

POLITICAL CULTURE, POLITICAL STRUCTURE, AND DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF LEGITIMATION AND OPPOSITION STRUCTURE¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

Political culture is one of the renegade concepts of contemporary social science. Theorists have not provided a persuasive picture of its causal role, but analysts have not been able to do without it in explaining empirical outcomes. In this article, I explore some of the ways that political culture combines with political structure to create or maintain a democratic regime form.

Three main positions have emerged in debates about political culture since World War II. A first generation of researchers, many working in a functionalist framework, argued that political culture plays a major role in determining political structures and regime outcomes (e.g., Adorno, et al. 1950; Stouffer 1955; Lipset 1981 [1960], 1963; Almond and Verba 1963). A second, critical generation argued either that political culture plays no role, or that it simply follows from the structure and institutions of the regime. Most critics

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took broadly materialist positions (not necessarily Marxist), and the most radical of them adopted a rational choice framework (e.g., Barry 1970). Yet while their critiques were persuasive, the critics' positive theoretical prescriptions were less compelling, and researchers have found it difficult to deny political culture a causal influence altogether. Thus, a third answer to the question was suggested by Almond (1980), a major proponent of the first position, that political culture and political structure affect each other reciprocally, in a complex fashion. This assertion was the easy part; neither Almond nor other writers have indicated in any detail what this interaction looks like. Instead, a new wave of writing, sometimes citing new data, simply tends to argue that the first generation was right and that political culture plays a major role (especially Inglehart 1988; also see Chilton 1988; Eckstein 1988; Wildavsky 1987, 1988).

In this paper, I adopt Almond's third alternative and investigate how the *combination* of political culture and political structure contributes to regime outcomes. Since it is impossible to address this whole question in a single article, I restrict my discussion to a special, but central, case: how legitimization and opposition structure (party systems and government coalitions) jointly contribute to democratic outcomes. In the discussion section, I suggest that this special case can be generalized.

My discussion proceeds in several stages. I begin by arguing that two popular theories are implausible. First, we do not necessarily need "deep" political culture to account for democratic outcomes. Democratic legitimization, a shallower aspect of political culture, probably suffices. Second, I argue that we cannot account for the emergence of liberal democracy simply in terms of the number and power of actors who want it. Liberal democracy is not just an additive sum of "actor-vectors," but rather, a product of actors' interaction. This interaction sometimes produces different outcomes from those the actors intend, just as drivers intending to spend the weekend at the beach sometimes spend it in a traffic jam instead. Thus, I describe how political culture and political structure combine to produce regime outcomes. First, I describe one's effects on the other. Legitimation constrains the influence of opposition structure, and opposition structure affects the growth of democratic legitimization. Second, I describe how the combination of the two factors affects the creation, survival, or collapse of democracy.

In this paper, I employ a social action framework in the tradition of Weber.² This framework shares features with other metatheories used in the literature on political culture, but it also differs at important points. First, a social action framework resembles rational choice theory, and differs from functionalism, in restricting motivation and goals to the actor, not the system. That is, teleology (goal-seeking) resides not in the system, but in actors who want certain things for themselves or the system. This orientation avoids many of functionalism's tautological problems. Second, like rational choice theory, a

social action approach focuses not on system-system effects but on how actors' behavior and interaction is "transformed" into system-level outcomes, and how system-level features constrain actors (see Coleman 1986; Wippler and Lindenberg 1987). This orientation permits the social-action analyst to construct subtler models of actor-system causality. Third, a social action framework resembles functionalism, and differs from rational choice theory, in broadening the view of goals and meaningful action to include many nonrational forms. This orientation avoids many of rational-choice's tautological and empirical problems. And finally, a social action approach resembles institutionalist theories, and differs from rational choice theory, in treating many corporate entities as social actors (but see North 1981; March and Olson 1984, 1989; Benjamin and Elkin, eds. 1985; Nordlinger 1987; for attempts to reconcile these differences).

II. DEFINITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

Political culture is that part of culture relevant to politics. It includes political symbols, values, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, expectations, goals, and so on. Political structure includes political institutions like constitutions and laws, organizations like the state and political parties, and configurations of political actors like party systems and government coalitions.

In order to discuss political culture and political structure concretely in a single article, I restrict my discussion to *Legitimation*, *Opposition Structure*, and *Democracy* in the industrial capitalist countries of North America and Western Europe—although I occasionally mention other regions. (1) Legitimation is a form of political support (see, e.g., Easton 1965, 1975; Habermas 1975; Held 1987). In contrast to party support or confidence in the administration, legitimation is oriented toward the regime rather than the state's incumbents and agencies. And it is oriented toward political processes (the rules of the game) rather than outcomes (who wins the game). Empirical studies have supported these distinctions and shown that legitimation has different sources than do other forms of political support (e.g., Citrin 1974; Weil 1989). (2) Opposition structure is the configuration of political actors pursuing competing goals or interests. It is used here as an umbrella term for party systems and government coalition structures. (3) Democracy or liberal democracy as used here is equivalent to Dahl's (1971) term, "polyarchy." According to Dahl, polyarchy is characterized by high levels of inclusiveness and contestation (see also Pennock 1979; Sartori 1987). Inclusiveness, the democratic part, is the extent of the franchise, with periodic elections to parliamentary bodies, and majority rule. Contestation, the liberal part, entails limited public conflict, tolerance of one's political opponents, and First Amendment-style civil liberties. I use the expression "democratic outcomes"

to indicate the successful creation, maintenance, or survival of a democratic regime.

III. TWO POPULAR BUT IMPLAUSIBLE THEORIES

Two popular theories hold that democratic outcomes are only possible given a consensus on certain deep values or a decisive victory in a power struggle. Each of these theories is implausible.

The first theory claims that democracy depends on "deep" elements of political culture. Functionalist theory, in particular, argues that liberal democracy requires consensus on fundamental values. This theory seems wrong: one can probably explain democratic outcomes simply with reference to legitimation, a "shallower" element of political culture. To begin with, consensus theory contradicts half of the definition of liberal democracy, the liberal half that political actors accept limited public conflict or contestation. As Rustow (1970, p. 362) puts it, "Consensus on fundamentals is an implausible precondition. A people who were not in conflict about some rather fundamental matters would have little need to devise democracy's elaborate rules for conflict resolution." The liberal values that *do* support democracy specifically do *not* require consensus on "deep" cultural values. Rather, a legitimation of the rules of contestation—an agreement to disagree—supports democracy.

Other versions of this theory agree that "democratic self-restraint" (Schumpeter 1975 [1950]) is needed for a democratic regime, but argue that this value itself can only emerge in certain cultures. For instance, democracy might depend on particular "deep" moral-religious elements of western culture, and this might explain why democracy is found only in western or westernized societies. Or, alternatively, democracy might depend on a certain stage of "development" of culture. Thus, democratic outcomes might be unlikely until contestants in a power struggle (e.g., rural landlords and peasants in developing countries) adopt an Enlightenment culture and acquire democratic self-restraint.

These versions of the theory are also implausible. First, democracy is not restricted to western or westernized societies—unless "western" is made part of the definition of democracy. Japan, India, and several Latin American countries have had democratic regimes for a long time; and recent transitions to democracy are well under way in other Asian, Latin American, and Eastern European countries. These "non-western" democracies have not been free of problems and may suffer reversals, but this was also true of most "western" democracies prior to 1945 (see Lipset 1994). Moreover, similar objections were once made of the suitability of industrial capitalism to countries with non-western cultures, especially those without a "Protestant" work ethic. Japan and

other Asian economies have disproved this thesis with a vengeance. Second, democracy emerged in many western countries *without* dramatic changes in their “deeper” political cultures. Britain and France provide examples. The competing values in the English Civil War were anything but self-restrained: at an extreme, it pitted religious fanaticism against absolutist despotism. Yet support for parliamentary institutions and practices emerged after the Civil War as part of a pragmatic decision to stop fighting over deeper values—an agreement to disagree. It is hard to imagine that this entailed a change in fundamental “western” values in a thirty to fifty-year period (from 1640/60 to 1688) rather than a change in “shallower” political values like legitimation (see Weil 1987a; cf. Zaret 1989, this volume). And the French Revolution can be interpreted as a continuation of, rather than a break with, many elements of French political culture, including Enlightenment (e.g., Tocqueville 1955; Furet 1981; Doyle 1988).

A second popular theory, which might be called an interest-based domination model, proposes that democracy simply represents the interests of a dominant social group that wins a power struggle and imposes its regime on the losers. The model posits a number of actors, with certain amounts of power, pursuing certain goals. Actors’ goals are determined by their interests, and these, in turn, are determined by their social position. One can conceive of these actors as vectors with particular magnitudes (power) and directions (goals). One predicts a system-outcome by summing the actor-vectors. Most simply, one would predict that liberal democracy will come into being if enough actors with enough power want it. If this theory is true, then there is little need to investigate how political culture and political structure *combine* to produce regime outcomes, or how political actors *interact* so as to produce outcomes that were not part of their intentions. It is only necessary to know who is strongest and what they want. However, this theory also appears implausible on closer examination.

The main problem with an interest-based domination model of democracy is that democracy is not a “goal” in the usual sense. Ordinarily, an actor aims to maximize utilities, that is, to accumulate power, riches, esteem, chances for salvation, and the like. But democracy is a method for *regulating* the pursuit of such first-order goals. Everything else being equal, an actor would usually rather win and maximize utilities. Pursuing democracy is a way of hedging one’s bet that one will win, because democracy protects one from losing too badly. True, democracy can be a second-order goal like insurance (see Przeworski 1986, 1987, for a similar point). But just as we do not usually say that an actor mainly “wants” insurance (because that implies a loss), we do not say that an actor mainly “wants” democracy: the actor mainly “wants” to win.

Proposition. Social actors aim at maximizing their interests, especially power over other actors. Therefore, no actor aims at democracy as its first choice: an actor would rather win power than share power.

However, if an actor does not believe it can win power, it may aim at democracy as its second choice: an actor would rather share power than lose power.

To be sure, liberal democracy is also a type of regime, a form of legitimate domination. If a nondemocratic regime exists, an actor who is fully excluded from power may prefer democracy in order to have some power rather than none. In this secondary sense, we can say that an actor "wants" or has an "interest" in democracy. Of course, this "secondary" goal is no trivial thing: it contains most attributes of citizenship. The struggle for the vote alone has been one of the major features of modern history. Yet most disenfranchised groups were also pursuing "primary" goals, usually attempting to redress their social or economic disabilities.

This coincidence of goals perhaps caused many theorists to conflate their notion of democracy with their notion of other interests. The classical political economists and utilitarians introduced this conflation, and Marx and his followers broadened it. Thus, John Stuart Mill argued that what Tocqueville saw in America was not democracy, but middle-class civilization; and Marx argued that "bourgeois" democracy was a sham, perpetrated by the new ruling class for the purposes of suppressing the working classes. Both writers simply extended a model of class interests from classical political economy and utilitarianism: if classes prefer certain economic policies, then they probably also prefer certain types of regimes.

Class- or interest-based domination models of democracy have not held up well. Writers who have sought to extend these arguments into the twentieth century have become entangled in a mass of conceptual problems (e.g., Ayçoberry 1981 chronicles many of their difficulties in accounting for Nazism). How were popular dictatorships possible? Why did (parts of) the working class sometimes advocate authoritarian means and ends? How is it that if a class could bring a regime into existence, the regime did not serve its interests (e.g., the petty-bourgeoisie and Nazism)? Why did institutions like the churches sometimes advocate democracy and sometimes authoritarianism? The simple answer to these problems is probably that an interest-based domination model of democracy was never adequate in the first place.

The best recent class-analytical accounts of the emergence of democracy in western societies confirm this point (Moore 1966; Therborn 1977; Luebbert 1987, 1991; Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992; see also Tilly 1985; Downing 1992 for similar accounts that focus on elites or estates). Moore argues that the middle classes led in favoring democracy, and Therborn, Luebbert, and Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens argue that the working classes led. But none of these writers argues that the leading class had the strength to bring about the transition by itself. Rather, they argue that it required *alliances* of classes to bring about democracy. And since these were

alliances of convenience rather than true convergences of interests, the writers actually describe a *balance* between, or an *interaction* among, classes at the system level. Thus, Moore states that if the upper classes or an upper-class coalition was so strong that it was tempted to suppress the lower classes in the process of industrialization, a democratic outcome was unlikely. If there was a balance between the crown and the aristocracy they were unable to overwhelm the emerging bourgeoisie; and if the aristocracy was not too strong by itself or in coalition with the bourgeoisie, it was unable to suppress the peasants and workers (Moore 1966, pp. 430-431). Therborn's argument is virtually a mirror-image: "Although the labor movement was the only consistent democratic force on the arena, it was nowhere strong enough to achieve bourgeois [*sic*] democracy on its own, without the aid of victorious foreign armies, domestic allies more powerful than itself, or splits in the ranks of the enemy [the bourgeoisie]" (Therborn 1977, p. 24). Luebbert (1987, 1991) argues that less depended on the democratic or antidemocratic intentions of classes than on the willingness and ability of a unified bourgeoisie and working-class movement to cooperate in the face of the economic crisis of the 1930s. This depended, in turn, on a prior history of moderation and accommodation. And while Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) argue that "the working class was the most consistently pro-democratic force," they state at the outset that the first precondition for democracy is a "balance of power among different classes and class coalitions" (pp. 5, 8).

