institutions, such as the education of young people and property ownership.

The key was identifying who supported expanding (or reducing) the scope of clerical authority over non-religious institutions. My research supported a fine-grained analysis of how particular political leaders and institutions shaped overall outcomes. Nonetheless, the overall style of the analysis shared the determinism of Luebbert's work.

In selecting cases for my project, like many scholars in the critical juncture tradition, I set forth scope conditions that extended beyond a single country case, yet restricted the analysis to a small number of cases that were sufficiently similar. The analysis focused on liberal reform movements in nineteenth-century Europe, and especially on countries at the middle of a spectrum, where liberal reform was neither a foregone conclusion nor completely implausible. Thus, I examined Switzerland, Belgium, France, and Germany as "cases at the center of the distribution of liberal success and failure."[18]

Though restricted to these four cases, I was convinced that the study was also relevant to understanding the more prominent cases of success, notably the United Kingdom, as well as yielding insight into countries where the prospects for liberal reform in the nineteenth century were dim, as in Southern and Eastern Europe. The case selection departed from the tendency in the literature on liberalism to focus on just one country at a time, or, when comparisons were made, to emphasize contrasts between the two best-known cases, the United Kingdom and Germany. The German case of attempted liberal reform that ultimately failed, I argued, could best be understood by studying these processes in other countries situated in the middle of the spectrum of likely success of reform.

Drawing on a critical junctures approach, I focused on how a common process—the launching of liberal reforms—could evolve differently in comparable cases. I argued that the attempt by liberals to reform political regimes was a critical juncture in the four cases. I distinguished between two phases of the critical juncture, the first marked primarily by elite politics and the second by mass politics. And I posited, in a nutshell, that each country's path through the common process was strongly shaped by the implications of political reform for religious authorities. *Institutions* present at the onset of liberal reform, especially whether or not churches were incorporated into state institutions, influenced *reform dynamics*. Ultimately, the outcomes of these efforts differed across the cases: repeated failures in Germany, multiple successes in Switzerland, and checkered reforms in Belgium and France (see Figure 1).

### *The Elite Phase*

How should these contrasting patterns of success and failure be explained? Religion was a key factor. The nineteenth century opened with churches being incorporated into the governing institutions of some states, but not others. Would-be

[17] Luebbert 1991, 6.

[18] Gould 1999, 9.

**Figure 1: Institutions, Reform Dynamics, and Outcomes: The Cases of Germany, France, Belgium, and Switzerland**

| | Cases | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Germany | France | Belgium | Switzerland |
| **Elite Phase** | | | | |
| State and Church Institutions at Onset of Liberal Reform | Non-liberal, incorporated churches | Non-liberal, incorporated church | Non-liberal, church not incorporated | Non-liberal, churches not incorporated |
| Liberal Policy toward Religious Authority | Attack Protestant & Catholic | Attack Catholic | Promote Catholic | Preserve Protestant & attack Catholic |
| Clergy Response | Protestant & Catholic opposition | Catholic opposition | Catholic support | Protestant support & Catholic opposition |
| Liberal Reform Outcome | *Failed reform* | *Failed reform* | *Successful reform* | *Successful reform* |
| **Mass Phase** | | | | |
| Institutions at Onset of Second Liberal Reform | Monarchs sovereign | Emperor sovereign | Parliament sovereign | Parliament sovereign |
| Liberal Policy toward Religious Authority | Preserve Protestant & attack Catholic | Attack Catholic | Attack Catholic | Preserve Protestant & attack Catholic |
| Clergy Response | Protestant toleration & Catholic opposition | Catholic opposition | Catholic opposition | Protestant support & Catholic opposition |
| Provincial Middle-Class and Peasant Response | Protestants tolerate liberals & Catholics oppose liberals | Catholics support liberals | Catholics oppose liberals | Protestants support liberals & Catholics oppose liberals |
| Party Outcome | *Weak liberal parties: co-opted defeat of liberals* | *Strong liberal parties: victory of liberals (contested)* | *Weak liberal parties: conditional defeat of liberals* | *Strong liberal parties: supremacy of liberals* |
| Regime Outcome | *Authoritarian regime* | *Constitutional democracy (contested)* | *Constitutional democracy* | *Constitutional democracy* |

*Source*: Gould 1999, 20.

liberal reformers encountered authoritarian regimes in all four cases, but those regimes had incorporated churches in just two of them, France and Germany. In those two countries, liberals cast their programs as a challenge to both political and clerical authority, and clerical leaders definitely viewed liberal reform as threatening. In France in particular, the Catholic Church had been deeply integrated into the pre-Revolutionary administration and had been a major landowner across much of the country, especially in the south-east. The Church opposed liberal reformers.

By contrast, in Belgium and Switzerland churches played only limited roles in the state and rural economy. Here, liberal reformers sought political change but did not call for reduced clerical authority within the state. In these cases, liberal reform even held out the possibility for clerical leaders of achieving greater political autonomy and/or supremacy over minority religions. Clergy supported liberal plans to reform political institutions only when such reform would enhance the scope of their authority. My chapters on these contests focused on the revolutions and attempted revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and concluded with the regimes that emerged in the 1850s.

