Macrofoundations of Regime Change

Democracy, State Formation, and Capitalist Development

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In his last lecture Max Weber claimed:

> Whether the military organization is based on the principle of self-equipment or that of equipment by a military warlord who furnishes horses, arms, and provisions, is a distinction quite as fundamental for social history as is the question whether the means of economic production are the property of the worker or of a capitalist entrepreneur.[1]

Few statements in Weber's writings are so openly confrontational in relation to Marxist social theory. Beneath what at first sight might seem an arbitrary reference to the details of military organization in the Late Middle Ages, Weber had in mind a sharp distinction between two basic types of power relations. In effect, in contrast to the means of *production* of Marxist sociology, Weber highlighted the control over the means of *destruction*—that is what "military equipment" is about—as a major source of social power and political change.

The distinction between means of production and means of destruction (or coercion), and between economic and politico-military sources of power more generally, prefigures with remarkable accuracy a major, although implicit, divide in contemporary studies of regime change within the tradition of comparative political sociology. In this tradition, regime trajectories are routinely understood as the outcomes of conflicts that emerge in the course of either of two macrohistorical processes: capitalist development and state formation. What is involved in each of these processes is precisely an unprecedented accumulation and concentration of the means of production—the capitalist firm—and the means of coercion—the territorial state.[2]

Authors relating regime variations to capitalist development traditionally view the contrast between democracy and dictatorship as the reflection of different power balances between social classes, either between the landed upper class and the urban bourgeoisie, or between the bourgeoisie and the working class. On the other hand, authors adhering to the state formation approach explain variations in political regime in terms of alternative resolutions to the struggles involved in the construction of modern state structures—struggles between the state-making elite and regional groups resisting incorporation into a national territory and taxation from a remote political center.

Since the contributions of the classical precursors, the debates on the causes of regime change between these rival perspectives have been as frequent and animated

as the disputes within each of them. In a recent edition of the criticism of the capitalist development perspective from the state formation approach, Brian Downing has argued that the first autocratic regimes in Western Europe had nothing to do with a reaction from feudal landowners during the transition to commercial agriculture—Barrington Moore's thesis on the origins of modern dictatorships. According to Downing:

> It was War and not domestic pressures that led to the rise of autocratic states in Prussia and France. The Junkers needed no elaborate state apparatus to market grain in the West or tie labor to the soil. The Prussian state that emerged from the household rule of the Hohenzollern electors was a machine geared toward war.[3]

Debates within each tradition have also been persistent. Against the thesis that the bourgeoisie is the chief sponsor of democracy—the other component of Moore's explanation—another prominent advocate of the capitalist development approach has argued that "none of the great bourgeois revolutions has actually established bourgeois democracy."[4] Within the state formation perspective, authors agree only on the implicit thesis that the form of political regime depends on the kind of resistance that the state-making elite must overcome in order to build modern state structures—the stronger the resistance, the larger the scope of political rights conceded by state builders. Yet, the specific determinants of the resistance against state-making initiatives are a major focus of contention. Thus, whereas for Charles Tilly the resistance is a function of the prior social organization of the population that was eventually incorporated into the state's territory, for Thomas Ertman it depends upon the institutional organization of the medieval representative bodies that preceded the onset of the state formation process.[5]

The goal of this article is to clarify the debates between and within the state formation and capitalist development approaches to regime change—in particular, to take stock of their distinctive contributions and strengths, and to pinpoint some pitfalls that block further progress in the analysis of regime change. For that purpose, this article advances a double thesis: whereas the various hypotheses in conflict are substantially more similar than it seems, the outcomes explained by those hypotheses are actually different. The first part of the thesis focuses on the explanatory variables and involves detecting the common foundations underlying apparently rival approaches to regime change. The state formation and capitalist development approaches have at least two key theoretical underpinnings in common, which are usually overlooked even by their advocates. First, they share an analytical framework centered on the concept of power. Second, they employ a common logic for building explanatory arguments, the "refraction model of causation," which views national political regimes as local adaptations to a universal process of change in the organization of power. These two elements are major strengths shared by both approaches, which set them apart from other perspectives on regime change, including modernization, cultural, and game-theoretic approaches.