Thus, an interest-based domination model is not sufficient to explain democratic outcomes. Domination models conflate actors' "primary" interest in winning with their "secondary" interest in reducing losses through democracy or not being disenfranchised under another form of regime. Still, an adequate theory of liberal democracy must incorporate interests. How else can we explain why actors struggle in the first place? Without this basic fact, as Rustow (1970) said, there is no need for democracy's elaborate rules of conflict resolution. Yet models that contain only interests, like domination models, are not sufficient: they must be incorporated into more adequate models that account for *interactions* among actors pursuing their (primary) interests.

IV. OPPOSITION STRUCTURE'S EFFECT ON DEMOCRATIC OUTCOMES, CONSTRAINED BY LEGITIMATION

A theory of democratic outcomes should account for the *interaction* of social actors and the *combined* effects of legitimation and opposition structure (or more broadly, political culture and political structure). The structure of opposition—the party system and coalition forms—is a prime example of the interaction of political actors trying to attain their goals. Scholars have argued since the collapse of some European democracies in the interwar period that

the opposition structure can affect regime outcomes. Their claim is undoubtedly true, and debate has centered around which features of the opposition structure are most important. Yet many of these structural analyses neglect to incorporate political culture, especially legitimation, into their accounts. In this section, I review the debates and show how including legitimation helps clarify which elements of the opposition structure have most influence on democratic outcomes. My general argument is that political structure alone is not sufficient to explain outcomes: we need the combined effects of political culture and political structure. And my specific arguments isolate just which combinations are most important.

Party-System Volatility and Protest Voting

Scholars have long debated whether electoral volatility³ and protest contributed to the collapse of democracies in the 1930s, especially the mobilization of first-time or previously alienated voters (e.g., Lipset 1981 [1960]; Hamilton 1982; and Falter, Lindenberg, and Schumann 1986). The result of these debates seems to be that volatility and protest have only *indeterminate* effects on democratic outcomes.

Some evidence suggests that volatility and protest contribute to non-democratic outcomes. Zimmermann and Saalfeld (1988) concluded that volatility encouraged democratic collapse in some, but not all, countries. Studies also show that most postwar anti-democratic "surge" parties draw support disproportionately from voters who are weakly attached to parties or weakly integrated in politically mobilized subcultures like labor, religious, or ethnic organizations (see Liepelt 1967; Lipset 1981; Husbands 1981, 1988).

Yet volatility and protest do not always flow in an anti-democratic direction. They are also normal components of democratic politics. Few would argue that the New Deal realignment harmed American democracy or that most new-left or ecology movements are anti-democratic. In order for volatility to cause trouble for democracy, it must be accompanied by anti-democratic sentiments. Indeed, massive vote-switching among *democratic* parties may be the best hope for *saving* democracy during a crisis. Everything depends on the propensity of voters to support anti-democratic parties: legitimation is the decisive factor. Thus, volatility is probably a necessary but not sufficient precondition for the weakening and collapse of democracy.

Hypothesis. If democratic legitimation is low, heightened electoral volatility during a crisis increases the probability that anti-democratic parties will gain and that democracy will be endangered.

Hypothesis. If democratic legitimation is high, heightened electoral volatility during a crisis will not lead to anti-democratic voting, nor will it endanger democracy: indeed, it may help save it.

Party System Fractionalization

Scholars have also argued that the fragmentation of party systems, partly caused by proportional representation, contributes to non-democratic outcomes (see Rae 1971). In a fragmented party system, there are too many small parties for democratic representation and effective government. Citizens are confused and alienated by the large array of choices. And because parties have to form coalitions to govern, voters' influence over policy is limited, and they become further disenchanted with democracy (see Austen-Smith and Banks 1988, for a game-theoretic version of this argument). With so many small parties, governing coalitions can be held hostage to the wishes of very minor parties.

Empirical studies show only mixed support for these theses. Fragmentation is associated with reduced confidence in government and satisfaction with democracy (Weil 1989). And governments in fragmented party systems tend to be unstable, weak, and ineffective in addressing major problems (Schofield 1984). However, other scholars argue that party-system fragmentation is not the main culprit. Fragmentation contributes to problems, but other factors are more important. Since fragmented party systems are often composed of blocs of parties (e.g., the Netherlands, Italy), voters have less difficulty reading the terrain than alleged (van der Eijk and Niemöller 1985; Allum and Mannheimer 1985). Besides, party system polarization may contribute to governmental instability and ineffectiveness more than fragmentation. Scholars have looked at this possibility in both the interwar period (Zimmermann 1987, 1988; Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988) and in the postwar period (Sani and Sartori 1983; Powell 1987). While the evidence is not overwhelming, it tends to support the thesis.

Party System Polarization

Party system polarization is a more serious problem for liberal democracy. Sartori's (1966, 1976) model of "polarized pluralism" is the most influential account (also DiPalma 1977; Powell 1987; cf. Arian and Barnes 1974). In a polarized party system, according to Sartori, a large (but not majority) party governs more or less permanently in unstable coalitions with various other parties. And at least one extremist (antisystem) party is in quasi-permanent opposition. Extremist parties are sufficiently unacceptable to others that they cannot form alternative coalitions, but they are strong enough to block alternative coalitions that do not include themselves. Sartori argues that this leads to stagnation and corruption at the center, frustration and radicalization at the periphery, instability of governing coalitions, and ultimately, the risk of democratic collapse. He cites Weimar Germany, Fourth-Republic France, and contemporary Italy as examples.

Much empirical evidence supports Sartori's model. Polarization is associated with illiberal values in post-authoritarian democracies like West Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain (Weil 1985a, 1991). And DiPalma (1980, 1986) argues that the dynamic also works in reverse. When intolerant and distrustful relations among political actors were institutionalized by constitutional guarantees in some post-authoritarian countries, they became crystallized in a polarized party system. Cross-national research shows that polarization harms other aspects of democracy, as well. Polarization is negatively related to democratic legitimation and trust in government (Weil 1989), and it is positively associated with cabinet instability (Nolte 1988; Zimmermann 1988).

Hypothesis. Polarization has a negative effect on liberal democratic values and cabinet stability. Causation also works in reverse. Especially after a transition from authoritarianism, preexisting distrust and intolerance may entrench polarizing tendencies if they are crystallized in the party system.

However, other elements of Sartori's model have been disputed. In particular, studies of Italy before the end of the cold war—the model's modern exemplar—call into question Sartori's claim that polarized pluralism generates extremism and thus harms democracy (Daalder 1983; Pasquino 1983; also Sani 1976). These studies based their objections on several key observations, some of which are still controversial. First, they argued, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) became more moderate over the years, at both the mass and elite level. On many issues, like nationalization of industry, it moved to the right of the British Labour Party. However, even if it moderated, surveys showed that its constituency was still well to Labour's left on ideological self-placement (Sani and Sartori 1983). Second, they argued, the constituency of the largest party, the Christian Democrats (DC) became less intolerant of communism and less rigid in its adherence to the Church's social teachings (e.g., divorce, abortion). As a result, they argued, the Italian party system *depolarized* from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. However, Daalder's own survey-based index does not show an unambiguous decline in system polarization. Finally, they argued, the real problem was other parties' continuing distrust of the PCI and unwillingness to form an alternative government with it—especially the Christian Democrats' rejection of the PCI's proposed "historic compromise" in the mid-1970s and the Socialists' rejection of the PCI's proposed "democratic alternative" since the late 1970s.

This last point, I believe, comes to the heart of the matter. While extremism and polarization are not completely subjective phenomena, judgments about where to draw a line *are* quite subjective. Ultimately, each party judges for itself whether it considers another party to be beyond the democratic pale. If parties are unwilling or unable to trust and tolerate each other—rightly or

wrongly—the system-level results are identical to those of polarization, *whether or not* “objective” indicators show moderation. That is, if all parties are seen as accepting democratic legitimation, then no polarization may occur and hence no danger to democracy. If some parties are seen as rejecting democratic legitimation, polarization may occur and with it, a danger to democracy. In this respect, polarization is an objective phenomenon only insofar as subjective judgments produce objective consequences. I develop this point further in my discussion of coalitions, below.

Hypothesis. Polarization is not a strictly “objective” phenomenon, but a set of relations among actors. Actors’ subjective beliefs that others are extremist can produce the same outcomes as objective distance, if actors do not trust or tolerate each other. Indeed, the more actors trust and tolerate each other, the greater their objective distance can be.

Coalition Forms

Different coalition forms can also affect liberal democratic outcomes.⁴ I address three questions here: (1) Does cabinet-coalition instability lead to regime instability? (2) Do oversized grand-coalition governments help democratic legitimation by reducing societal conflict, or harm legitimation by submerging democratic competition? (3) Does party-system polarization block democratic alternance only under certain coalition conditions?

Cabinet stability is not identical to democratic stability, although some investigators use it as an indicator (e.g., Powell 1982). Yet the two probably share some of the same causes. Recent research shows that party system factors affected democratic survival in the interwar period and liberal-democratic values in the post-1945 period—but that economic factors were indeterminate (Zimmermann 1987, 1988; Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988; Weil 1985a, 1989, 1991, 1993c). Studies of cabinet instability yield similar results. Dodd (1976), Powell (1982), Luebbert (1987), and Zimmermann (1987, 1988) show that party-system fragmentation and polarization, and the presence of anti-system parties all contributed to cabinet instability in the interwar and the post-1945 periods. And Powell (1982), Robertson (1983), and Browne, Frendreis, and Gleiber (1986), among others, have sought to show that socioeconomic problems and societal conflict reduce cabinet stability. But their results are still somewhat inconclusive.

Cabinet instability may induce democratic instability more directly. Extreme cabinet instability may reduce governments’ capacity to solve problems effectively, and this may reduce the regime’s legitimation. Yet research gives only mixed support for this conjecture. Investigators have found that cabinet instability tends to depress the electorate’s evaluation of “the way democracy works” (Schmitt 1983; Harmel and Robertson 1986). But its effects on other

measures of democratic legitimation and confidence in government are inconsistent (Weil 1989). Research on contemporary democracies shows that cabinet instability is related to civil disorder and governmental ineffectiveness (e.g., Powell 1982). But research on the interwar period indicates that cabinet instability cannot be definitely tied to the collapse of democracy. Cabinets in France and Belgium were as unstable as those in Germany and Austria, but only the latter democracies collapsed (British and Dutch cabinets were more stable; see Zimmermann 1987, 1988).

Why is cabinet instability not more clearly tied to problems for liberal democracy? One possibility is that cabinet instability simply reflects the severity of problems. Just as electoral volatility may reflect citizens' desire for change, cabinet instability may reflect elites' flexible response to the problems. Neither of these need reflect a desire for a regime change, simply for a policy change. Indeed, cabinet *immobilism* might be more damaging to effectiveness and democratic legitimation if problems are severe enough. As with electoral volatility, the effect of cabinet instability on democratic survival probably depends on the level of legitimation.