Two alternative outcomes emerged. In Belgium and Switzerland, liberal regimes were established with executives responsible to a legislature, and a formal separation of church and state at the national level. By contrast, Prussia's governments depended mainly upon the Kaiser's support and France's depended upon that of Napoleon III; legislatures did not make governments on their own. Other scholars overlooked that Prussia's and France's authoritarian rulers integrated churches into the ruling apparatus.

### *The Mass Phase*

In the context of these elite-dominated regimes, pressures for greater participation and mass franchise increased and brought new actors into the set of coalitional possibilities. Conservatives and liberals alike reached deeper into the urban and provincial middle classes, and into the peasantry. They sought the electoral support needed to prevail in contests in which most of the adult male population was eligible to vote, as was common throughout these cases in the 1870s and thereafter. I labelled this period the "mass phase" to signal the common process of expanding participation and inclusiveness in national politics.

This shared process yielded different coalitional possibilities in each case. A key factor shaping coalitions was how provincial middle classes and peasants responded to the specific threats they faced. In France, these two groups feared both socialism and a revived Catholic Church; whereas their counterparts in Belgium, whose property did not derive from forced secularization of land, feared only socialism. In Prussia and Switzerland, where Protestants ruled over large Catholic minorities, Protestants viewed the Catholic Church with deep suspicion. In Prussia and France, monarchs seemed viable as checks against socialist-inspired expropriation, but not in Bel-

gium or Switzerland, where neighboring powers checked the ambitions of would-be royal rulers.

The expansion of participation thus reinforced a liberal regime in Switzerland, but it strengthened the monarchy in Prussia. In Belgium, it brought a Catholic party to power that preserved parliamentary sovereignty and expanded clerical authority in education. In France, universal male suffrage rejected the presidential ambitions of generals and empowered radicals, such as Léon Gambetta, who declared clericalism to be the enemy of a constitutional republic. The expansion of participation in national politics, a quintessentially "modern" process, thus emboldened authoritarians in Prussia and republicans in France. In Belgium it buttressed Catholic constitutionalism, while in Switzerland it reinforced greater direct democracy.

### Competing Explanations

The book sought to evaluate competing explanations for the successes and failures of liberalism. The historical scholarship on each country gave central attention to case-specific factors, including the personalities of political leaders and the outcomes actually experienced in a given country. Hence my book, like many works in comparative-historical analysis, faced a creative tension with works of history. The tension lay in my claiming greater comparability of explanatory factors, across diverse contexts, than many historians found plausible. Yet at the same time, I drew on these historians' very own work as basic sources of data.

I used a critical junctures framework and cross-case comparison to generate insights that scholarship on individual countries did not offer. For instance, I found that liberals in Germany were well aware that established Lutheran churches encouraged support for monarchy; as a result, German liberals supported so-called free churches that incubated support for liberal politics. I learned about these efforts in works of history, but their significance had been ignored in assessments of German liberalism. From the point of view of my book, these ill-fated efforts showed that liberals knew that religion could be their ally only once it was differentiated from the state.

To take a different example, for scholars of French politics, "republicans" could not be liberals; they were viewed as too popular to be liberal, which was supposed to be an attribute only of the elite supporters of the Orléanist monarchy. Yet excessive fealty to how terms were deployed in particular cases obscured a key fact about France in the 1870s: a political movement advocating constitutional governance successfully attracted a mass following by activating concerns over the scope of a church's authority.

With regard to modernization theory, which was commonplace in works by political scientists, I offered two responses to the argument that economic development accounted for liberalism. On the one hand, my case selection acknowledged that Europe's most economically developed country, Britain, provided the most hospitable setting for liberal reform, in contrast to the underdeveloped peripheral states in Southern and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, my book showed that levels of development in the middle-range could not account for differences between such key cases as France and Germany, much less between Belgium and Switzerland. Moreover, my analysis showed that assessments of the relative sizes of the middle class in various countries were often measured in ways that excluded Catholics by definitional fiat; I carefully avoided such bias.

The final alternative explanation was the claim that Catholic political theology opposed liberalism, while Protestant political theology supported it. It simply did not bear sustained scrutiny to argue that national and regional religious elites conformed to uniform applications of doctrine. Protestant clergy supported direct democracy in Switzerland and opposed it in Germany, while Catholic clergy supported Belgian constitutionalism, but frequently sided with monarchists in France. Clerical elites, as well as members of churches, took stances on liberal reform mainly for local and institutional reasons.

My book confirmed Luebbert's suggestion that religious cleavages provided crucial opportunities to Europe's most successful liberal movements. The book filled in key gaps in sustaining this argument across diverse cases, such as by explaining how the struggle against the Catholic Church in the 1870s could weaken liberal movements in Germany and Belgium but strengthen it in France and Switzerland. The fight against Catholicism alienated many middle-class voters who feared socialism but not the institutional power of the Church. At the same time, it bound together those who saw the Church as a threat to parliamentary sovereignty and the rural economy, as in France and Switzerland.