The second part of the thesis, which analyzes the outcome variable, uncovers differences in a supposedly common object of explanation, and is the point of entry to discussing the pitfalls of these approaches. Two observations provide the frame for this discussion. First, the concept of democracy used in regime analysis refers to a

multidimensional set of institutions, such as division of powers, competition for office, and universal suffrage—even the Schumpeterian definition of democracy that has prevailed in the field is a highly compound concept.[6] Second, the installation of the different institutional components of a democratic regime is the result of distinct causal processes. On the basis of these two observations, it can be shown that theories that view each other as rival explanations of democratization are actually engaged in a false debate. Rather than opposite explanations of the same outcome, they should be viewed as mutually independent hypotheses about the different components of democracy.

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

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

Common Features of Rival Explanations

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

regime change, which either ignore the issue of power altogether or associate it with the influence of intangible factors like ideas, norms, and knowledge.

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

How do the state formation and capitalist development approaches move from this simple concept of power to constructing comprehensive theories of political change? The linchpin is the assumption that the prime goal of the holders of power resources, either economic or political, is to preserve and expand their command positions—and, conversely, that the goal of those who lack power resources is to reverse their subordination. The consequent clash of interests and power struggles is, for both approaches, the most important source of social change, including regime change. The causal connection between power struggles and social change is of course the thrust of Marx's famous assertion, "the history of society is the history of class struggle," and Weber's criticism of it was directed not against viewing power struggles as the engine of social history but only against emphasizing conflicts over the means of production at the expense of conflicts over the means of coercion.[7] Hence, for undertaking empirical research on political regimes, capitalist development and state formation approaches apply an unequivocal explanatory principle: regime transformations can be traced to asymmetries in the distribution of material resources and the power struggles that follow from them.

The Refraction Model A second distinctive feature of the state formation and capitalist development approaches corresponds to an explanatory logic that views variations in national political regimes as local repercussions of universal processes of change. As the British historian H. R. Trevor-Roper wrote in his celebrated essay on the formation of Modern Europe, "the various countries of Europe seemed merely the separate theaters upon which the same great tragedy was being simultaneously, though in different languages and with local variations, played out."[8]

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

This shared form of argumentation is composed of two explanatory elements: an exogenous process of change that operates as a common shock to all cases, and a set

of conditions peculiar to each case that sends countries affected by the common shock along different regime trajectories. This "refraction model of causation" is crucial for organizing and clarifying the disputes on regime change in comparative political sociology. First, the overall logical structure of the refraction model is shared by the two approaches. Second, the concrete macrohistorical process that enters the model as the exogenous common shock differentiates state formation and capitalist development approaches from one another, and is precisely what is at stake in the disputes between them. Finally, the debates within each approach center on the conditions of refraction.

Mapping the debates in comparative political sociology onto the structure of the refraction model points in the same direction as the reconstruction of the shared underlying conceptual framework advanced above—the intensity of disputes between and within approaches should not conceal that key areas of consensus exist. By converging on the focus on the concept of power and the refraction model of causation, state formation and capitalist development approaches can be seen as different applications of the same theoretical framework. As shown below, the areas of consensus underlying debates within each perspective, albeit also largely unnoticed, are not less important than the areas of agreement underlying disputes between perspectives.

Circumscribing the Debates

The Consensus behind Disputes within the State Formation Approach The rise of the territorial state is the key impulse for regime change within the state formation approach. The great transformation involved in the rise of the modern state corresponds to the transition from a system of "parcellized sovereignty" to an organization that monopolizes the means of coercion within the territory defined by its boundaries.[9] According to the authors adhering to the state formation perspective, this transformation over time affecting all countries in Early Modern Europe was nevertheless refracted by context-specific conditions that account for variations in regime forms across countries. All European countries converged on the territorial state as a generic form of political organization, but variations in the process of state formation determined that states differed in the specific kind of political regime they adopted.[10]

The explanation of the variation over time involved in the emergence of the modern state is the focus of a remarkable, albeit implicit, consensus among authors within the state formation perspective. A shared empirical understanding and theoretical account of the rise of the territorial state is precisely a distinctive feature of this perspective. Authors adhering to the state formation approach would agree with Otto Hintze's pioneering insight: "[A]ll state organization was originally military organization, organization for war. This can be regarded as an assured result of comparative history."[11] The core causal claim of this approach is that the territorial state emerged in Western Europe as the only viable form of political organization in the wake of the escalation of geopolitical competition during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a direct consequence of the superior military performance of the territorial state, geopolitical

competition forced rulers struggling for political survival to centralize the means of coercion, and open war provoked the extinction of the various systems of fragmented sovereignty that had dominated the continent since Antiquity—feudal empires, city-states, urban federations, and theocratic enclaves. War and preparation for war caused the convergence on the territorial state by selecting out less competitive forms of military organization.