Oversized grand-coalition governments also have ambiguous effects on liberal democracy. The most important theory is Lijphart's (1977, 1984) model of "consociational democracies," plural societies with high levels of intercommunal conflict. In such polities, parties are unwilling to go into opposition because they risk losing too much and because party strength—closely tied to the size of the ascriptive communities—changes too slowly to make their return to office likely. Thus, formal opposition could lead to more extreme conflict. The alternative is a grand coalition government of all major parties, combined with a degree of federalism and proportional allocation of state services according to party/communal size. Since potential conflict is too dangerous, open opposition is delegitimated and suppressed. In this respect, consociational procedures are intended to be a method for *reducing* extreme underlying intercommunal conflict through contact among opposing elites, which promotes trust. If these measures succeed, the "game among players" can move to one in which moderate conflict and tolerance of opponents becomes legitimated. This appears to have succeeded in the Netherlands and Austria and failed most miserably in Lebanon. In this respect, consociationalism may become a "victim of its own success" (Luther and Müller 1992).⁵

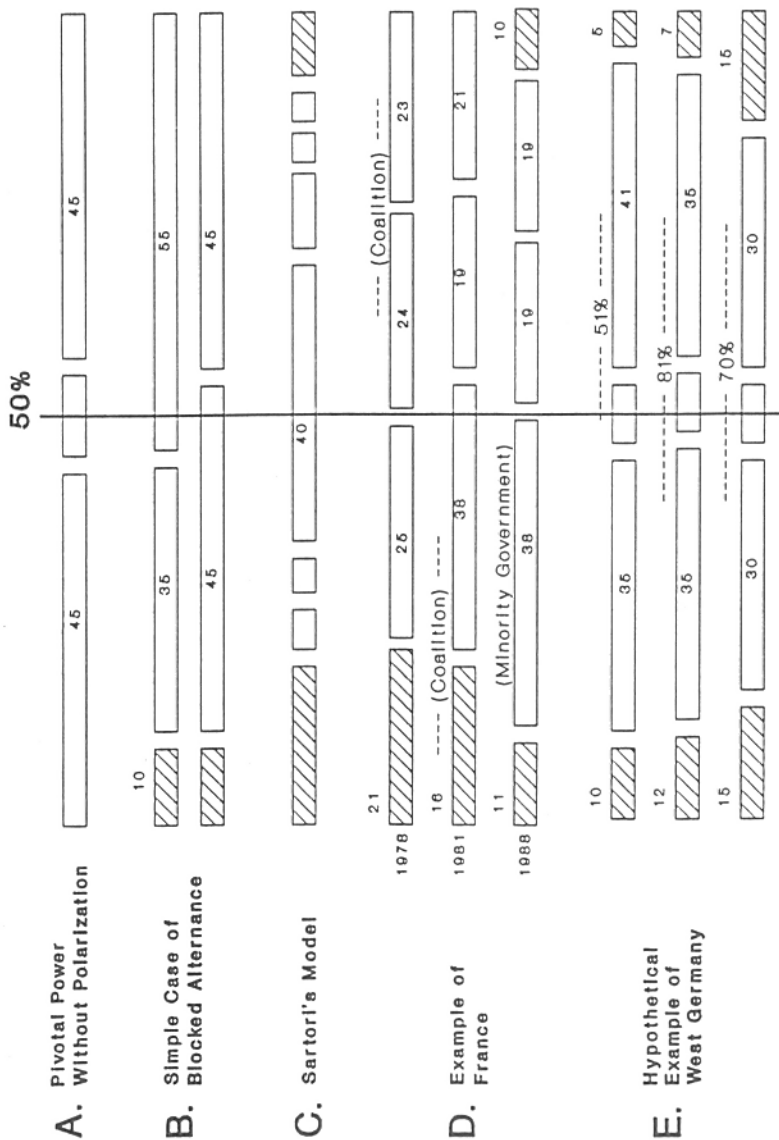
On the other hand, if grand coalitions are formed in societies *without* extreme underlying conflict, they may *initiate* a vicious circle of intolerance and delegitimation. To form a grand coalition, pro-system parties generally move closer to the center of the policy spectrum than they would otherwise do. This move may leave their more militant (but still prosystem) constituents politically homeless, and they may seek harder positions in a more extremist party or movement. These constituents do not so much abandon their party as the party abandons them. Thus, if a grand coalition submerges a moderate competitive

structure, it can generate polarization. The grand coalition government of 1966-1969 in West Germany—a country with little intercommunal conflict (Lepsius 1974)—was probably largely responsible for the rise of antisystem voting at the time. If the grand coalition government had not ended fairly quickly, it might have caused serious problems for West German democracy (I argue this point at greater length in Weil 1981, 1991).

Finally, the interaction of party-system polarization and certain coalition structures can create the potentially most dangerous problem for liberal democracy: blocked alternance. Sartori's model of polarized pluralism describes the worst-case scenario. Antisystem parties are unacceptable as coalition partners to prosystem parties, and their presence reduces the pool of potential coalition partners. Especially under the pressure of a crisis, such a reduced pool may make it impossible to change the administration without taking in antisystem parties. This is what happened in the Weimar Republic. The only coalition that definitely supported democracy was already in office and included both working-class and bourgeois parties. Forming either a socialist or capitalist alternate coalition meant taking avowedly anti-system parties (Communists or Nazis) into government. As the crisis worsened from 1930 to 1933, the vicious circle spiraled. Prosystem or ambivalent parties progressively lost strength to anti-system parties in repeated elections; it became increasingly difficult to form alternative prosystem coalitions with the reduced pool; governments were increasingly ineffective; and voters increasingly defected to antisystem parties (see Bracher 1970; Lepsius 1978).

However, Sartori's model does not operate under all coalition conditions. By itself, a reduced pool of pro-system parties might not create problems. Alternance at the fringes of the coalition may be sufficient for a change of policy, and the electorate may also approve of minority governments if it is the best alternative to taking in antisystem parties (Luebbert 1984, 1987). Indeed, minority governments are sometimes not much less stable or effective than majority governments (Strom 1985): both Britain and Italy have had them in recent decades. Under any of these circumstances, we would not necessarily predict voter alienation and further polarization—even in an economic crisis—because the party system still offers the electorate policy alternatives.

The key seems to be a party's pivotal, or veto, power: that is, how much *marginal value* any party has to its potential coalition partners (Shapley and Shubik 1954; Owen and Grofman 1984). (Figure 1, to be discussed more fully later, illustrates some of the examples in the following discussion.) Depending on the array of parties, even a very small party can hold its partners hostage if they need it to stay in power (see Figure 1, panel A). The centrist West German Free Democrats have long been in this fortunate position. They have only been out of government for a fraction of the Bonn Republic's history and have been disproportionately rewarded with important cabinet posts. Pivotal coalitional power has two consequences for Sartori's version of polarization theory (see



Note: * Multiple Bars in a Panel Indicate New Elections

Figure 1. Party Coalitions/Dynamics* (Extremist or Anti-System Parties Shaded)

Figure 1, panel C). First, if an anti-system party does not have veto power, it cannot block democratic alternance, even in a crisis. The party system can still respond to voters' wishes for alternate policies, and no centrifugal (polarizing) dynamic takes hold. Second, pivotal power is relevant not only for the whole universe of parties, but also for relations *within* blocs of potential partners. We must expect centrifugal tendencies only when the tail can wag the dog, not otherwise. If a moderate party is able to control its own extremist partner, it may succeed not only in taking it into a stable coalition, but also in consuming it and setting in motion a centripetal (depolarizing) dynamic.

To illustrate this last point, consider party relations in Italy and France through the 1980s. The small Italian Socialist Party (PSI) wanted to play a pivotal role like the West German Free Democrats, selling its cooperation to a larger partner on either side. But if it carried out its threat of allying with the larger Communist Party (PCI), it ran a dual risk. It risked losing strength on the left because leftist voters might prefer to cast a more "effective" vote for the larger party in the bloc. And it risked losing strength in the center because centrist voters might punish it for allying with an antisystem party. As a result—its public ruminations to the contrary—the PSI had a tremendous disincentive to enter the PCI's proposed "democratic alternative" coalition, *whether or not* it believed the PCI was truly a prosystem party. Thus, a full alternance in office became less likely.

The dynamic in France in the 1970s and 1980s was quite different, despite many similarities in the party system (see Bell and Criddle 1986, 1989; Tsebelis 1988; see Figure 1, panel D). In the second half of the 1970s, four parties shared most of the electorate almost equally, the Gaullist RPR, Giscard's UDF, the Socialists (PS), and the Communists (PCF). The PCF was considerably more extremist than its Italian counterpart and was also strong enough to block a rotation in office without its cooperation, as long as the center-right (UDF-RPR) coalition held together. But the PCF was also slightly smaller than the Socialists. With Mitterand's election to the presidency in 1981, the PS increased its small lead over its more extremist partner and began a policy of embracing the PCF to death, saddling it with ministerial responsibility but giving it little real authority. The PCF dropped out of the coalition several years later, but not before losing half its electoral strength at the expense of the Socialists. Meanwhile, the PS moved to the center and established itself as a credible governing or loyal-opposition party. At least for a time, the centrifugal dynamic appeared to be broken, and the practice of turnover in office by a moderate opposition established.

The main difference between the Italian and French cases through the 1980s was the *relative* size of the two leftist parties. Both countries had a large (but not majority) center-right party or coalition, and both were similarly polarized, with a 20-35 percent antisystem party on the left and a 6-10 percent anti-system party on the right. Yet *intracoalitional* dynamics—pivotal power within the

Table 1. Political Problems, Structure, Legitimation, and Outcomes in (West) Germany at Six Historical Periods

	"Performance" Problems	Party Attachment	Legitimation	Party System and Coalition Structure	Outcome
Early 1930s	(1) ^a World Economic Crisis	(1) Quite Low; Unattached Voters	(1) Low	(1) Weak (Polarization; Cabinet instability)	(1) Collapse of Democracy
Early 1950s	(2) Unemployment, Low Standard of Living	(2) Rather Low but growing rapidly	(2) Weak but growing rapidly	(2) Fairly Weak (Polarization and Fragmentation)	(2) Some Anti-Democratic Voting; Considerable Voting for Semi-Loyal Parties
Mid-1960s	(6) Mild Economic Downturn	(6) High	(3) Consolidating	(3) Weak (Grand Coalition)	(3) Brief rise of Anti-Democratic Voting
Mid-1970s	(4) Oil Crisis, Terrorism, Rising Unemployment	(5) High but emerging Dealignment	(4) Consolidated	(6) Strong	(6) System Stability; Time to address Problems
Late 1980s (prior to 1989)	(5) Unemployment, Immigration Problems	(3)* Medium, some single- issue voting	(5) High	(5) Strong	(5) Re-emergence of Anti- Democratic Voting
Early 1990s	(3) Reunification Burdens, Recession, Unemployment, Immigration Problems	(3)* Medium, some single- issue and protest voting	(6) High	(4) Strong, but some signs of erosion: consideration of a Grand Coalition	(4) Some Anti-Democratic Pro- test Voting; Possible prob- lems unless politicians are skillful
t _c	.47 ^b	.55	.60	1.00	—

Notes: ^a Rank order of severity of problem in column. (From monograph literature and press).

^b Correlation with "Outcome": t_c = Kendall's tau-c rank order coefficient.

* Ranking ties.

coalition, not the whole party system—largely determined in which country polarization interfered with a democratic turnover in office. This point was not lost on Craxi's PSI, which longed to pursue a "French" strategy but never sufficiently closed the gap with the PCI to risk it. (Mannheimer and Sani 1987; and Daniels 1988 argued that the PSI would not find this easy. The question has perhaps been mooted in the meantime, with the transformation of western Communist parties after 1989, the rise of regional parties, and the Italian corruption scandals.) Thus, if potential partners are similar in strength, a few percentage points' change in either direction could "tip" the dynamic and strongly affect democratic outcomes.⁶

Opposition Structure and Democratic Outcomes: The Case of Germany

Twentieth-century German history provides an especially graphic illustration of the effects of opposition structure on democratic outcomes, as constrained by legitimation. Table 1 ranks democratic outcomes and several other factors during six periods: the early 1930s, the early 1950s, the mid-1960s, the mid-1970s, the late 1980s prior to the democratization of East Germany, and the early 1990s after unification. If we take into account exogenous "performance" problems, party attachment, liberal-democratic legitimation, and structural relations in the party and coalitional system, we can sketch a picture of each period as follows.

The Early 1930s

The world economic crisis of the 1930s hit Germany with tremendous force. The party system may have been in a period of realignment; voter loyalty and turnout were fairly low. Legitimation of the Weimar regime started out quite low; and while some moderate "Republicans of the head" were becoming "Republicans of the heart," the transition had not gone very far. Moreover, the party system was quite polarized and alternate coalitions were virtually impossible without taking in anti-system parties. This caused political paralysis, and protest voting now flowed to antisystem parties, problems escalated, and the Republic collapsed.

The Early 1950s

Wartime destruction had been extensive, and West Germany was still rebuilding its economy and trying to integrate large numbers of refugees from the east. Party loyalties were in the process of being formed and constituencies of marginal parties were being quickly absorbed by three major parties. Support for liberal democracy was still fragile, but as the decade wore on, it also grew quickly. The party system was initially quite fragmented and rather polarized (two extremist parties were banned), but it was not difficult to form

governing coalitions without antisystem parties. On the whole, the regime was gaining strength and weathering its problems, even though it was difficult to know at the time.