Like Luebbert, I argued that Lipset and Rokkan's framework could be used to explain not just party systems, but also the characteristics of the political regimes in which partisan competition took place. Political regimes are more short-lived than patterns of partisan support and opposition, which often survive interludes of authoritarianism. Yet explaining episodes of liberal reform did indeed aim squarely at a core goal of comparative politics, which is to understand the conditions for self-government.

### The Study of Religion, Then and Now

At the time I was doing research for my book in the 1990s, Lipset and Rokkan's 1967 work had already endured thirty years—an eternity in modern social science. Their work was a touchstone for almost all research on religion in comparative politics, bringing religion into a broad and exciting research agenda. As noted, the field had long been influenced by the often unacknowledged, yet widely shared, assumptions of secularization theory, with the idea that economic modernization would inevitably diminish the personal, social, and political importance of religion. Potential successors to modernization theory—such as neo-Marxism and dependency theory—neither challenged long-standing assumptions about secularization nor provided useful ways to guide research on how religion shaped politics.

By contrast, Lipset and Rokkan contended that conflicts among different religions, and between religious and state auth-

orities, created enduring legacies. Cleavages were conceived as boundaries between social groups that identified, on an ongoing basis, with one side or the other of old conflicts. As politics democratized and participation expanded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political parties formed with the objective of representing the interests of groups that were defined by these historically given conflicts. Thus, long after modernization theory and its critique had become less salient for comparativists, Lipset and Rokkan endured as a valuable model for investigating the politics of religion.

Nearly two decades into the 21st century, of course, scholars continue to be called upon to explain religion's role in politics. Islamist movements have thrived throughout Muslim-majority countries—in democratic or semi-democratic contexts such as Indonesia and Turkey, as well as repressive ones such as in Egypt and Pakistan. In Europe, religious settlements that seemed firm and unchallenged have re-emerged in a highly contentious form, as states confront new religious heterogeneity.

In the original critical junctures formulation, the key role of religion was rooted in the past, given that the legacies of religious conflict endured for decades. My elaboration of critical juncture analysis, while it similarly interpreted religion as embedded in historically derived institutions, emphasized that liberalizing movements could gain strength from religious leaders and movements that sought greater freedom and autonomy. This insight was crucial to understanding the divergent effects of Protestantism in Germany and Switzerland and Catholicism in France and Belgium. Religion has proven far more capable of renewal than most scholars of comparative politics previously allowed, making research on the political commitments of religious movements ever more pressing today.

Lipset and Rokkan's insights should be considered more relevant today than many scholars recognize. Several features of their work do limit its appeal. Key terms were rooted in Western European events, such as the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution. In addition, Lipset and Rokkan favored a deterministic view of causality, and gave sparse attention to the details of how politicians attempted to assemble coalitions of supporters. My own research is similar to Lipset and Rokkan's in this regard. It focused on particular cases, in one region (Europe) and in one historical period (the nineteenth century). It also could be characterized as overly deterministic. Yet, for all of these limitations, Lipset and Rokkan's work helped my book show that religion was a key determinant of support for liberalism and of regime outcomes. Moreover, my research did validate a general claim: that religion can have a decisive political impact when politicians threaten—or promise—to change the scope of religious authority. And this lesson is certainly relevant today.

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# Conclusion: Methodological Challenges and Qualitative Tools

## *Contingency and Determinism in Research on Critical Junctures: Avoiding the "Inevitability Framework"*

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### Introduction: Contingency and Determinism

For scholars who study critical junctures and their legacies, the distinction between contingent and deterministic causal relationships is an abiding concern. Among the methodological challenges faced by this tradition of research, this distinction deserves central attention. To be clear about this contrast: for present purposes, contingent outcomes are understood as subject to chance. They are possible or even probable, yet uncertain. Expressions such as less likely, likely, and very likely can indicate contingency. By contrast, deterministic relationships lack these attributes.[1]

Landmark books such as Roberts' *Changing Course in Latin America*[2]—a central point of discussion in this symposium—stress the importance of contingency. More broadly, some authors treat contingent choice, agency, and uncertainty as defining characteristics of critical junctures.[3] Others, by contrast, see critical junctures as determined by structural constraints and antecedent conditions. Slater and Simmons, for example, carefully avoid making contingency a defining attribute, and they underscore the impact of "critical antecedents" that strongly shape the critical juncture itself.[4]

In parallel, some researchers contrast the contingency of the critical juncture itself with a deterministic view of the *legacy* it generates. Thus, the legacy is produced and sustained by self-reinforcing, path-dependent processes, and determinism is seen as a defining characteristic of the path. Mahoney, for instance, treats contingency as a defining feature of the critical juncture, and determinism as a defining feature of the subsequent trajectory of path dependence.[5]

Finally, some accounts combine ideas of contingency and determinism in other ways. In Pierson's view,[6] as critical junctures and their legacies begin to unfold, no specific event initially has a high likelihood. However, due to a process of increasing returns, outcomes subsequently become more deterministic. Other scholars, by contrast, view the legacy in terms of contingency and/or as subject to diverse influences that reduce the likelihood of adherence to a path.[7]

