
MASS-ELITE REPRESENTATION GAP IN OLD AND NEW DEMOCRACIES

CRITICAL JUNCTURES and ELITE AGENCY

EDITED BY
JAEMIN SHIM

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Published in the United States of America by the
University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
Printed on acid-free paper
First published August 2024

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Shim, Jaemin, 1983– editor. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8401-4447> | Michigan Publishing (University of Michigan), publisher.
Title: Mass-elite representation gap in old and new democracies : critical junctures and elite agency / Edited by Jaemin Shim.
Description: Ann Arbor [Michigan] : University of Michigan Press, 2024. | Series: New comparative politics | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024008389 (print) | LCCN 2024008390 (ebook) | ISBN 9780472076949 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780472056941 (paperback) | ISBN 9780472904587 (ebook other)
Subjects: LCSH: Representative government and representation. | Democracy. | Elite (Social sciences)—Political aspects. | Political participation.
Classification: LCC JF1051 .M325 2024 (print) | LCC JF1051 (ebook) | DDC 321.8—dc23/eng/20240322
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024008389>
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024008390>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12776814>

The University of Michigan Press's open access publishing program is made possible thanks to additional funding from the University of Michigan Office of the Provost and the generous support of contributing libraries.

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Digital materials related to this title can be found on
the Fulcrum platform via the following citable URL:
<https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12776814>

Polarization, Political Cleavages, and Elites in Old and New Democracies

Simon Bornschier

The appeal of the cleavage concept lies in its capacity to link individual political behavior to large-scale divisions in society by conceiving of individuals as members of various social groups. In their seminal work, Lipset and Rokkan (1967; Rokkan 1970, 1999) explained how party systems in Western Europe formed and came to represent the programmatic preferences of voters, thereby achieving a high degree of mass–elite correspondence (Dalton 1985). Because it was developed to explain the configuration of party systems in Western Europe, Lipset and Rokkan’s model cannot be directly applied to other contexts (but see Geddes 2003). While the point of departure in the original model was the critical junctures defined by the twin processes of the national and industrial revolutions, subsequent theorizing on Western Europe identified the educational revolution beginning in the 1960s (Allardt 1968; Kriesi 1999; Bornschier 2010; Stubager 2009, 2010), the multifaceted process of globalization (Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012; de Wilde et al. 2019), and the transnationalization of governance (Hooghe and Marks 2018) as further critical junctures that shaped party systems. Contrary to accounts that emphasize a generalized process of dealignment, or the prevalence of antiestablishment dynamics and issue competition,¹ scholars working within the cleavage account generally assess the capacity of party systems to represent voters’ substantive policy preferences more positively.

If we detach this perspective from the critical junctures that were relevant in Western Europe, the cleavage approach can fruitfully be applied to other regions, and to newer democracies in particular. To make the cleavage

approach travel to other contexts, which forms the prime focus of this volume, it needs to be adapted in two ways. For one thing, the approach needs to be contextualized to account for critical junctures that are often different from the national and industrial revolutions (Randall 2001; van Eerd 2017; this volume, chap. 4). More fundamentally, this requires a shift from macro-historical sociology and a concern with similarities and differences between societies and their party systems to a more actor-centered perspective that acknowledges that critical junctures may afford elites considerable leeway to shape political cleavages (Chhibber and Torcal 1997; Torcal and Mainwaring 2003; Enyedi 2005; Deegan-Krause 2006; Bornschier 2009; Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010; Bargsted and Somma 2016). The agency-oriented approach is also in line with definitions of critical junctures prevalent in recent theorizing (Collier and Collier [1991] 2002; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Mahoney 2000; Roberts 2017). As noted in the previous chapter, mass–elite discrepancy largely depends upon elite leeway during the critical juncture, which takes the form of intentionally muting mass-level social divides or politicizing divides without much mass-level demand. This chapter focuses on the former.

The first part of this chapter seeks to contribute to theorizing on elite agency in the politicization of social divides and their translation into party systems. Specifically, it lays out key conditions under which elite agency increases. It takes as a point of departure the undisputed importance of elite strategy in situations when cleavages are cross-cutting, a common scenario in developing and advanced democracies alike. It then moves on to discussing how new and old democracies differ by addressing the interplay between mobilization from below and elite strategic action. In most new democracies, large-scale processes of social change and suffrage expansion were less intimately related than was the case in the old democracies. Second, elites are also afforded more leeway in new democracies due to the frequent restrictions on political pluralism and party competition. It is here that a different strategic configuration of elite actors impinges directly on the quality of substantive representation. Finally, I address the process in which cleavages are reproduced over generations, and how prior democratic experiences shape the degree to which redemocratization constitutes a critical juncture in its own right, or merely reproduces earlier mass–elite configurations.