The Mid-1960s

There was a moderate downturn in an otherwise robust economy, and the sealing of East German borders had effectively resolved earlier immigration problems. Party adherence was probably at an all-time high, and legitimization was consolidating. However, in order to address the economic downturn and resolve the outstanding constitutional problem of emergency powers, the two major parties formed a grand coalition. Although this was the means by which the Social Democrats wanted to come to office for the first time, the grand coalition coincided with the rise of the international new left. Antiadministration protest had nowhere to go but the extremes, and neo-fascist voting and new-left activity both rose until the grand coalition ended in 1969. The mass constituency of the far right and left then rejoined their respective prosystem parties.

The Mid-1970s

The postwar boom threatened to come to an end with the Arab oil boycott; unemployment was on the rise; and the rump of the new left conducted a campaign of terrorism. Party loyalty was still high, but repressive government actions against terrorism alienated many young and well educated voters, who began to drift toward the emerging Green party. Democratic legitimization was very high, but support for civil liberties was still weak, especially on the right (but West Germany did not differ much from other western democracies in this). The party system and coalition structure were in extremely good shape. The system was very stable and had time to address its problems.

The Late 1980s

The terrorism and repression of the 1970s had subsided, but unemployment was higher, and renewed immigration was causing economic and nativist protest. The classical postwar voter alignments were weakening, in a fashion reminiscent of the American electorate between Kennedy and Reagan: fourth and fifth-party strength was rising, and single-issue groups were becoming strong. Legitimation was as high as it had ever been, and was probably no different from any other stable western democracy. Prior to the democratization of East Germany in late 1989, the party system and coalition structure inherited from the 1987 federal elections were still strong. But, largely for intraparty and intracoalition reasons, volatility and semi-disloyal voting rose. The far-right Republican party polled seven percent in the 1989 elections to the European Parliament.

The Early 1990s

The euphoria of reunification was quickly followed by a host of difficulties. Unemployment and feelings of insecurity soared in the East, while complaints and worries about the costs of reunification were widespread in the West. Unemployment remained high in the West, and a world recession hit Germany hard. Immigration doubled yearly, reaching a peak of about half a million. About half the immigrants were ethnic Germans from East Germany or eastern Europe; most of the rest were nominal asylum seekers and of non-German ethnicity. Both groups placed financial burdens on the state, but the ethnic minorities became targets of brutal attacks and the pretext for a constitutional change of Germany's liberal asylum law. While democratic legitimation remained very high (surprisingly high in the East, for a new democracy), dissatisfaction with government and extremist protest also grew (Weil 1993a, 1993c). There was talk again in some quarters of forming a grand coalition: this was necessitated by the election outcomes in one state and could occur nationally if the 1994 federal elections do not produce a majority government.

Rank-ordering these system characteristics supports the arguments outlined above (see the Kendall's tau-c's in Table 1). Opposition structure has the greatest effect on democratic outcomes, followed in turn, by legitimation, party attachment, and performance problems. Performance problems are strongly related to a decline in party attachment ($t_c = .83$), but all other links are weaker. Thus, performance problems caused protest, but if legitimation was high and opposition structure was responsive, they filtered the problems and there were few dire consequences for the regime. Later, I will indicate with cross-national data that one cannot simply attribute the collapse of the Weimar Republic to the severity of the depression.

Summary of Opposition Structure's Effects on Democratic Outcomes

Opposition structure influences democratic outcomes, and this effect is constrained by democratic legitimation. Some factors are less important than others. Electoral volatility and protest, party system fragmentation, cabinet instability, and oversized coalitions have indeterminate effects on democratic outcomes: it depends on the level of legitimation. If legitimation is low, these factors aggravate pressures on democracy. If legitimation is high, these factors may help provide the structural flexibility that democracy needs to survive. Party system polarization, blocked alternance, and pivotal power in a coalition, in combination, create more serious problems. Yet even here, legitimation plays a key role.

Figure 1 graphically summarizes some of the examples given in this section. Panel A shows that a small, pro-democratic party can hold pivotal or veto power in forming coalitions without endangering democratic outcomes. If this

same party were anti-system, as in Panel B, it might succeed not only in holding the administration hostage, but also the regime itself. If one of the moderate parties lost its majority, the alternative coalitions would not be attractive. There could be: (a) a grand coalition, which would risk polarization (see also Panel E), (b) a minority government, which would risk alienating pro-system voters, or (c) a bare-majority coalition in which the pro-system partner risks hemorrhaging its constituents in the next election to its anti-system partner and its pro-system opponent. Panel C shows Sartori's model of polarized pluralism. As I argued, the degeneration that Sartori fears is most likely if the anti-system parties hold pivotal power in forming coalitions. Otherwise, alternance can still occur around the large centrist party. Panel D shows the example of France through the 1988 election. Note how the Socialist Party was able to dominate the Communist Party within its coalition and squeeze it out. (New dangers of polarization have arisen with the emergence of the far-right National Front; since 1988 there has also been a minority government.) Panel E shows how polarization could occur in the West German polity if the results of the 1989 European Parliament elections were repeated in Federal elections and a centrist grand coalition were formed.

It should be noted that these structural effects are not completely determinate. For instance, panels B and D are rather similar. In them, a moderate party must decide whether or not to form a coalition with a smaller anti-system party to its extreme. The present models cannot predict whether the moderate party will embrace the extremist party to death and grow at its expense, or be squeezed by the parties on either side and shrink at their expense. Much depends on the political skill of the party leaders—and luck. I return briefly to these questions later.

V. THE EFFECTS OF THE OPPOSITION STRUCTURE ON LEGITIMATION

Up to now, I have argued that opposition structure's influence on democratic outcomes is constrained by legitimation. To this extent, legitimation is relatively autonomous from the opposition structure. But legitimation's autonomy is not complete: causation flows in the other direction as well. In this section, I explore how opposition structure affects legitimation. I begin with some general remarks about political culture's relative autonomy.

Political Culture's Relative Autonomy

Political culture is relatively autonomous. While political structure influences political culture, this influence has limits. For political culture is inertial: to a large extent, it resists exogenous influence and follows its own endogenous course of development.

How can we account for political culture's dual character—its resistance to, and also its openness to, outside influence? One possibility is that political values are embedded in a cultural "substratum" like language (e.g., Wittgenstein 1958 [1953]), ethics learned by socialization (e.g., Freud 1965 [1933]), or what early American sociology called folkways and Tocqueville called mores (customs, habits, practices).⁷ Since a cultural substratum cannot simply be invented or reinvented by actors, it contributes to political culture's inertia. On the other hand, a cultural substratum remains somewhat accessible to actors' influence, unlike the cultural "deep structure" of some theories (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1977; Wuthnow 1987; Chilton 1988).

Two characteristics of a substratum help account for political culture's relative autonomy. First, a cultural substratum is a rich source of dormant themes that can be revived. The literature on prejudice contains many examples of stereotypes embedded in the language (van Dijk 1987) or of latent, tabooed themes that sometimes emerge openly (Bergmann and Erb 1986; Marin 1979). For instance, the values of a prior regime may persist in a cultural substratum for a considerable period of time under a new regime, as when citizens of a post-authoritarian regime still yearn for a "strong man" when troubles arise. Second, actors' strategies are often filtered and modified through a cultural substratum. Instrumental rationality itself may be reinterpreted in a variety of unexpected ways because a culture's elective affinities help shape the expectations and capabilities on which instrumental strategies are based (see Swidler's [1986] concept of culture as a "toolbox").⁸ These reinterpretations can manifest themselves as self-reinforcing circles. For instance, Sartori's centrifugal and centripetal dynamics contain self-reinforcing elements, and I will discuss other examples later.

Like political culture, legitimation is inertial. Democratic legitimation does not come into existence easily, but once it emerges, it is not easily snuffed out. A performance crisis is not likely to generate democratic values if they did not already exist, but democratic values often survive crises intact. If democracy was not legitimated prior to the onset of a crisis, there is no reason to expect actors to choose democratic solutions in a crisis. But if democratic legitimation is already the norm, it will also tend to persist in a crisis.

Historically, democratic legitimation has not always existed: it had to be created, learned, and maintained against inertial tendencies. The parliamentary government with a loyal opposition that first emerged in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain was more a contingent by-product of political struggle than the wished-for outcome of the most successful actors (e.g., Downing 1992; Weil 1987a). Democracy's subsequent spread to other countries probably had as much to do with Britain's and, later, other democracies' power and prestige as with any ruler's desire to share power (whether king or vanguard party). Nor did the creation of liberal and democratic values become easier with the inception of mass franchise. After visiting Jacksonian America,

Tocqueville worried about the prospects for liberal democracy in a post-aristocratic society. "In the dawning centuries of democracy," he wrote, "individual independence and local liberties will always be the products of art. Centralized government will be the natural thing" (1969 [1835/40], p. 674). In this respect, a democratic political culture does not exist by default, and it is not the product of "nature" or "rationality." Actors do not generally pick democracy as a first choice: they would rather win.

Yet the same inertia that slows the emergence of a democratic political culture helps entrench it if it succeeds in emerging. Tocqueville was just as impressed by the strength and resilience of this "unnatural" or "artificial" political culture, once in place, as he was by the difficulties of bringing it into existence.

The Direct Effect of Opposition Structure⁹

Still, political culture's autonomy is only relative. Political structure has considerable influence. This influence can be quite complex,¹⁰ but in this article I limit my discussion to fairly simple effects of opposition structure on legitimation. I begin with the most direct effects and discuss several less direct effects in the following sections.

Actors learn democratic values most directly by experiencing a responsive structure of opposition. If actors cannot win, a responsive opposition structure provides an attractive form of accommodation. A nonpolarized party system and a coalition structure that permits choice and alternance are probably most important; but party-system fragmentation and volatility also play a role.

Thus, on the one hand, the longer a liberal democracy survives, the greater the reservoir of legitimation it seems to acquire, and in turn, the more it seems capable of surviving crises. This is presumably due to citizens' experience with the regime form: the longer actors live in a country with a responsive opposition structure, the more they seem to adhere to liberal and democratic values. Analyses of survey data show this pattern directly (Weil 1981, 1989, 1991, 1993a), and studies of regime longevity suggest it more indirectly (Lichbach 1981; Muller 1988).

On the other hand, everything else being equal, actors will not support democracy until they have seen it in operation for some time. Therefore, there will be some lag after a regime transition until legitimation begins to grow.

Hypothesis. The longer a country has a responsive opposition structure, the more its citizens will support liberal and democratic values. Older democracies tend to have deeper reservoirs of legitimation.

Hypothesis. Citizens will not support liberal and democratic values immediately after a transition to liberal democracy. There is a lag before a reservoir of legitimation accumulates.

Note that these hypotheses exclude the state's "performance" in assuring peace and prosperity, and preventing civil disorder.¹¹ The opposition structure largely filters the effects of performance. As long as a credible democratic opposition is available to take office and address the problems, poor performance is unlikely to undermine legitimation by itself. Performance problems may be necessary to undermine legitimation, but they are not sufficient (see Weil 1989).

Hypothesis. Poor performance by the state in assuring prosperity and preventing civil disorder will not cause citizens to reject liberal and democratic values, as long as the country has a well-functioning opposition structure.

Comparative Preferences

Actors support liberal and democratic norms not only because they experience a responsive opposition structure, but also because they compare their present situation with other situations. They make these comparisons across space and time: actors compare their own country to other countries, and they compare their country's present to its own past.¹² In essence, they ask themselves what alternatives there are to liberal democracy, and whether the alternatives are more attractive or not.

Broadly speaking, the more prestige existing democracies have, the more citizens of other non-democracies will want to emulate them. This prestige probably centers in the political structure itself: foreigners find it attractive for the same reasons domestic actors do. But performance may well play a greater role in this case: citizens of other countries may think they can duplicate success in other fields with the model country's political structure. British political institutions were a model for many Europeans and Americans in the eighteenth century. In contrast, the prestige of liberal democracy was low among populations of authoritarian countries in the middle decades of the twentieth century because liberal democracies were in crisis themselves in the interwar period and doing badly at war until about 1943-1945.

Some citizens of authoritarian countries also live in democracies for periods of time and acquire democratic values through direct experience, just as the citizens of democracies do. Direct experience played a role in Spain's transition to democracy after Franco's death and in several Eastern European countries in the upheavals of 1989-1990. Yet most citizens of nondemocratic countries experience democracy at best vicariously, through their own or (more likely) foreign media. These unexperienced effects of an attractive foreign model are probably more common and pervasive.

Such "demonstration effects" probably flow most effectively among "reference groups" of countries that believe their conditions are comparable.