Given these contrasting views—and the focus of many authors on the interplay between contingency and determinism—in this concluding essay to the symposium I propose a key priority: a preference for considering both deterministic and contingent causal patterns, as opposed to adopting methods that impose an a priori assumption in favor of one or the other. Given the importance of both contingency and determinism in theoretical treatments of critical junctures, we require empirical approaches that do not reject contingency out of hand. As I document here, foundational qualitative works in the critical juncture tradition rely centrally on claims about likelihoods, even as they also make reference to necessary and sufficient causes. This reflects the fundamental concern with the relationship between contingency and determinism, instead of a focus on one to the exclusion of the other.

The discussion proceeds as follows. First, it summarizes an analytic framework which is a particular point of concern here, which may be called the "inevitability framework." As will be explained below, this framework explicitly treats contingency as irrelevant in qualitative, case-oriented research. This approach has variously been identified with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA),[8] with the broader perspective of set theory,[9] and with a new body of work on process tracing.[10] According to this framework, thinking in terms of probabilities is not meaningful in case-oriented research—and in particular, in studies focused on outcomes that have already occurred. Instead, causal patterns are seen as intrinsically taking the form of necessary and sufficient causes—and also INUS causes,[11] which combine necessity and sufficiency.

Against this backdrop, the essay then discusses substantive examples to illustrate how the treatment of contingency and determinism in fact plays out in case-oriented, small-N analysis. The examples include: (a) Illustrations of qualita-

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[1] The distinction between contingency and determinism is deservedly the focus of substantial debates in the philosophy of science. The above is the meaning intended here.

[2] Roberts 2014.

[3] See e.g., Mahoney 2000: 507-508; Katznelson 2003: 277; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 352; and Bernhard 2015: 978.

[4] Slater and Simmons 2010, 889-890. See also Luebbert 1991: Chapter 9; and Thelen 2004: 30-31.

[5] Mahoney 2000, 507.

[6] Pierson 2000, 263.

[7] E.g., Roberts 2014: 281; Collier and Collier 1991: 498. See also Lieberson (1997), discussed below.

[8] Ragin 1987, 2008; Rihoux and Ragin 2009.

[9] Goertz and Mahoney 2012: 18-24; Schneider and Wagemann 2012.

[10] Blatter and Blume 2008a, 32; Blatter and Blume 2008b, 322; Blatter and Haverland 2012, 92; Blatter and Haverland 2014, 9; Schneider and Rohlfing 2013, 569; Mahoney 2012, 573; Goertz and Mahoney 2013, 279.

[11] An INUS cause is "an *insufficient* but *necessary* part of a condition which is itself *unnecessary* but *sufficient*" (Mahoney 2008, 7, citing Mackie 1965, 246).

tive reasoning in everyday life. (b) Two critical juncture studies: Roberts, and Collier and Collier. (c) A prominent example of historically-oriented process tracing: Tannenwald. (d) A critique of determinism in path-dependent processes: Lieberson. (e) A consideration of contingency and counterfactuals: Roberts. Building on these examples, the final section seeks to draw lessons for the analysis of contingency and determinism in qualitative research.

## The Inevitability Framework

The priority of having analytic tools that allow for an interplay between contingency and determinism leads to a methodological recommendation. I propose that the *inevitability framework* for case-oriented research is ill equipped to analyze critical junctures.

This inevitability framework in some respects appears appropriate for research on critical junctures and therefore merits close attention. First, it advocates the context-specific and historically embedded forms of analysis that are fundamental to research on critical junctures and to comparative-historical analysis more broadly. Second, in the major, initial formulation of this framework, Ragin offers as a lead example the scholarly work that is the foundation of current studies of critical junctures: i.e., Rokkan, including the field-defining study by Lipset and Rokkan.[12] Research on critical junctures and necessary/sufficient conditions are thus strongly connected. Third, for scholars in the Latin American field, the salience of this approach is reinforced by two major comparative-historical books that frame part of their findings in terms of necessary and sufficient causes: Wickham-Crowley's *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America* and Mahoney's *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development*.[13] Fourth, this framework is diffusing rapidly as an approach to case-oriented, contextualized comparison.[14]

Hence, scholars who study critical junctures would do well to think carefully about whether the inevitability framework is appropriate for their research.