Political survival in Early Modern Europe depended not only on the modernization of military organization but also on the intensification of the extractive activities that would provide the financial resources required by preparation for war. In effect, the military and extractive organizations that rulers in Early Modern Europe built as a byproduct of preparation for war were actually the central organizational components of the modern state.[12] The integral character of the connection between coercive and extractive activities in the formation of the modern state was early captured by Norbert Elias:

> The society of what we call the modern age is characterized…by a certain level of monopolization. Free use of military weapons is forbidden to the individual and reserved to a central authority. Likewise, taxation of property or income is concentrated in the hands of a central social authority. The financial resources thus flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of military force, while this in turn maintains the monopoly of taxation….They are two sides of the same monopoly. If one disappears, the other automatically follows.[13]

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

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

Thus, authors within the state formation perspective not only agree on the empirical understanding of the state formation process but also share the intuition that the main source of regime variation resides in the extractive aspects of that process. Against this backdrop, debates about regime variations within this perspective concern the specific conditions that were paramount in shaping domestic resistance against state-making initiatives, the extractive strategies with which the state-building elites tried to overcome them, and the ensuing conflicts. In other words, disagreements within the state formation perspective refer to the conditions of refraction of the common shock represented by the

financial pressures imposed by geopolitical competition. The works by Tilly, Ertman, and Downing, three of the most sophisticated contributions of the state formation approach, exemplify these disputes.

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

> Rulers pursuing similar ends—especially successful preparation for war—in very different environments responded to those environments by fashioning distinctive relations to the major social classes within them. The reshaping of relations between ruler and ruled produced new, contrasting forms of government, each more or less adapted to its social setting.[14]

Tilly's point of departure is the observation that the territories that state builders managed to control differed strongly in their level of urbanization and the incidence of commerce.[15] The key contrast is between the feudal manor and the city, or between "coercion-intensive" and "capital-intensive" settings. Thus, state builders in search of the means of war had to confront two types of rivals, either landlords or merchants, and adapt their extractive strategies accordingly.[16] Coercion-intensive settings, such as Russia, Brandemburg, and Castile, were regions of subsistence agriculture and few cities, where resources were in kind (crops, cattle, land), dispersed in the countryside, and controlled by landlords who relied on coercion to extract them. By contrast, the Netherlands, northern Italy, and the south and west of England were capital-intensive regions, with many cities and commercial wealth, where markets, monetized exchanges, and high value-added production prevailed.

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

Ertman agrees with Tilly in explaining regime trajectories as the outcome of the conflictual interaction between state-making rulers and their domestic adversaries. Yet Ertman changes the focus from the socioeconomic to the political organization of resistance against the state formation process. The key opposition to the state-making ruler was not that of landlords and merchants, but that of the local governments and

representative bodies—the estates—from which the crown had had to obtain authorization to levy new taxes since the Low Middle Ages.

Ertman argues that in countries where local governments in the Middle Ages were organized in a "participatory" manner, as in England, Scandinavia, Hungary, and Poland, the estates generated reserves of social capital, as well as financial and military resources, that could be mobilized to resist absolutism and force the crown to accept a constitutional arrangement of power sharing. Where, on the other hand, local government was structured in a top-down, "administrative" way, as in Portugal, Spain, France, and Germany, representative assemblies remained internally divided, and thereby rulers were able over the long run to play one chamber off against the other and weaken the representative body's ability to resist the ruler's absolutist designs.

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

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

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

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

The only area of disagreement among Tilly, Ertman, and Downing refers, in the last instance, to the conditions that refracted the state formation process into divergent regime trajectories. However, from a logical point of view, Downing's version of the conditions of refraction, far from incompatible with Tilly's and Ertman's, is actually complementary to them. The key point is that, when analyzing the struggle between the state-building rulers and the groups reluctant to surrender the essential resources, Tilly and Ertman allow for variations in the strength of one of the two sides in the conflict—the resistance by the subject groups—and keep constant the other—the state builders' onslaught.[17] Downing makes the opposite analysis, for he focuses on variations in the state builders' attack—which was more intense the more they had to rely on domestic resources—while assuming that the nature of the resistance against it was constant. However, a causal model allowing for variations in the relative power and political posture of both contenders is not only viable but also desirable.