After Franco's death, the Spanish population could take the successful construction of democracy in West Germany after Nazism as a model, even if Anglo-American models were regarded with distaste for other reasons. And media influences were probably greater in East Germany than in other Eastern European countries, because East Germans received not just western propaganda broadcasts, but also the same broadcasts that West Germans received themselves. (West German media were well aware of this and encouraged it. For instance, television weather maps matter-of-factly stopped at the "external" German boundaries and showed no "internal" boundaries between East and West Germany.) Demonstration effects within reference groups of countries may have proceeded in a chain-like manner in recent years, as Latin Americans, Eastern Europeans, and the Filipinos took the Iberian peninsula as a model, South Koreans looked to the Philippines, and the Chinese students in Tiananmen Square looked to South Korean students.

Thus, demonstration effects can serve as a functional equivalent to a reservoir of legitimation that otherwise takes years to build up. This helps explain why contemporary Spaniards and East Europeans moved to embrace democratic legitimation faster than the West Germans, Austrians, or Italians did after 1945: the prestige of foreign democracies was higher.

Hypothesis. The higher the prestige of foreign liberal democracies, the more likely actors in non-democracies are to adopt liberal democratic norms. These "demonstration" effects can counteract lags after a transition to democracy: indeed, they can produce "acceleration" effects. Demonstration effects can provide a functional equivalent in new democracies to the reservoir of legitimation that older democracies possess.

In contrast to actors' comparative judgments about other countries, the direct influence of other countries is probably indeterminate. Relations to the great power blocs explain less than their leaders would like to claim. No doubt, a great power can help a client to pursue a goal, but it is not clear that it can persuade the client to adopt the goal. Thus, the United States has historically been allied to many authoritarian regimes and has only a mixed record of success in pushing them toward democracy. And the movement of Eastern European countries to democracy was probably as much (or more) a cause of the Soviet Union's sufferance as Gorbachev's policies were a cause of democratization. Hungary and Poland were sending official delegations to Spain to ask how it managed its transition well before it was clear that the Soviet Union would permit it (Markham 1989). And the pace of change probably exceeded the Soviet leadership's projections and desires.

Historical Preferences

Actors can be just as negatively impressed with their own country's non-democratic history as they are positively impressed with the prestige of foreign democracies. When regime changes were imposed by outside forces, as was the case after 1945 in West Germany, Austria, Italy, and Japan, it took some time before populations became convinced that the change was for the better. The growing preference for democracy was not simply a reflection of growing prosperity—prosperity grew in all four of these countries—but was especially a reflection of the improvement of the opposition structure. In contrast, when democracy was introduced by domestic forces, as was the case in Spain and Portugal in the mid-1970s and in Eastern Europe at the present writing, preference for democracy may grow extremely rapidly. Populations experience such euphoria that they “anticipate” improvement before it actually occurs. Their willingness to lend legitimation credit to a new regime may serve as a functional equivalent to the reservoir of legitimation enjoyed by older democracies. Such a “honeymoon period” may help new regimes weather difficult times initially, but it is unlikely to prove permanent if opposition structures do not improve, as the comparison of Spain and Portugal suggests. Indeed, if the new opposition structures function poorly, disappointed citizens may turn away from liberal and democratic values as quickly and extremely as they embraced them in their hopes for improvement.

Actors also try to avoid repeating mistakes that were made in the past. After Franco's death, Spanish party elites often subordinated partisan goals to efforts to build democracy. And antisystem parties intentionally softened their stance, if only during the transition. As a member of the Communist secretariat said in 1979,

This memory of the past obliges us to take these circumstances into account, that is, to follow a policy of moderation. We feel responsibility for this process [of democratization, and] the need to make a super-human effort so that this process is not truncated. This is a unique moment in Spanish history. After more than a century of civil wars and a vicious cycle of massacres among Spaniards, which began after the war of independence and ended in June 1977 with the first elections based on universal suffrage, this is the moment when it is possible to end this cycle and open a period of civilized life, politically speaking. In this sense we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of expressing opinions which might be misunderstood, which could be, or appear to be, extremist. Thus, we have a very prudent policy, very closely adapted to the realities of today, and we make efforts to demonstrate that we really want to institutionalize democracy. We don't want this process to be interrupted. (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, p. 147. Editorial insert in original).

Nor was this attitude restricted to party leaders. Maravall and Santamaria (1986) argued that the mass population may have even led the way in introducing moderation. Despite its desire to express dissatisfaction with poor

government performance, the Spanish electorate avoided voting for extremist parties during the transition and afterwards because it feared the polarization that tore apart Spanish democracy in the 1930s. In a similar sense, the Austrian population probably has an exaggerated tendency to avoid open political confrontation because of its own experiences with civil war (Gerlich 1983; Müller 1984).

Hypothesis. The worse the historical experience actors have of a non-democratic regime in their own country, the more likely they are to adopt liberal democratic norms. Like “demonstration” effects, such historical experiences can also counteract lags in the emergence of these norms after a transition. They can produce “acceleration” or even “anticipation” effects and serve as a functional equivalent to a reservoir of democratic legitimation.

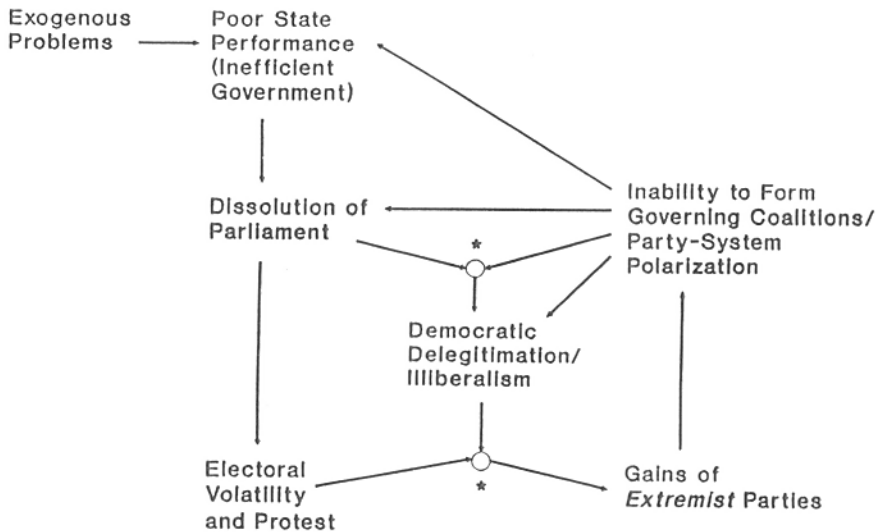
VI. THE COMBINED EFFECT OF OPPOSITION STRUCTURE AND LEGITIMATION ON DEMOCRATIC OUTCOMES

In previous sections, I described how opposition structure's effects on democratic outcomes are constrained by legitimation and how a responsive opposition structure, in turn, promotes legitimation. In this section, I discuss how political culture and political structure *combine* to affect democratic outcomes. Focusing first on interactions among the actors, I describe models of dynamic equilibrium and change from one equilibrium to another. Then shifting focus to the variables, I describe models of asymmetrical or lagged causation, uneven development, differences in sequencing, and the phasing or non-phasing of cycles.

Self-Reinforcing Dynamics: Vicious and Virtuous Circles

In a social action framework, a social system is populated by actors pursuing goals, constrained by other actors pursuing the same or different goals. The culture-structure effects described in previous sections can be re-expressed as models of dynamic equilibrium, as systems of actors interacting with each other. In this section, I discuss equilibria in terms of self-reinforcing circles or feedback loops. In the next section, I discuss how small changes among the actors can transform one self-reinforcing circle into another.

Democratic legitimation, a responsive opposition structure, and democratic outcomes are positively related. Their correlations can be pictured as a self-reinforcing circle or a feedback loop. The loop may be a vicious circle of delegitimation, illiberalism, problematic opposition structure, and nondemocratic outcomes. Or it may be a “virtuous” circle of democratic

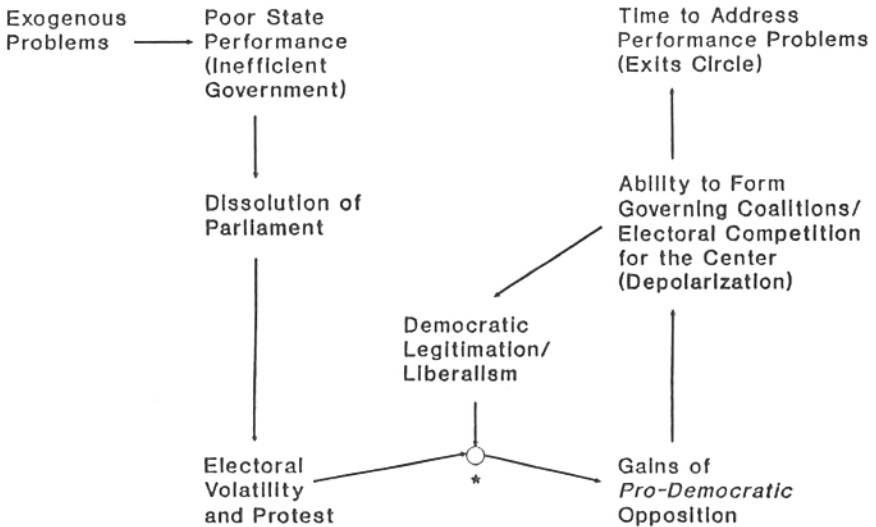


Note: * Interaction Effect

Figure 2. Vicious Circle of Democratic Regime Collapse

legitimation, liberalism, responsive opposition structure, and democratic outcomes. As we have also seen, these relationships are *not* generally affected by state “performance”—maintenance of prosperity and civil order (Zimmermann 1987, 1988; Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988; Weil 1989, 1991, 1993a, 1993c). That is, performance problems are exogenous to the loops and do not directly affect their equilibrium. To be sure, exogenous problems may intensify an existing circle and perhaps precipitate tendencies that were contained in it. But performance problems are unlikely to change one self-reinforcing equilibrium into its opposite.

Let us consider the crisis of the 1930s in terms of two alternative feedback loops, focusing on how actors (primarily parties and voters) pursued certain goals and acted under certain structural constraints.¹³ In democracies that collapsed (see Figure 2), low legitimation and an unresponsive opposition structure reinforced each other during the crisis as citizens became increasingly indifferent to democracy and cast ever more protest votes for anti-system parties (see Bracher 1970; Linz 1978; Lepsius 1978; Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988). The crisis prompted calls for a change in administration, and governing parties lost elections. Loyal opposition parties were not strong enough to form stable alternative coalitions; and anti-system parties acquired veto power in forming new governments. Antisystem parties also gained control of state



Note: * Interaction Effect

Figure 3. Virtuous Circle of Democratic Regime Survival

performance by “controlling disorder.” If they were excluded from government, they could “deliver disorder” on the streets, and endanger democracy. But if they were taken into government (their price for “withholding disorder”) democracy was doomed. Thus, the vicious circle tightened. Performance crises precipitated government breakdowns, new elections, and electoral volatility and protest. Because democratic legitimation was low and pro-system parties were unable to form alternative coalitions, citizens voted for anti-system parties (e.g., in Germany in the early 1930s, the protest vote went to the Nazis and the Communists). The anti-system parties further blocked the formation of prodemocratic coalitions able to address the performance crisis—and a new cycle was initiated. Democracy was perceived not to have “worked” and was further delegitimated. Although the army, or another actor besides the parties, often led the change to dictatorship, the vicious circle was probably necessary to weaken the system and pave the way (Linz 1978).

In democracies that survived (see Figure 3), high legitimation and a responsive opposition structure reinforced each other during the crisis as citizens pulled together to support democracy, voting only for loyal oppositions to “throw the bums out,” but not the regime. As in the vicious circle, the crisis also prompted calls for a change in administration, governments fell, electoral volatility and protest rose, and the parties in office lost elections. But with a

responsive opposition structure and higher levels of democratic legitimation, citizens cast their protest votes for loyal oppositions (e.g., in the United States in 1932, the protest vote went to Roosevelt). A rotation in office occurred, an alternative pro-democratic coalition addressed the problems—or simply outlasted the cyclical crisis—and the system was perceived to have “worked.” Regime legitimation was reinforced, and citizens felt encouraged to continue to chose among pro-system alternatives. The performance crisis was unable to penetrate the “virtuous circle” of legitimation and responsive opposition structure.

Thus, when actors responded to events, their political cultural outlooks predisposed them to act in accustomed ways. Their actions reinforced existing opposition structures, and opposition structures reinforced actors’ existing outlooks. Whether pro- or antidemocratic, the circles tended to reproduce themselves. New pressures arising outside the circles could not transform the circles, but were simply filtered through, and absorbed into, the existing dynamics.