What are the basic premises of this framework? A number of authors argue that qualitative research must inherently yield deterministic findings of causal necessity and sufficiency. Beach and Pedersen, for example, maintain that research based on the comparative method, small-N analysis, comparative case studies, and process tracing produces deterministic findings that exclusively involve necessary and sufficient causes.[15] In discussing "the tenets of qualitative case-oriented methodology," they advance the position that "it makes no sense to use a probabilistic understanding of causality when we are investigating single cases and their causes."[16] Their subsequent 2016 book makes the same arguments.[17]

Further, Goertz and Mahoney argue that the entire qualitative tradition, i.e., the "qualitative culture," is anchored in necessity, sufficiency, and INUS causes, suggesting that "ideas concerning necessary and sufficient conditions are at the core of qualitative research practices."[18] They also extend this position to natural language, arguing that it is likewise structured around the logic of necessary and sufficient conditions.[19] Rohlfing and Schneider hold the same view,[20] and variants of this position are found in the wider literature on Qualitative Comparative Analysis and in the literature on process tracing cited above.[21]

Beach and Pederson offer a specific defense of this framework, quoting in detail from Mahoney's discussion of small-N, case-oriented research.[22] Mahoney argues that:

> …the very idea of viewing causation in terms of probabilities when N = 1 is problematic. At the individual case level, the ex post (objective) probability of a specific outcome occurring is either 1 or 0; that is, either the outcome will occur or it will not….To be sure, the *ex ante* (subjective) probability of an outcome occurring in a given case can be estimated in terms of some fraction. But the real probability of the outcome is always equal to its ex post probability, which is 1 or 0.[23]

This statement motivates the label "inevitability framework": outcomes are not subject to chance. Thus, Mahoney notes with approval authors who see the idea of probabilities for individual cases as "meaningless"[24]—notwithstanding his use of the probabilities of 1 and 0 in the formulation above. Similarly, Beach and Pedersen, seeking to build on an important consensus in the literature, maintain that "most qualitative methodologists" reject a probabilistic approach.[25] These authors do not accept the frequentist logic associated with large-N statistical analysis, which "assesses the magnitude of causal effects of X on Y, or the degree to which the presence of X raises the probability of Y in a population….In contrast, the comparative method aims at assessing necessary and/or sufficient conditions that produce Y."[26] As is clear from the discus-

[12] Ragin 1987, 126-128; Rokkan 1970; Lipset and Rokkan 1967.

[13] Wickham-Crowley 1993; Mahoney 2010.

[14] For example, the COMPASSS website lists over 700 substantive and methodological publications, based on different variants of these methods. http://www.compasss.org/bibdata.htm. Viewed June 30, 2017.

[15] Beach and Pedersen 2013, Chapters 3 and 5: e.g. 26-28, 76-78.

[16] Beach and Pedersen 2013, 28.

[17] Beach and Pedersen 2016. While their 2016 book acknowledges the value of methodological pluralism, they argue that "using ontological determinism and asymmetry [i.e., necessity and sufficiency] as the core common foundation for case-based research is the only logical position when taking causation at the case level as the point of departure" (Beach and Pedersen 2016: 15).

[18] Goertz and Mahoney 2012: 11; Goertz and Mahoney 2013.

[19] Goertz and Mahoney 2012: 17-19.

[20] Rohlfing and Schneider 2014, 30.

[21] See footnote 10.

[22] Beach and Pedersen 2013, 28. Here Mahoney uses the example of N=1 to illustrate issues that arise more broadly in small-N analysis.

[23] Mahoney 2008, 415-416.

[24] Mahoney 2008, 416.

[25] Beach and Pedersen 2013, 28; citing Blatter and Blume 2008a and Mahoney 2008.

[26] Beach and Pedersen 2013, 76.

sion above, this overall position is held by a number of authors.[27]

A key further element in the inevitability framework is the treatment of contributing causes. With a dichotomous outcome, contributing causes increase (or decrease) its likelihood; with a graded outcome, they cause it to have higher (or lower) values. The inevitability framework subsumes contributing causes under the concept of necessity, sufficiency, and INUS conditions;[28] the size of their "contribution," that is to say, their marginal effect, is not analyzed. As Rohlfing and Schneider put it, this group of methods "focuses on multiple conjunctions and distinguishes between necessary and sufficient conditions as opposed to marginal effects."[29] Mahoney views contributing causes as "probability raisers" that are relevant for quantitative analysis but not for qualitative, case-oriented research.[30]

Overall, the inevitability framework has become an important position in the literature.

### Analysis of Contingency: Substantive Examples

What are we to make of the inevitability framework? This section considers examples which show that, contrary to the claim of this framework, ideas of likelihood and probability are central to qualitative, case-oriented reasoning. Such ideas are often informal—that is, they are not formalized mathematically and quite appropriately do not evoke any specific statistical concept of probability—yet they are nonetheless central to qualitative research.

**Examples from Everyday Life**. It is hard to understand how the inevitability framework can be plausible, given that in our ordinary experience it is so standard and intuitive to think about the likelihood of a singular event that has already occurred. For example, a military mission may have had a relatively high risk of failure, have been fairly likely to succeed, or have been in-between—and the commanders who analyze it in retrospect will certainly think carefully about the difference. After a game, baseball fans might argue about "lucky doubles," "unlucky outs," or an "easy win."[31] The bursting of a real estate bubble, once it has (or has not) occurred, might be seen as having been extremely likely, quite possible, or improbable.

It hardly requires an elaborate commitment to any notion of probability to accept the intuitive idea of likelihood illustrated by these straight-forward examples.