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

By tracing variations in national political regimes to the formative period of modern capitalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Moore's analysis adopts the same time frame as that of the state formation perspective. In the same way that state-building elites responded to war-induced fiscal pressures by fashioning different

extractive policies, rural lords reacted to the challenge of commercial agriculture by pursuing different strategies of labor control and promoting alternate political coalitions. The transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture was, according to Moore, refracted into different regime trajectories by the prevailing structure of class relations, including the form of exploitation of peasant labor by landowners and the balance of power between the landed upper class and the urban bourgeoisie.[18] Whereas in England and the northern states of the United States landowners relied on "free labor" to work the soil, in France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and China, the rural upper classes intensified or reintroduced labor-repressive forms of agriculture, such as slavery, serfdom, and feudal dues. In relation to the balance of power between the landlords and the bourgeoisie, the English and northern U.S. rural upper classes found in the city a strong ally for launching a bourgeois revolution to remove the vestiges of pre-modern times. With the abolition of royal absolutism after the Puritan Revolution in England, and the elimination of slavery in the southern U.S. after the Civil War, England and the United States converged on democracy as the long-term regime outcome. In France the bourgeoisie was also a powerful group, but the labor-repressive practices of the French landowners precluded a coalition between them. In Germany, Japan, China, and Russia, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie was not powerful enough to challenge the landlords' interest in retaining the prevailing socioeconomic arrangements.

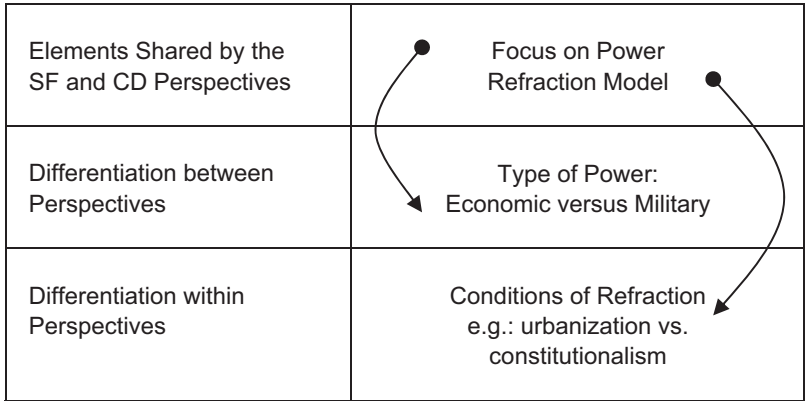
To explain the divergent regime trajectories within the subset of countries where landlords adapted to commercial agriculture by means of forced labor practices, Moore introduces a second filter of refraction—the capacity of the peasantry to resist the landowners' repressive strategies.[19] In France, China, and Russia, the solidarity networks among peasants were more robust than the vertical links between peasant and lord, but whereas the French peasantry found a strong anti-feudal ally in the city to produce a bourgeois revolution and placed France on the democratic trajectory, the lack of a bourgeois component in Russia and China made peasant insurrection install a communist dictatorship. Finally, the absence of an organized peasant opposition allowed German and Japanese rural lords to preserve labor repressive practices and, in alliance with a dependent bourgeoisie, oversee a "revolution from above" that resulted in fascist dictatorship.

In an alternate version of the capitalist development approach, Therborn argues that none of the bourgeois revolutions created liberal democracies and, furthermore, that democracy "has always and everywhere been established in struggle against the bourgeoisie."[20] Besides opening an internal debate within the capitalist development approach, Therborn's case also involves a major criticism of rival approaches to regime change, especially modernization theory. According to Therborn, cross-national statistical findings showing a high correlation between democracy and basic indicators of economic development—such as industrialization and literacy—are correct, but for reasons that modernization studies fail to identify. Specifically, Therborn states that:

> The advance and development of capitalism strengthens the working class, [and] this explains the traditional sociological correlations of democracy with wealth, literacy, and urbanization.[21]