“Leveraged” Change

Yet self-reinforcing circles do change. A virtuous circle may degenerate into a vicious circle, and a vicious circle in a poorly functioning democracy may collapse into a dictatorship. How can such a change occur if exogenous factors do not produce the change and if a majority of actors does not want the change? One possibility is that the change is “leveraged.” As we saw earlier, even very small parties can occupy a pivotal point in forming governing coalitions and exercise power out of proportion to their size. Two related groups of theories explain how small shifts among the actors can produce major changes in system outcomes. I describe them and then add a third, especially destructive type.

The first group of theories describe “tipping” or “bandwagon” effects (see Schelling 1978; Noelle-Neumann 1984). Undecided actors believe that one side is about to win, or actors in the majority believe that the minority is about to become the majority. These actors then move to the side they perceive as ascendant, and by so doing, *create* a winning majority. Przeworski (1986) applied this idea to actors in an authoritarian regime who think a regime change is imminent: this is sometimes the fastest way to create a large number of new “democrats.”

The second group of theories describes the strategic cooperation of some actors to achieve goals they cannot achieve as individuals. Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira (1985; and Lenin before them) describe a “critical mass” of actors who combine to overcome free-rider problems in social movements or organizations. Wilson (1975) and Axelrod and Hamilton (1981) describe how biologically-related individuals behave in an “altruistic” (self-sacrificing) fashion to promote the welfare of their gene pool. Granovetter (1985) argues

that actors embedded in sub-market networks often achieve more than actors who operate in the open market. And Coleman (1986) argues that family support can provide "social capital" to actors without other resources.

Both tipping and strategic cooperation affect outcomes in many of the system-level phenomena described in previous sections. By way of illustration, I restate two of them as hypotheses.

Hypothesis. A polarizing dynamic sets in only under certain coalition forms, namely when (a) an anti-system party achieves pivotal or veto power, or (b) when an antisystem party is more powerful than its moderate potential partner. The antisystem party can achieve this power by high levels of internal solidarity, or strategic cooperation among its activists. And a small change in party strength can produce a rapid and major change in the system dynamic because of tipping.

Hypothesis. Contrary to traditional (especially functionalist) social science belief, values do not always change slowly and serve as ballast for structural change. Populations of post-authoritarian democracies have been known to adopt the new liberal democratic values both slowly and rapidly. This is partly determined by their comparative judgments of the past and present regimes. Value change may lag until citizens believe the present regime is better than the former regime. At that time, the evaluation "tips," and values change extremely rapidly.

A third type of leveraging is more destructive than tipping or strategic cooperation and can lead to the collapse of a democracy.¹⁴ In neither of the first two types of leveraging do actors specifically aim to change the game itself; in general, they play by the rules and simply try to change outcomes. But in the third type of leveraging, antisystem players use the game's rules strategically to destroy the game itself. On one hand, they use the first two methods of leveraging to maneuver themselves into a pivotal position and magnify their influence. On the other hand, they systematically disobey the rules of the game and try to provoke other players to disobey them as well. This antirule behavior has two consequences. First, it narrows the field of rule-abiding players, who now find it more difficult to construct workable coalitions or policy decisions within the game. Second, it tempts prosystem players themselves to abandon the rules and defect from the game. That is, it sets in motion a vicious circle of malfunctioning and delegitimation of the game.

We can see this type of destructive leveraging at work in the actions of antisystem parties that attempt to bring down liberal democracy. Anti-system parties try to prevent pro-system parties from forming workable coalitions by reducing the field of acceptable partners. They try to prevent prosystem

coalitions from governing effectively by threatening to “withhold or deliver” disorder. And they try to provoke prosystem parties to abandon liberal and democratic restraint, harden their own positions, and engage in repression and retribution. By these means, they hope to generate polarization, system paralysis, and a new cycle of delegitimation. Above all, antisystem parties try to convince the *constituencies* of prosystem parties that liberal democracy does not work and that liberal democratic norms are unimportant. If they succeed, anti-system parties create a self-fulfilling prophecy, as pro-system parties hemorrhage support to antisystem parties, and simple “tipping” takes over. Thus, antisystem parties try to undermine both the functioning and the legitimation of liberal democracy. By this destructive leveraging, they try to change a virtuous circle into a vicious circle, or a still-democratic vicious circle into a dictatorship. However, as we have seen, the more legitimated a democracy is, the less chance anti-system parties have to destabilize it.

Hypothesis. It does not require a large majority to undermine a liberal democracy. But to produce this change, antisystem minorities must fulfill three conditions. They must (1) maneuver themselves into a pivotal position that magnifies their influence, *and* (2) make it difficult or impossible for pro-system parties to achieve system-compatible outcomes, because the field of players has been reduced, *and* (3) tempt or provoke pro-system parties to abandon system-legitimation themselves. Success on all three counts can set in motion a vicious circle of democratic collapse. However, this is not an easy task. Prosystem parties can save the system if they block *any* of these conditions. If pro-system parties are reasonably skillful, principled—and lucky—liberal democracy is relatively resilient.

Hypothesis. Legitimation is the best and most effective defense against this form of destructive leveraging. If prosystem parties close ranks against anti-system parties, they can deprive the latter of their destructive efficacy, even at some cost to themselves. Prosystem parties have two stakes in upholding legitimation. First, they risk being harmed themselves if a vicious circle of extreme conflict takes hold. Second, they risk hemorrhaging support to antisystem parties if they signal to their constituencies that only effectiveness matters, not legitimation. If the electorate embraces legitimation, for rational or nonrational reasons, it will cast its protest votes for prosystem parties, not anti-system parties, and this kind of leveraging will not work. Thus, abandoning legitimation—even for the avowed purpose of fighting antisystem parties—is the most dangerous and least effective tactic.

Thus, while these systems tend to be self-reinforcing, actors can sometimes "leverage" a change. Antisystem actors (who reject system legitimation) do this by picking at the weak points of the opposition structure and trying to make the self-reinforcing circle unravel.

Historical Stages: Culture-Structure Interactions

I now shift focus from actors to variables. In equilibrium models, correlations among the major variables (opposition structure, legitimation, democratic outcomes) generally remain stable; and in the leveraged-change models, correlations restabilize fairly quickly. However, in historical practice, these variables do not always move perfectly in tandem. There may be lags, asymmetrical effects, and other disjunctures in their relations. In the remaining sections, I describe how these disjunctures can affect democratic outcomes. I begin with some general remarks about culture-structure interactions.

One can picture culture-structure interactions as a series of historical stages separated by moments of change.¹⁵ A historical stage is a system of actor interactions like those described in previous sections, an equilibrium in which culture-structure correlations are relatively stable. That is, the system parameters are fixed. During a historical stage, a change in one variable produces a relatively predictable change in another variable. A new historical stage arises when the system of correlations changes. In the course of this change, cultural factors, structural factors, and even actors' identities are liable to be transformed. Actors may adopt new goals or inherit new assumptions; the structural environment in which they interact may change; and individual actors may regroup as new collective actors. The players and the issues change. If an old player or old issue reasserts itself in a new historical stage, the new system may not respond as the old system did.

Two important corollaries follow from a model of historical stages. First, while culture and structure affect each other reciprocally, their interaction is asymmetrical. Each side obeys its own rules of development, and each persists in different ways. Cultural attributes (values, beliefs, expectations, etc.) never completely die out, and they are cumulative. Once created, they remain available, to some extent, in later historical periods. In this respect, they are not time-bound and do not depend entirely on their present strength. As noted earlier, dormant cultural themes can sometimes be revived, especially if they are embedded in a "substratum" like language. An opponent of democracy may employ a popular predemocratic figure of speech to persuade listeners of a point they would not otherwise accept. By contrast, structural attributes are much more dependent on their current strength. If an institution is eradicated, it is unavailable at that moment to influence the interaction.

Second, culture and structure do not necessarily change synchronously or in tandem. Their asymmetrical interaction can produce lines of uneven

development. This occurs not only because culture and structure each follows its own endogenous development, but also because each lags in its response to changes in the other. A new interaction may occur before the previous historical stage has been consolidated. For example, we saw that existing values can determine whether protest voting goes to democratic or antidemocratic parties in a crisis. Suppose a crisis occurs after a transition to democracy, but before the new regime has been strongly legitimated. The new democracy may fail to survive *despite an adequate opposition structure* because its citizens still act according to old beliefs.

In the following sections, I apply this approach more directly to accounts of democratic outcomes.

Sequencing

In equilibrium models, the *sequence* in which variables change is virtually irrelevant. In a self-reinforcing circle, a rise of legitimation encourages the development of a responsive opposition structure, and vice versa. In either case, the change promotes democracy. By contrast, in a model of historical stages, sequencing can be very important.¹⁶ Certain developments tend to preclude others: paths not taken may not easily be reachable again. It may not be possible to revive collective actors that have been destroyed, reconstitute opposition structures that have been reshuffled, or resurrect political values that have been submerged. Factors that could have contributed to a democratic outcome at one historical stage may fall on sterile soil at a later stage because other conditions have changed.

The historical development of democracy in western countries reveals the importance of sequencing. For instance, consider the Social Science Research Council's theory of "crises and sequences" of political development (LaPalombara and Weiner, eds. 1966; Binder et al. 1971; Grew, ed. 1978) and Lipset's (1983) account of the radicalization of working-class movements (cf. Katznelson and Zolberg, eds. 1986). If a country had *already* secured stable national boundaries, nineteenth-century middle-class democratic movements were less likely to be diverted toward reactionary nationalism. If parliamentary institutions were *already* legitimated, elites were less likely to press for strong-state measures in responding to working-class demands for the franchise. And if the franchise was extended *prior* to industrialization, and elites did not engage in repressive practices, emerging working class movements were more likely to be pro-democratic. That is, if lower-status people retained *preexisting* party loyalties as they left the farm for the factory (became working class), there was less chance that antisystem parties would be formed, pressure-cooker fashion, by working-class organizations denied the vote and excluded from participating.¹⁷

Likewise, a sequential analysis helps explain why democratic outcomes were so different in Germany than Britain, despite many similarities in their social

structure. Blackbourn and Eley (1984) have argued that the old picture of Germany's "backward" or "belated" development compared to Britain is wrong. In the period between, say, 1870 and 1933, German industry became as strong as Britain's; the German bourgeoisie—and working class—became politically as influential; and Britain's aristocracy retained no less political power or cultural hegemony than Germany's. Why then, did Weimar Germany's democracy prove so fragile at the end of this period and Britain's so resilient? An interest-based domination analysis finds this question difficult to answer because the array of sociopolitical forces was so similar in the two countries (but cf. Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992). But according to the arguments developed here, the primary difference lay in Germany's low levels of democratic legitimation and her unresponsive opposition structure—a polarized party system, unstable governing coalitions, and blocked alternance. A sequential analysis helps explain how this pattern emerged. In the German sequence of development, the question of national borders was unresolved when the middle classes came on the political scene in the first half of the nineteenth century. Democratic nationalist bourgeois forces were constantly out-manuevered by antidemocratic nationalist forces, and the middle classes' adherence to democracy weakened. The story was repeated when the working classes and the Catholics formed political movements in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Conservative resistance hardened, the opposition structure remained unresponsive, and ultimately antidemocratic parties grew in both the working-class and middle-class-Protestant camps during the crisis of the 1930s. This whole development occurred while class and religious *alignments* remained remarkably stable, except that two of the sectors finally split into radical and moderate parts (see Bracher 1970; Lepsius 1966a, 1966b, 1978).

A sequential analysis helps explain why the same actors with the same resources found themselves in an antidemocratic vicious circle in Germany and a prodemocratic virtuous circle in Britain. And the concept of sequence derives more easily from a dynamic model of historical stages than it does from more static equilibrium models.

A Conjunctural Model: The Phasing and Non-phasing of Cycles

Just as one cannot predict the survival of democracy simply from the power and interests of the actors, one cannot easily predict its survival from cultural and structural factors that are in flux. Many who witnessed the collapse of the Weimar Republic felt that "this did not have to happen." It appeared to them that democracy was becoming stronger, and that "Republicans of the head" were becoming "Republicans of the heart." Observers felt that if German democracy had possessed a few more years to consolidate, it might have weathered the economic crisis as Britain did.