**Critical Juncture Studies: Roberts, and Collier and Collier**. A focus on the varying likelihood of events that have already occurred is also routinely found in case-oriented research in the tradition of process-tracing, comparative-historical analysis, and specifically the study of critical junctures. Consider two key books in this tradition: Roberts' *Changing Course in Latin America*, and Collier and Collier's *Shaping the Political Arena*.[32]

These books demonstrate that arguments about likelihood and probability play an important role in qualitative research about outcomes that have already occurred. This calls into question basic premises of the inevitability framework. They also show how conventional qualitative work makes reference to the ideas of necessity and sufficiency, thereby casting doubt on the argument that these are sharply contrasting traditions. Of course, in inferring either contingent or deterministic causation these studies might make mistakes. The point is not to claim that these studies are unquestionably making correct inferences, whether contingent or deterministic. Rather, the point is to show that they are open to finding both types.

Roberts' book on critical junctures periodically makes claims about the likelihood of a particular outcome, given a specific antecedent factor—i.e., the conditional likelihood of the event.[33] He uses what might be interpreted as partially ordered categories: "unlikely" (2 times); "less likely" (1); "likely" (8); "more likely" (11); "far more likely" (1); "especially likely" (1); "disproportionately likely" (1); and "most likely" (2). In addition, "probable/probability" occur twice, and "unlikely" is used three additional times not as a conditional probability, but simply to characterize the likelihood of a given outcome. Thus, ideas of likelihood do indeed play an important role in Roberts' argument.[34]

Roberts' focus on likelihoods does not preclude a concern with necessity and sufficiency, however, and he occasionally discusses causal patterns in those terms as well. For instance:

> Delayed industrialization stunted the growth of urban middle and working classes, preventing organized labor from emerging as a significant political factor....[35]

> Economic and political changes by the early decades of the 20th century made it impossible to reproduce exclusive oligarchic regimes by electoral means.[36]

In the first sentence, "prevent" means that the antecedent condition is sufficient to yield a politically weak labor movement. In the second example, the antecedent conditions were sufficient to block, i.e., render "impossible," the electoral reproduction of oligarchic regimes. The ideas of necessity and sufficiency are not elaborately conceptualized here, but specific causal claims correspond to these concepts. Thus, Roberts avoids adopting one approach to the exclusion of the other.

[27] Its salience as of 2017 is reflected in the fact that Mahoney's 2008 article is one of the first two readings in a course on process tracing offered at ICPSR in June 2017.

[28] Goertz and Levy 2007, 10.

[29] Rohlfing and Schneider 2014, 30.

[30] Mahoney 2008, 415.

[31] This example is from Lewis (2004: 134). Overall, this book is about large-N statistical analysis, but these examples involve singular events that have already occurred.

[32] Roberts 2014; Collier and Collier 1991.

[33] Roberts 2014, passim.

[34] These word counts exclude instances that appear to express the author's uncertainty, or to express inadequate information. Thus, they reflect statements about the probabilistic process through which causes shape outcomes.

[35] Roberts 2014, 66.

[36] Roberts 2014, 177.

Collier and Collier, like Roberts, periodically discuss the conditional likelihood of events.[37] Some of the terms, once again, might be seen as ordered: "unlikely" (3 times); "less likely" (2); "likely" (13); and "more likely" (10). The term "probably" is used periodically (13), and "likelihood," "probable," "probability" and "probabilities" appear occasionally (4).

The ideas of necessity and sufficiency are also employed by Collier and Collier in discussing state-labor relations—specifically contrasting patterns of mobilization and cooperation. For example, with regard to necessity they argue that "in order to mobilize support successfully an exchange was necessary in which real concessions were offered."[38] With regard to sufficiency, they suggest that "the inducements contained in the law were thus initially sufficient to motivate the dominant sector of the labor movement to cooperate with the state."[39] However, as with Roberts, the idea of likelihood is more central to their analysis.

**Process Tracing: Tannenwald**. Given that process tracing is a fundamental tool in research on critical junctures, it is also appropriate to illustrate this argument about likelihoods with a well-known example of that method: Tannenwald.[40] Although the process-tracing authors discussed above, such as Beach and Pedersen,[41] place their approach clearly in the inevitability framework, Tannenwald's work makes it clear that their view of process tracing is seriously incomplete.

She seeks to explain the non-use of nuclear weapons by the United States in international crises in the decades after the Second World War. Contrary to the authors cited above who see process tracing as inherently yielding findings of necessary and sufficient causes, the causal language used by Tannenwald is more nuanced.[42] She frequently refers to factors that decrease or increase the likelihood of alternative outcomes. The word count for terms that refer to decreasing the likelihood is as follows: "constrain" (21 times); "inhibit" (11); and "limit" (3). For terms that entail increasing the likelihood, she uses: "encourage" (2); "raise" (2); and "bolster" (1). Some terms directly express probability: "likely" (5); "unlikely" (2); and "probability" (2).