Hence, the growth of the working class was, according to Therborn, the key impulse for regime change. However, in contrast to models positing a linear relation between the strength of the working class and democratization, Therborn argues that cross-country differences regarding the viability of multiclass coalitions refracted the rise of the labor movement into a variety of regime trajectories. Multiclass coalitions played a crucial role because, according to Therborn, the labor movement was nowhere strong enough to achieve democracy on its own. Therborn identifies two auspicious conditions for the construction of pro-reform coalitions pivoting on the working class: the existence of an independent class of small farmers, and divisions within the ruling class. Whereas the latter led to intense vying for popular support, as in England, the Netherlands, the Third Republic, and the United States, the former favored the creation of a popular coalition broad enough to surmount the upper classes' resistance to democratic institutions, as in Denmark, Australia, and New Zealand. By counterfactual analysis, Therborn argues that, in the cases where none of these two conditions was present—Germany, Italy, Austria, and Japan—dictatorial regimes would not have been dismantled had it not been for foreign military interventions. By way of recapitulation of the explanatory arguments, Table 1 presents the hierarchy of attributes that define works within the state formation and capitalist development perspectives, from those shared by all of them to the ones that are distinctive of individual authors.

Table 1 Shared and Distinctive Elements of the State Formation and Capitalist Development Perspectives



Unpacking the Outcome; Revealing False Debates

State formation and capitalist development approaches resort to the same kind of theoretical concepts and explanatory models. But do they explain the same outcomes? Democracy is a long-term regime outcome that all authors focus upon. However, a

democratic regime is a multidimensional set of institutions, including representative assemblies, division of powers, popular participation, protection of civil rights, and competition among parties. More important, the installation of each component is the result of nonsimultaneous, relatively independent causal processes. This multifaceted character of the democratic form of rule—even when viewed in the strict sense of a delimited set of political institutions—underlies the main pitfall in controversies across and within state formation and capitalist development perspectives. Potential confusion in debates about regime variations is produced by "underspecified theses"—that is, causal arguments that fail to indicate the specific component of the regime outcome they focus upon. A subtler problem, and much more frequent in comparative political sociology, is created by "misplaced countertheses." Like all countertheses, misplaced countertheses are presented as replacing prior, allegedly wrong, regime explanations. They are misplaced because, despite being specific enough as to the regime component that is the focus of their explanation, they fail to notice that it does not coincide with the one explained by the supposedly flawed one. A misplaced counterthesis may be right in relation to the causal connection it tries to make, but it is wrong as a disconfirmation of the explanation under critical inspection. Hence, competing theories may actually not be rival explanations of the same regime outcome but rather mutually independent hypotheses about its different constituent parts. Regime explanations may differ because the specific outcome explained by each is different—and not because of some intractable discrepancy in their understanding of the causal process behind regime variations.

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

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

Consultation versus Competition In emphasizing the medieval roots of democracy, Downing's version of the state formation approach to regime change is not only an explicit counterthesis to Moore's bourgeois revolution argument, but also affects

Tilly's case about the role of the modern city in the creation of citizenship rights. Downing's argument can be reduced to two parallel propositions. First, when problems of war and finance arose in the early modern period, rulers who had no outside source of money were left with only one alternative to the loss of sovereignty: swift mobilization of domestic resources, which meant constitutional crises, the destruction of collegial bodies, and the rise of absolutism. Second, rulers who found alternate financial sources, such as commercial wealth and foreign loans, were able to escape the conflict with collegial institutions controlling taxation, and thus the constitutional legacy of the Middle Ages entered the modern era untouched.

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

The option of considering medieval constitutionalism as a component of modern democracy rather than as a predisposition to it, as Downing sometimes does, does not solve the problem. Given the obvious differences between medieval constitutionalism and modern democracy in terms of political competition and popular participation, the former would not only be just one of several components of the latter: it would also be a rather insignificant one in relation to Moore's and Tilly's research goals. The capitalist development factors that Downing dismisses provide more leverage in explaining the emergence of the democratic components on which Moore and others do focus.