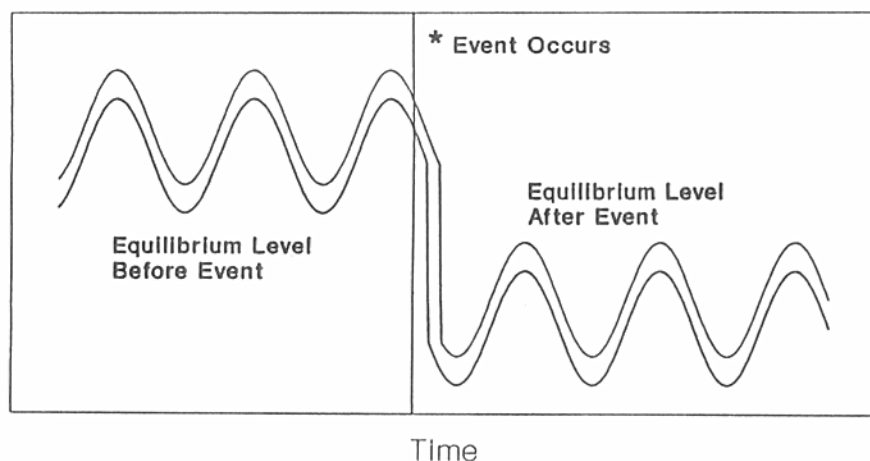


Figure 4. Interrupted Time Series of Two Correlated Variables

Equilibrium and leveraged-change models leave much of this picture unexplained. A leveraged-change model helps explain how a minority of actors was able to undermine the Republic, but it does not describe how the system's strategic weak points emerged. The weakened variables are "givens" in such a model. And both equilibrium and leveraged-change models treat correlations among variables as relatively fixed. Such an overdetermined model does not capture observers' sense that the Republic could have survived.

A more appropriate model would show that several variables, which do not generally move in perfect tandem, *converged* at a weak point. A conjunctural model based on cycles could describe such an outcome.

Generally speaking, most historical phenomena fluctuate over time:¹⁸ examples include seasonal and business cycles, Konradiev long waves, protest waves, and religious revivals. Variables like legitimation and opposition structure do not vary as regularly as sine waves, but it is not uncommon to speak loosely of their fluctuation as "cyclical" (see Weber 1987 for a more rigorous definition). Yet conventional cyclical models must be modified to describe conjunctural phenomena. A conventional cyclical model states that if two phenomena like political culture and structure are related over time, they covary, or rise and fall together, perhaps with a lag in one of the phenomena.¹⁹ These cycles can be changed by exogenous factors. An exogenous interruption moves a single cycle to a different level, and it moves covarying series to a different level of covariance. Figure 4 shows a simple interruption of two covarying time series. Thus, under a conventional cyclical model, the economic crisis of the 1930s jolted legitimation and opposition

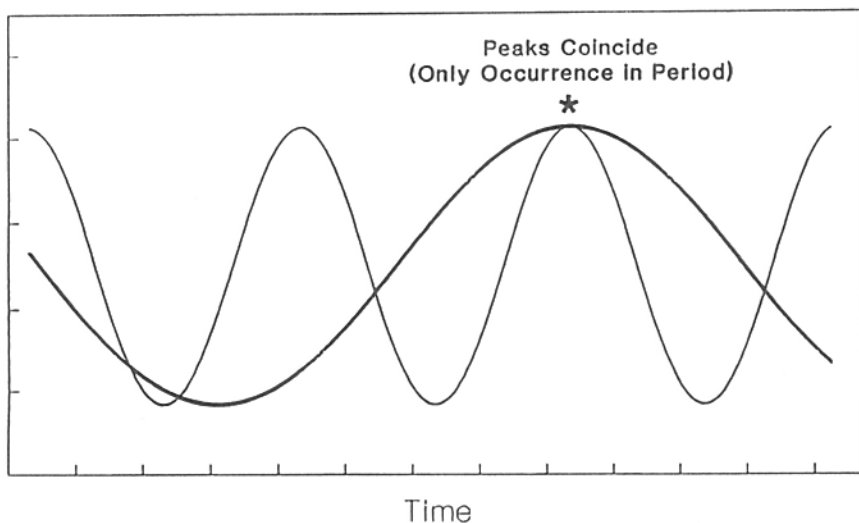


Figure 5. Phasing and Non-Phasing of Cycles

structure out of a steady-state covariance, and caused democracy to collapse and be replaced by dictatorship. This is essentially an interest-based domination model, re-expressed in time-series terms. The economy caused a change in the party system, which caused a regime change and a change in ideology. The dominant actors threw out a regime that did not produce prosperity (assure their class control, etc.) and proceeded to legitimate the new regime on a new basis.

Under a model of historical stages, political culture and political structure do not covary perfectly, but each follows its own semi-endogenous rules of development. This approach requires a modification of the conventional cyclical model—and a different conceptualization of the relationship between variables. Suppose two variables do not *covary* over time, but *coincide* at regular or irregular intervals. That is, two cycles with different frequencies occasionally peak together. Loosely speaking, we could say that they are ordinarily out of phase with each other, but occasionally come into phase. Figure 5 shows such a “phasing” and “non-phasing” of two cycles. Let us now assume that only a coincidence or phasing of variables can produce a certain outcome. For instance, the ocean might spill over a retaining wall and flood a plain only when two different systems of waves “come into phase.” And a democracy might collapse only when cycles of delegitimation, unresponsive opposition structure, and exogenous performance crisis coincide or peak together.

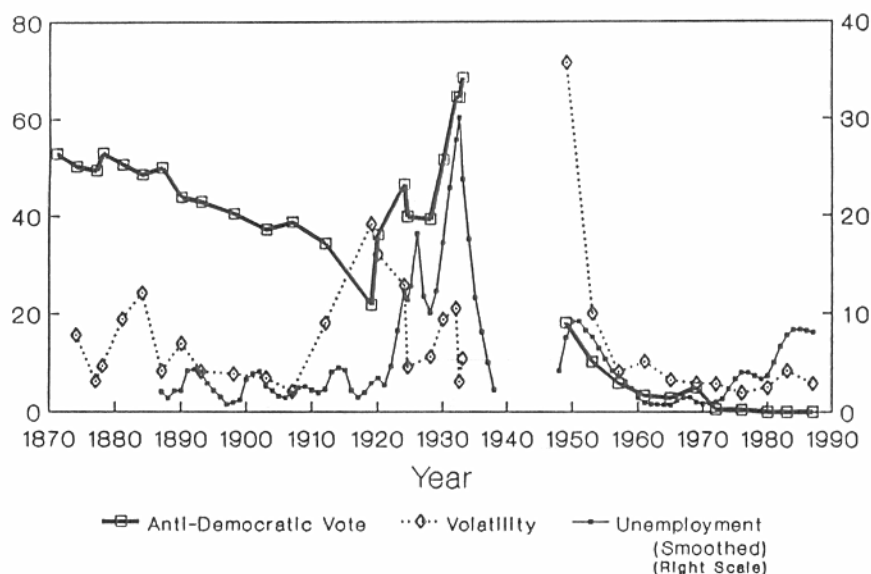
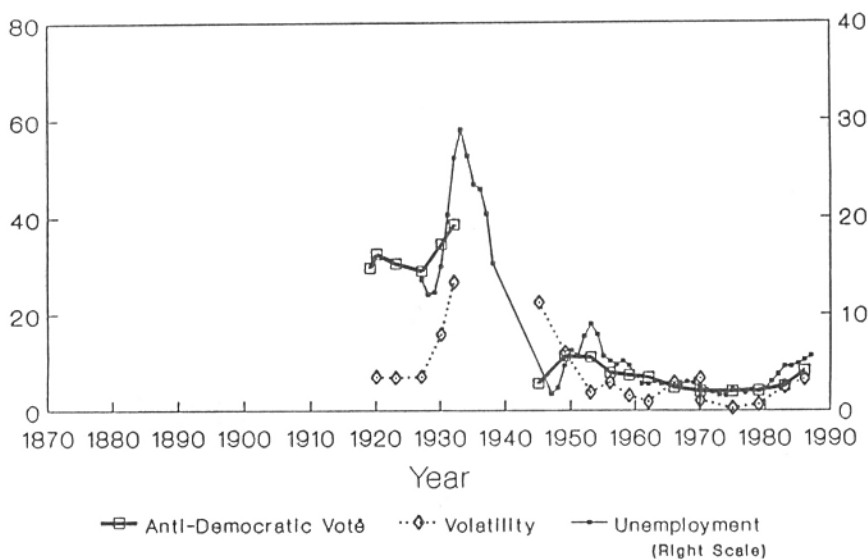


Figure 6. Germany: Unemployment, Electoral Volatility, and Anti-Democratic Votes

This conjunctural model helps explain why only certain democracies collapsed in the Great Depression. Suppose that countries had a very long cycle of democratic legitimation, a somewhat shorter cycle of opposition structure, and a much shorter economic cycle—perhaps with small-scale correlations within these broad cycles. When the world economic crisis of the 1930s hit countries with historically low levels of democratic legitimation and long-standing problems of opposition structure, democracy might have collapsed because all three problems coincided. But when the depression came to countries with historically high levels of democratic legitimation and few problems of opposition structure, the sitting government was simply voted out, and democracy survived.

Plots of antidemocratic voting, electoral volatility, and unemployment in five countries support this account (see Figures 6-10).²⁰ No survey data are available to measure democratic legitimation directly in most countries during the interwar period, but anti-democratic voting corresponds roughly to the portrait of legitimation levels in the monograph literature. Prior to the Depression, anti-democratic voting (and delegitimation?) was already higher in Germany and Austria than in Britain, the Netherlands, or the United States. Electoral volatility rose with unemployment in all countries in the 1930s, as



Note: Election results are for national Parliament, except 1932, which are projected from local elections.

Figure 7. Austria: Unemployment, Electoral Volatility, and Anti-Democratic Votes

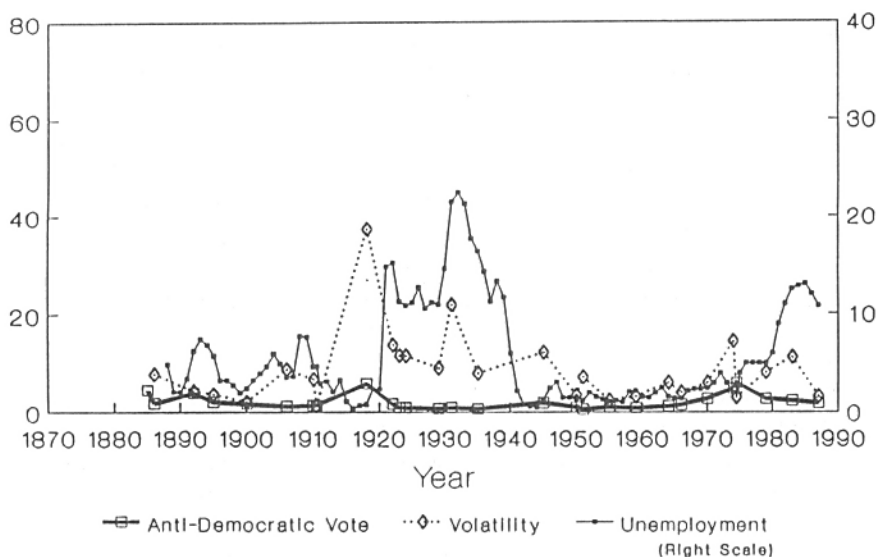


Figure 8. Britain: Unemployment, Electoral Volatility, and Anti-Democratic Votes

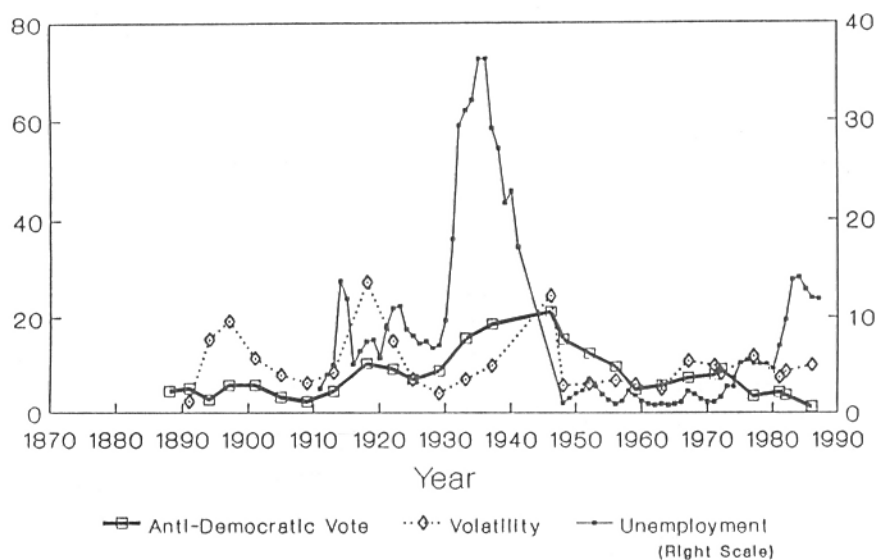


Figure 9. Netherlands: Unemployment, Electoral Volatility, and Anti-Democratic Votes