Tannenwald also makes reference to causal necessity/sufficiency: "contribute decisively to" (1) and "prevent" (1). These statements show that her framework does not exclude ideas of necessity and sufficiency, yet overall she rejects determinism in favor of a view based on likelihoods and probabilities: "Norms do not determine outcomes, they shape the realm of possibility."[43]

Overall, the examples of Roberts, Collier and Collier, and Tannenwald underscore two key points. Qualitative research routinely uses intuitive ideas of likelihood and probability in analyzing events that have already occurred. It is simply incorrect to say that they do not. At the same time, these authors also use ideas of necessity and sufficiency, thus combining these two traditions and calling into question the idea that they are two distinct methodological cultures. A key point is that the analytic framework employed in these three studies is open to finding likelihoods—rather than precluding such findings, as occurs with the inevitability framework.

**Path Dependence: Lieberson's Critique**. The inevitability framework also leaves the researcher unable to respond to Lieberson's important challenge to the idea of path dependence.[44] In Lieberson's view, even with fairly tightly structured causal relationships, the probability of staying on a path at each step is doubtless not 1.0. Hence, the cumulative probability of staying on the path may drop sharply across the steps. To illustrate using numerical probabilities,[45] take the example of a path with only three steps and a fairly high probability of the posited outcome at each step, perhaps 0.8. In that case (and if the probabilities are independent at each step), the cumulative probability that a given case will stay on the hypothesized path is only 0.5. If the probability at each step is 0.7, which is still high, the cumulative probability drops to 0.3. This point invites us to look more closely at the ideas about contingency, path dependence, and increasing returns discussed above.

Scholars should be attentive to Lieberson's critique. Perhaps it does not apply to all forms of path dependence, such as the processes described by Pierson.[46] But if researchers are committed to the questionable assumption that at each step the outcome is inevitable, then they are simply unable to place themselves in dialogue with Lieberson's argument. Similarly, if scholars respond by insisting that qualitative works simply do not use ideas of probabilities—to reiterate, an argument clearly contradicted by the examples discussed above—then this response is simply incorrect. Again, they would fail to place themselves in dialogue with Lieberson's argument, which is an important loss.

**Counterfactuals: Revisiting Roberts**. Roberts' book *Changing Course in Latin America* illustrates a key feature of critical juncture research: demonstrating how contingent choices during the critical juncture produced outcomes that could have been different.[47] For example, he considers the contingent process through which mechanisms of reproduction shaped the legacy—as with "reactive sequences" in the aftermath of a critical juncture.[48] As Kaufman suggests (this symposium),[49] this focus calls for counterfactual thinking—including arguments about what might have happened if the actors

[37] Collier and Collier 1991, passim.
[38] Collier and Collier 1991, 197.
[39] Collier and Collier 1991, 54.
[40] Tannenwald 1999.
[41] Beach and Pedersen 2013; Beach and Pedersen 2016.
[42] Tannenwald 1999, passim.
[43] Tannenwald 1999, 435.
[44] Lieberson 1997.
[45] A qualitative version of this example could also be employed, based, for example, on the gradations of likelihood used by Roberts.
[46] Pierson (2000) describes "Polya urn" processes, in which early random draws strongly shape the probability distribution of later outcomes.
[47] Roberts 2014.
[48] Mahoney 2000.
[49] Kaufman 2017.

in the critical juncture had made different choices. Such arguments may depend on within-case process tracing, as well as cross-case comparisons.[50] Establishing what would have happened in the counterfactual absence of some choice or event is difficult.[51] Yet for theories that attribute legacies to critical junctures, this is a first-order objective.

Roberts meets this challenge in his effort to demonstrate how contingent differences among cases exposed to a common external shock produced divergent outcomes. He argues that, in the context of the exhaustion of statist development models, pressures for market liberalization affected all Latin American countries in the 1980s and 1990s. However, due in part to accidents of timing, reforms were led in some countries by traditional center-left or populist parties, whereas in others conservative actors took the lead.

Thus, in countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina, traditional center-left or populist parties implemented structural adjustment policies. This pattern led to de-alignment, as center-left/populist parties lost the ability to project clear programmatic positions and opened space for extreme left challengers. By contrast, in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, conservative-led reforms instead aligned party systems programmatically. Here, conservative actors took the lead, and traditional left parties could then channel Polanyian resistance to market orthodoxy. As a consequence, partisan competition stabilized around programmatically consistent alternatives and ultimately produced relatively moderate "left turns" as a legacy of events during the critical juncture.

It is clear from Roberts' discussion of each case that the reactive sequences that followed from market reforms were in no way deterministic or pre-ordained (see above on the role of likelihoods in his analysis). In all of Roberts' cases, the party implementing structural reform could easily have differed—either if left/populist parties had made alternative choices, or if the greatest pressures for market liberalization occurred when these parties happened to be out of power. Alternative outcomes are easy to envision. Rigorous reasoning about counterfactual alternatives is a great challenge, for reasons outlined by authors such as Fearon.[52] Yet it is essential to good causal inference—and crucial, for present purposes, for careful thinking about contingency versus determinism.