If Downing does not focus on the institutions of competition and participation, the two institutional components included in Robert Dahl's definition, what component of democracy does his argument explain?[22] Like Ertman, Downing focuses on the "consultation" component of the democratic institutional set, which basically refers to constitutional arrangements of power sharing between the executive branch and collegial bodies of decision-making. Hence, what Downing and Ertman explain is whether geopolitical competition resulted in the institutionalization or the dismantling of the division of powers, and related variations in the political resources and responsibilities allocated to the legislatures within the broader institutional framework of the modern state.[23]

Competition versus Participation In the same way that the distinction between consultation and competition shows that Downing's and Ertman's versions of the state formation approach are not countertheses in relation to Moore's argument, the distinction between competition and participation can help clarify the debate within the capitalist development approach regarding the relative weight of the bourgeoisie

and labor in the rise of democracy. This line of analysis, explicitly advanced by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, attempts to disentangle the discrepancy between Moore and Therborn by arguing that whereas the bourgeois revolution explains the competition component of democracy, the rise of the working class explains the participation component. Specifically, the causal model advanced by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens views each of the new social classes that emerge in the course of capitalist development as fighting for its own inclusion in the political arena, and resisting the incorporation of those below it.[24] In this view, the bourgeoisie struggled for its own inclusion against the feudal nobility but opposed the extension of participation rights to the working class. Successive institutional transformations incorporating new classes into the political regime occur when the power of the new class counterbalances that of the already included ones.

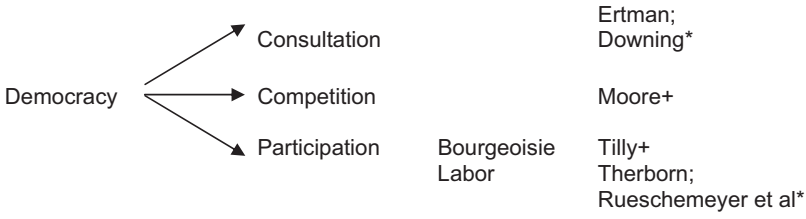
This argument, however, must be refined in two directions—one conceptual, the other empirical. First, the competition component of democracy does not reduce only, or even primarily, to "bourgeois inclusion," as Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens imply. Competition, in the strict sense of a contest for electoral support between alternate political parties, is essentially a peaceful device for solving conflicts of interests around public issues, irrespective of the interests of whom or how many are represented in the contest (an issue that belongs to the participation component). As Schumpeter, following Weber, emphasized, the competition component of democracy must be contrasted not only to the lack of public contestation over political issues in despotic regimes, but also to violent forms of competition among rival groups, which predominate in military praetorian polities.[25] Moore's outcome variables are certainly not fully specified, but it is clear that he is not only interested in accounting for the political inclusion of the bourgeoisie. He also wants to explain the rise of a peculiar institutional configuration that allows for the public expression of political disagreements, and at the same time provides a peaceful mechanism for working them out.[26] It is this regime outcome, and not simply bourgeois inclusion, that makes the bourgeois revolution thesis interesting—if only because peaceful political contestation is a less obvious outcome resulting from rise of the bourgeoisie than bourgeois inclusion. If the competition component is thus reconceptualized, a second qualification of Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens' argument, specifically refining the connection between the working class and the participation component of democracy, is in order. According to Moore,

> In England manufacturing and agrarian interests competed with one another for popular favor during the rest of the nineteenth century, gradually extending the suffrage.[27]

By tracing the extension of the franchise to the strategic dynamics of a preexisting competitive political arena, Moore makes a rather obvious causal connection, which has nevertheless been ignored by other studies within the state formation and capitalist development approaches. The argument would be that the participation component of democracy was caused not by the emergence of the working class, as Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens argue, but by another component of the democratic institutional

set—competition—which was actually the conquest of the bourgeoisie. In a recent assessment of the evidence on the role of the working class in democratic reforms, Ruth Berins Collier has shown that strategic competition among "bourgeois" parties was at least as important as labor protest in the extension of rights to political participation during the first wave of democratization.[28] Hence, Moore's cursory suggestion regarding the origins of the participation component has a significant empirical base, and Therborn's and Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens' rejection of the bourgeois thesis must be qualified. Figure 1 summarizes the disaggregation of the outcome variable in regime analysis, and links individual authors to a specific component.

Figure 1 Disaggregating the Outcome Variable



+ Outcome is underspecified by the author.

* Misplaced counterthesis in relation to Moore.