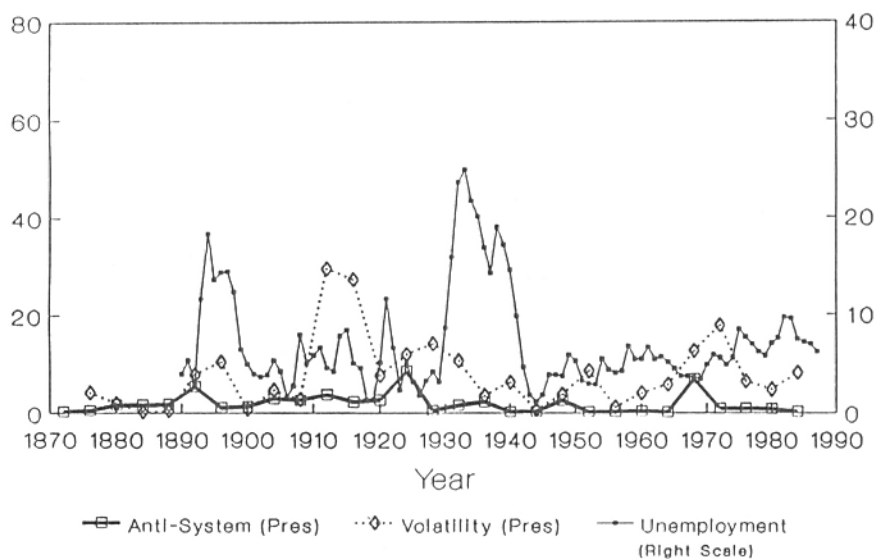


Figure 10. United States: Unemployment, Electoral Volatility, and Anti-System Votes

voters protested their governments' policies. But the crisis produced the sharpest rise of antidemocratic voting in Germany, followed by Austria and the Netherlands. In this respect, more protest voting flowed in an antidemocratic direction in these three countries. But democracy only collapsed in the two countries with the highest *prior levels* of anti-democratic voting (and delegitimation?): Germany and Austria. This anti-democratic dynamic was broken in those countries after 1945. Rises in unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s have often been accompanied by electoral volatility and protest voting, but not by large rises in anti-democratic voting.²¹

Thus, a conjunctural model helps account for some of the variance that equilibrium or leveraged-change models could not explain. This does not mean that a conjunctural model can accurately predict future change: the trajectories of the variables are too uncertain for that. But it can explain past change better than static models. A conjunctural model accounts both for the chinks in democracy's armor that anti-system actors were able to see and exploit, and also for observers' impression that democracy's collapse "did not have to happen." If we compare countries at the historical moment of the Depression, we find that legitimation, opposition structure, and democratic collapse correlate as equilibrium and leveraged-changed models predict. Yet if we examine time-series for each country, we find little of the predicted covariance among the variables—but a very powerful effect of conjuncture.

VII. DISCUSSION

Neither political culture nor political structure alone affects democratic outcomes, and neither has clear causal priority. Rather, their combined influence affects democracy. This article specifies some of the forms this combined effect takes. I restricted my discussion to the case of democratic legitimation and opposition structure (party systems and coalition forms), and made the following arguments.

1. Democracy does not depend on agreement on fundamentals. Rather, it was designed to cope with disagreement on fundamentals; it requires tolerance of differences. And democracy does not depend on a "western" political culture: some non-western countries are also democratic.
2. Democracy is not formed simply when enough actors with enough power want it. If enough actors with enough power could get their way, they would have no need of democratic compromises. Democracy is everyone's "second choice:" they would rather win.
3. Some opposition structures are more conducive to democracy than others, and this effect in turn is constrained by actors' legitimation of democracy. If even a small antidemocratic party is strategically located to block turnover in office, this blockage can generate further polarization, citizen disaffection, and structural paralysis.

4. Although legitimation is relatively autonomous, opposition structure does exert influence. Democratic legitimation grows as citizens experience a responsive opposition structure in their own country, see it in another country, or compare it to their country's own past.
5. A responsive opposition structure and democratic legitimation form a "virtuous circle" that is relatively impervious to exogenous (e.g., economic) problems. If a crisis comes and voters want to protest, they will cast their votes for a viable democratic alternative, if it exists. If alternance is blocked and legitimation is low, citizens are more likely to vote for anti-democratic parties in a crisis.
6. A small number of actors can "leverage" such a change in a self-reinforcing equilibrium—but only if they can exploit strategic weak points in the system.
7. Although legitimation and opposition structure tend to reinforce each other, their effects are asymmetrical, and one's influence on the other may lag.
8. The sequence of development can affect democratic outcomes. If an anti-democratic dynamic exists when the franchise is extended, even pro-democratic new voters may be drawn into the vicious circle. A historical chance may be passed to produce a democratic outcome.
9. Legitimation, opposition structure, and exogenous problems do not move perfectly in tandem. A problem in only one factor may permit democracy to survive. Yet a conjuncture of problems—a "phasing" of cycles—may cause democracy to collapse.

Thus, the model posits that legitimation and opposition structure mutually affect each other—with various disjunctures—and that their combined effects influence the chances for democracy. And because the model is framed in a social action perspective, system-level outcomes can be described in terms of actors who pursue particular goals and are structurally constrained by their mutual interactions.

Such models can be extended in several directions. One could examine aspects of liberal and democratic values in more detail. For instance, political tolerance can be analyzed in terms of a vicious/virtuous circle. Tolerance contributes to party-system depolarization, which contributes to moderation of conflict, which contributes to incremental reform and conflict resolution, which contributes to greater cooperative contact among political opponents, which contributes to trust among opponents, which leads back to tolerance. And similar models can be applied to other culture-structure interactions as well. Examples include the historical development of antisemitism (see Weil 1983, 1990) and the relative contributions of a "culture of poverty" and a deficient "structure of opportunity" to economic and social dislocations.

Social-action models represent an advance on simple additive causal models. They allow us, in a fairly straightforward fashion, to examine such things as interactive effects, the "transformation" of actors' actions into system-outcomes, and endogenous changes in the model's parameters. Coleman (1986) argued that social-action models have been in eclipse since Parsons' early work. But as Sewell (1987) responded, to a great extent these models simply formalize what good comparative-historical research does routinely. And comparative-historical research has hardly been in eclipse: it has experienced an explosive revival in recent years. In my view, these two approaches complement, and do not contradict, each other. It is only a matter of emphasis and perspective whether such models are expressed in formal-mathematical or comparative-historical terms. Most importantly, both approaches describe social reality more completely than simple additive models, but still parsimoniously. This was also my intention here. I sought to demonstrate that monocausal models of political culture or political structure are no longer viable. And I tried to suggest some more adequate alternatives. Whether the new models are, in fact, more adequate will be best tested in concrete empirical analyses.

NOTES

1. This paper is an attempt to wrestle with a theoretical framework that has lain behind my empirical work for many years. Over these years, as I have developed this framework, the paper has grown. Yet as I am aware, it still falls short of answering all the questions it raises, and some of its answers need more fleshing out. The topic deserves a book-length treatment, and someday I hope to give it that. In the meantime, I hope that this paper will help connect some points made elsewhere in the literature and generate productive debate. As editor of this series, I have encouraged other contributors to be speculative; and in the present case, I have taken that liberty myself. This paper has benefitted from the comments of many colleagues over the years, even though I have not always succeeded in resolving problems they pointed out or incorporating their suggestions.

2. This paragraph simply sets out my position; it is not meant as a critique of metatheory. For further discussion and critiques from various perspectives, see Kim (1964); Barry (1970); Pateman (1970); Lehman (1972); Elkins and Simeon (1979); Almond and Verba, eds. (1980); Kaase (1983); Alford and Friedland (1985); and Almond (1988).

3. Party system volatility, or fluctuations in electoral strength, encompasses several different processes (see Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, eds. 1984; Crewe and Denver, eds. 1985; Franklin, Mackie, and Valen, eds. 1992). It includes the gross and net flow of voters between parties, as well as into and out of the electorate because of maturity, migration, death, and abstention. And it includes realignment and dealignment: changes in the electoral alignment of various constituencies, and the overall weakening of party attachments.

4. For reviews of research on coalitions, see Pridham (1987), Laver (1986), Browne, Frendreis, and Gleiber (1988), Strom (1988), Nolte (1988), Laver and Schofield (1990), and Laver and Budge, eds (1992). Much of this literature does not address democratic outcomes directly.

5. Some scholars have criticized Lijphart's theory for not "predicting" the decline of consociationalism in countries like the Netherlands. But this change actually supports the dynamic

predictions of the model (see Dalder 1987; Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1985, 1987; van Mierlo 1986).

6. I discuss phenomena like "tipping" further in the section on combined effects, below.

7. With the concept of a cultural substratum, I wish to avoid the theoretical rigidities of functionalism, rational choice theory, and institutionalism. In functionalism, values are located at the system level and are virtually inaccessible to actors: actors are over-socialized. In rational choice theory, values are virtually irrelevant because actors must pursue instrumental rationality or lose utilities. And in institutionalism, values tend to be generated by institutional structures.

8. This is also an example of bounded rationality: strategies shaped by the—culturally-colored and habituated—way an actor reads the situation (cf. March 1978; Elster 1983; Simon 1986).

9. The following three sections repeat and expand on arguments made in Weil (1993a).

10. The means by which actors learn what they like or dislike about system structure can be quite complex. Consider just three questions. First, there is disagreement about the means by which values and norms evolve. Writers have proposed deduction, trial and error, "natural selection," or other means. Some of these paths involve actor-rationality, and some do not (Axelrod 1984, 1986; Axelrod and Hamilton 1981; Opp 1982). Second, the structural environment can influence value-learning in rather perverse fashions. For instance, March and Olsen (1975) and Lave and March (1975) describe "superstitious learning," in which actors mistakenly attribute good outcomes to system factors that actually had no effect, and "learn" new values accordingly. Third, value-learning can proceed differentially, rather than uniformly, through a population. One important example is differential socialization effects, especially among different generational cohorts or education levels. I have investigated this topic in some detail elsewhere (Weil 1981, 1982, 1985b, 1987b, 1991, 1993b).

11. Liberal democracy is probably more vulnerable to violent disorder than economic problems (Linz and Stepan 1989).

12. One could argue that actors also compare their present country to ideals that they have never seen. But this introduces a different notion of comparison than I want to consider here.

13. The next two paragraphs and the accompanying figures further develop arguments advanced in Weil (1989).

14. The rest of this section can be read as a gloss on Bracher (1970) and Linz (1978).

15. A model of historical stages is sometimes neglected in interest-based domination models and static equilibrium models, but it is not new. It resembles Marx's historical dialectic and Adam Smith's model of conflict/interaction that generates unintended consequences. It is also consistent with a "branching tree model of sequential development," theories of "punctuated equilibrium" (both reviewed by Krasner 1984) or a model of "episodic" development (Zaret 1989). But it is *not* consistent with ration-choice assumptions that values (tastes) are absolute, stable, consistent, and exogenous (cf. March 1978). Nor is it consistent with functionalist arguments that changing structures are simply reflections of changing values.

16. Classical examples of sequencing models include Weber's "branching tree models of sequential development." His models seek to explain, for example, why only certain types of legitimate domination can lead to others, or why certain solutions to the problem of theodicy reduce a religion's elective affinity for capitalism. Utilitarians also propounded at least one example of a sequencing theory. John Stuart Mill argued (against Bentham's maxim, "pushpin as good as poetry") that once a person had learned to enjoy "difficult" or culturally more advanced activities, the older "simpler" activities no longer gave the previous pleasure. Becker's (1976) theory that tastes and addictions derive from investments of time is a version of Mill's theory that may return it to Bentham's democratic orientation. On the other hand, it is also quite similar to Skinnerian operant conditioning.

17. These hypotheses are modern versions of Tocqueville's argument that liberty lost in the process of democratization is much harder to regain than liberty retained is to preserve.

18. A monotonic rise or fall of a time series may be considered a special case of fluctuation.
19. I disregard several other characteristics of time series in order to pursue one line of argument (see Gottman 1981; and van der Eijk and Weber 1987).
20. Antidemocratic voting is calculated as the percentage vote for anti-democratic parties, plus half the percentage vote for ambivalently-democratic parties. Parties' adherence to democracy is derived from monograph literature. Electoral volatility is one-half the interelection change of each party, summed over all parties (Pedersen 1979, 1980; Shamir 1984). Electoral data come from Flora, et al. (1983/1987) and more recent press reports. Unemployment data come from International Labor Organization Yearbooks and Mitchell (1978).
21. Events of the 1990s were too recent to incorporate into this paper. While unemployment and protest voting have risen in many countries, it has not been accompanied by anti-democratic voting in most cases. Depending on characterizations of parties, anti-democratic voting has risen in many European countries, but as yet, not to the levels of the 1920s and 1930s.

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