### Drawing Together the Argument

These several examples, which demonstrate the importance of contingency in qualitative, case-oriented work, point to major concerns about the treatment of likelihood and probability within the inevitability framework. This section draws together key points that emerge from the discussion above.

A key premise of this framework is that ideas of probability are irrelevant in qualitative research and are an extremely well-worked-out paradigm in quantitative research.[53] Questions can be raised about both parts of this premise. On the one hand, the claim that probabilistic thinking is not part of the qualitative tradition is called into question by these examples. On the other hand, some statisticians argue that in quantitative research, the concept of probability is too often used in settings where it may not be appropriate—for example, because a chance model is not relevant.[54] One plausible view is that intuitive ideas of likelihood are an essential concern of qualitative methods, whereas formal notions of probability remain contested in statistics and quantitative methods.

A further problem arises with the claim that, once an outcome *has occurred*, its probability is 1.0. The implausibility of this claim can be shown by examining an argument made by Roberts. He maintains, for example, that "inequalities are more likely to be politicized when parties establish programmatic linkages to social groups."[55] What happens to Roberts' argument if this politicization of inequalities has *already* occurred? In that case, according to this idea of "ex-post" inevitability, the probability of this outcome can only be 1 or 0, and we should conclude that Roberts is simply wrong in arguing that it is "more likely." But this makes no sense at all; a more credible account would suggest that this idea of ex-post inevitability is misleading, and Roberts should definitely not abandon his own argument.

The subordination of contributing causes also gives up too much. In the inevitability framework these are seen as probability raisers that play a fundamental role in quantitative research, whereas in qualitative research they are subsumed under necessary, sufficient, and INUS causes. Yet major studies discussed above—to reiterate, Roberts, Collier and Collier, and Tannenwald—show that reasoning about marginal effects plays a central, and not subordinate, role in case-oriented research. Hence, the analysis of probability raisers, far from being a peripheral concern, is crucial in qualitative work.

Finally, this framework treats inevitability as true a priori, which preempts the possibility of treating it as an empirical finding. Obviously, if an outcome occurs in a given case, then by the definition of necessity, no necessary causes are absent. Further, if the outcome occurs, by the definition of sufficiency, a sufficient cause or combination of causes must be present. With this line of argument, such claims come close to being a "re-description" of the cases, and they neglect inferential challenges. One key facet of this neglect is the failure to provide a basis for inferring whether the outcome was likely, unlikely, or somewhere in between. This approach likewise neglects the interesting possibility that inevitability could be an empirical finding, rather than true by assumption.

[50] On the combination of within-case process tracing and cross-case comparison, see e.g. Dunning (2014: 215-218).

[51] This involves the so-called "fundamental problem of causal inference" (Holland 1986: 947).

[52] Fearon 1991.

[53] See again Mahoney 2008.

[54] For example, in the social sciences the ubiquitous use of significance tests for sample-to-population inferences is routinely inappropriate, given that—to a far greater degree than scholars acknowledge—samples are not random and populations are ill defined. For an interesting treatment of this problem from a related perspective, see Freedman and Stark (2003).

[55] Roberts 2014, 26.

## Conclusion

The inevitability framework—which encompasses Qualitative Comparative Analysis, set theory, and a new body of work on process tracing—fails to address a fundamental priority of research on critical junctures: distinguishing between contingent and deterministic causal claims. This failure derives from the argument that qualitative research inherently yields findings of necessity and sufficiency—which is contrasted with the probabilistic foundation of quantitative research. According to this framework, treating qualitative, case-based research in terms of probabilities is meaningless.

In contrast to this self-imposed limitation of the inevitability framework, examples of qualitative analysis discussed here—from ordinary experience, work on critical junctures, and historically-oriented process tracing—show that ideas of likelihood are fundamental. In addition, these studies also periodically use causal ideas of necessity and sufficiency, consistent with Goertz's useful reminder that necessary causation receives wide attention in comparative and historical analysis.[56]

The inevitability framework fails to bridge these alternative perspectives. This makes it unsuitable for the study of critical junctures, which has focused centrally on understanding the combination of contingent and deterministic patterns. The examples in this essay also highlight more broadly the emphasis on contingency in a range of work in the qualitative tradition, including major works of historical-comparative inquiry as well as process tracing involving single cases.

The exclusive focus on necessity and sufficient causation therefore seems unsuitable as a methodological recipe for a great deal of qualitative research, definitely including research on critical junctures.

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*continued from p.1*

these listed under Division 46 in the online program, found at https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/apsa/apsa17/. We encourage our readers to attend many of them, as well as the QMMR section's Business Meeting at 6:30pm on Thursday, August 31, in the Cyril Magnin I room of the Parc 55 hotel—to be followed at 7:30pm by the QMMR reception in the Bay View Room of the Nikko hotel.

We close by underscoring our invitation to QMMR scholars to submit proposals for articles and symposia for future issues. We especially encourage proposals relating to methodological approaches or problems that are currently animating debate or shaping research practice in large segments of the discipline, as well as recent books of major significance and broad interest for QMMR scholars.

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