Conclusion

Disagreements about the causes of regime change in comparative political sociology have been excessively exaggerated. Explanations of regime variations are much more similar—and regime outcomes are much more different—than commonly acknowledged by producers and consumers of the comparative political sociology literature. Beneath the disputes, major areas of consensus can be found. The analytical framework centered on the concept of power and the refraction model of causation constitute the theoretical core of all comparative political sociology studies. The combined adoption of those two tools is in turn based on a shared vision of political regimes as the outcome of power struggles that emerged in the course of the large-scale, macrohistorical transformations involved in "the Making of the Modern World," as Moore called it.

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

Modernization theory, especially in its original formulation, also aspired to associate regime variations to the macrohistorical changes involved in the passage from traditional to modern societies. However, capitalist development and state formation perspectives critically depart from modernization theory in two key respects, one given by the power-centered analytical framework, and the other by the refraction model. According to modernization theory, the passage from traditional to modern societies is a multifaceted process involving interdependent changes in all areas of human activity, including urbanization, industrialization, education, and secularization.[29] For capitalist development and state formation perspectives, the problem with such a vision of the rise of modern society is that it fails to grasp the importance of the transformations in the organization of power—either by placing them on a par with other changes or ignoring them altogether. Hence, in contrast to modernization theory, state formation and capitalist development approaches conceptualize the rise of modern society primarily in terms of a revolution in the organization of power. For state formation and capitalist development approaches, no aspect of the rise of modern society is more important than the centralization of the means of coercion in the territorial state and the concentration of the means of production in the capitalist firm. Other transformations either follow from them or are not as relevant for explaining regime variations.

The refraction model of causation is the other theoretical component that differentiates state formation and capitalist development approaches from modernization theory. Underlying this contrast is the rejection, by state formation and capitalist development arguments, of unilinear, evolutionary models of causation as a proper framework for understanding the effects of modernization on regime change. Both in old and new versions of modernization theory, different political regimes correspond to different levels of modernization, and democracy is viewed as the dominant regime form associated with modern societies. By contrast, according to the refraction model, countries may enter the modern age with a variety of regime types, depending on how the conflicts triggered by the state formation and capitalist development processes are solved in each in case. An interesting asymmetry between unlinear and refraction models of causation regarding the issue of regime convergence and divergence may be noted: whereas unilinear models rule out divergence of political regimes for the same modernization level, refraction models do not preclude convergence—room is made for the possibility that the conditions of refraction are roughly equivalent across cases.

State formation and capitalist development approaches are incompatible with modernization theory, but they are perfectly complementary with game theory, despite appearances and mutual distrust. The notion has prevailed that the focus on the macrofoundations of regime trajectories—a central concern in comparative political sociology—and the specification of the causal mechanisms underlying regime changes—the essence of game theory—are opposite enterprises. This notion could not be more incorrect. When advocates of comparative political sociology place regime dynamics within the macrohistorical contexts of state formation and capitalist development, the main purpose is precisely to specify as clearly as possible the essential elements of an eminently strategic model of regime change. This includes the definition of the main social and political

groups, such as crowns, collegial bodies, landlords, peasant communities, and city dwellers, the specification of their economic interests and political projects, and the identification of the power resources with which they can pursue their own objectives and block those of their rivals. The macrohistorical process involved in the rise of the modern state, for instance, provides the basic information required to model the strategic interaction between crown and assemblies in Early Modern Europe. How should the crown's decision to attack medieval institutions, and the decision of the assemblies to resist it, be understood, if not in a geopolitical context that forced rulers to mobilize as many resources as possible? Thus, a focus on the macrofoundations of regime change, the distinctive contribution of state formation and capitalist development approaches, not only does not preclude the specification of mechanisms but also facilitates it. In the modernization approach regime changes are largely anonymous processes, with no actors or actions involved. By contrast, in delineating actors and preferences, the capitalist development and state formation approaches take the fundamental preliminary step for building a game-theoretic model of regime change.

Major game-theoretic breakthroughs in regime analysis, including that of Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, would not have been possible without the prior identification of groups, cleavages, and conflicts by prior contributions from comparative political sociology.[30] In turn, in an exceptional example of true intellectual complementarities, Acemoglu and Robinson have contributed to regime analysis what game theory is best suited for: an original, general, and well-specified mechanism of regime change. In agreement with the basic spirit of macrofoundation approaches, Acemoglu and Robinson's model takes changes in the balance of power as the driving force behind regime change. Democratization occurs when groups excluded from the political regime experience a sudden but transitory increase in their physical capability to challenge the group in power (for instance, the crown of the state formation approach or the bourgeoisie of the capitalist development one). The elites may promise economic concessions to the challengers, but the elites and the subordinate groups face an insurmountable commitment problem: they both know that when the balance of power returns to normal, the elites will have an incentive to renege on their promise, and the subordinate groups will be left with no resources to enforce it. To prevent rebellion, then, both the elites and the excluded sectors agree on the extension of political rights, that is, democratization, which furnishes would-be rebels with a permanent ability to enforce policy promises. A transitory shock in the balance of de facto power is thus locked in into a permanent rebalance of institutional power.

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

ahead on the nature and duration of the shocks to extrainstitutional power behind institutional changes.

The reconstruction of the common theoretical matrix underlying state formation and capitalist development explanations has circumscribed disputes across and within perspectives to their proper proportions. The examination of the outcome variables, on the other hand, has further reduced the debates by showing that disputes are actually based on misplaced countertheses and false disconfirmations. Different versions of the state formation and capitalist development arguments focus on different components of the democratic institutional structure. State formation and capitalist development approaches depart sharply from other approaches in political sociology, like modernization and cultural theories, but combined with game-theoretic ones promise great theoretical rewards.

NOTES

1. Max Weber, *General Economic History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1981), 320.

2. On the key distinction between accumulation and concentration of power resources (either economic or political), see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 16–28.

3. Brian Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 239.

4. Göran Therborn, "The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," *New Left Review*, 103 (May–June 1977), 17. The image of a bourgeois revolution creating a democratic regime of course belongs to Marx, but Therborn addresses the statement against Moore, who explicitly emphasized both the bourgeois and revolutionary origins of political democracy. See Barrington Moore Jr., *The Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship* (London: Penguin, 1966), 418, 431. Within the capitalist development approach, the alternative hypothesis—that the strength of the working class actually explains the rise of democracy—has also been called into question, especially as to its scope of application. See Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992), 40–63; and Ruth Berins Collier, *Paths toward Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14–17, 33–36, 54–59, 171–77.

5. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, 15, chap. 5 passim; Thomas Ertman, *The Birth of the Leviathan* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 19–25.

6. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1947), 269–73.

7. Karl Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 473.

8. H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), 46.

9. The expression "parcellized sovereignty" was coined by Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1974), xi.

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

11. Otto Hintze, "Military Organization and the Organization of the State," in Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 181.

12. Gabriel Ardant, "Financial Policy and Economic Infrastructure of Modern States and Nations," in Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 164–242.

13. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 268.

14. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 30.

15. Ibid., 15, 20–30, 99–107.

16. State builders were not always successful. When landlords were too powerful, as in Hungary and Poland, the very process of state formation failed. As Polish and Hungarian nobles in control of the

essential resources vetoed the centralizing initiatives, state builders could not meet their geopolitical challenges, and lost substantial extensions of territory to the hands of the Germans, Russians, and Scandinavians. Similarly, too powerful cities, such as Genoa and Venice, routinely frustrated political centralization projects in the Italian peninsula.

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

18. Moore, *Social Origins*, 420, 423, 433–35.

19. Ibid., 453–83.

20. Therborn, "Rule of Capital," 35.

21. Ibid., 29.

22. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), chap. 1.

23. For a systematic conceptualization of the consultation component, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of Berkeley Press, 1978), 271–83; and Randall Collins, *Macrohistory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 114, 122–31.

24. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, *Capitalist Development*, 77; see also 44, 47.

25. Schumpeter, *Capitalism*, 271. In Dahl's adaptation of prior politico-institutional definitions of democracy, the contrast between competition and the lack thereof was emphasized at the expense of the contrast between peaceful competition and violent competition. Recovering the second contrast, of course, does not entail any kind of stretching of the minimalist definition of democracy. For arguments placing competition as a peaceful mechanism of conflict resolution at the center of minimalist definitions of democracy, see Norberto Bobbio, *Quale Socialismo?* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editori, 1976), chap. 5. Critics of liberal democracy have also underlined peaceful political competition as its distinctive feature. Carl Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1926) is the *opus classicus* in this respect.

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

27. Moore, *Social Origins*, 444.

28. Berins Collier, *Paths toward Democracy*, 33–76.

29. Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958), p. 438.

30. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Economic Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).