The empirical part of the chapter substantiates some of these theoretical claims by analyzing the mobilization of the economic cleavage in South America in the first decades of the twentieth century. Often noted as a region whose party development sequence most closely resembles that of Western Europe (Randall 2001), South America can be distinguished

from other non-Western regions by its early decolonization experience in the early nineteenth century, the emergence of working-class organization in the early twentieth century, and prominent socioeconomic divides at the mass level. The empirical analysis consists of paired comparisons of South American countries and is intended to illustrate the range of possible outcomes in mass–elite congruence or divergence when parties have substantial autonomy from society in defining their policy positions. The results demonstrate that elite choices are central in determining whether mass pressure from below results in mobilization of competitive divides at the elite level, or whether it results in congruence between parties and voters, in the terms set out in figure 4.2 in chapter 4. Specifically, parties played the predominant role in mobilizing left-leaning voters in Uruguay and Colombia, pulling them into a coalition with the middle class. The Colorados in Uruguay maintained their course and were able to retain this constituency, while the Liberals in Colombia colluded with their former archenemies after a civil war, leaving left-wing voters without representation. Similarly, the comparison between the Argentine Peronists and Peru’s American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) again underlines the leeway for elite agency: party leaders unconstrained by party organizations with strong mechanisms of internal accountability may in some cases remain congruent with their constituents, and in others abandon them. Finally, both the Venezuelan and the Colombian cases demonstrate that elite pacts intended to restore democracy after interruptions of democratic rule can put the party system on the track of growing mass–elite divergence, because these pacts often restrict open contestation and competition. In Venezuela, this eventually paved the way for the emergence of Chavismo.

5.1. Elite Agency in Old and New Democracies

Mobilization from below and from above interact both in the initial formation of cleavages, as well as in their subsequent perpetuation or their fading, as we will see. Politics is always a struggle about meaning and about which of the manifold dividing lines in society are politicized, as Schattschneider ([1960] 1975) recognized long ago. Agency is thus crucial in old and new democracies alike. At the most elementary level, individuals need interpretative frames in order to engage in collective political action. These frames allow them to interpret grievances and to form political preferences to alleviate those grievances. This involves the formation of collective identities that help to define the boundaries of the group in question (see also Tar-

row 1992). Leadership by elites is crucial in this process, as many cleavage theorists highlight (e.g., Chhibber and Torcal 1997; Torcal and Mainwaring 2003; Enyedi 2005; Deegan-Krause 2006; Zuckerman 1975). Beyond the collective action problem, elite agency is also crucial because every individual belongs to multiple groups that are potentially relevant politically. Following Stryker (1980, 2000), we can think of identities such as those linked to class, religion, or ethnicity as arranged in a hierarchy of salience. Elites matter both in the initial mobilization of cleavages, when they provide interpretative frames to make some group identities salient at the expense of others (Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010, 697; Bornschier et al. 2024). Here, the space for agency is limited by the legacies of the mobilization of prior cleavages, as is evident in the well-known notion of cross-cutting cleavages. On the other hand, the continued salience of a division depends on the degree to which political conflict stabilizes the salience hierarchy of identities at the individual level (Bornschier 2010; see also Coser 1956; Sartori 1968; Bartolini 2005). Indeed, the extensive literature that has documented how the strength of class voting in the old democracies depends on the degree of continued elite political conflict speaks in favor of this hypothesis (e.g., van der Brug 2010; Evans and Tilley 2011; Adams, De Vries, and Leiter 2011; Evans and de Graaf 2013).

In this section, I start out by expanding on the first notion, namely that new divisions interact with existing cleavages, whereby the latter determine the mobilization space for the former. This mechanism is common to old and new democracies. I then go on to discuss some of the reasons why political elites have more room for agency in new democracies.

5.1.1. *Cross-Cutting Cleavages*

Political agency occupies a central role in the initial mobilization of cleavages, and especially where social divisions are strongly cross-cutting. While we find state-market and religious cleavages almost everywhere in Europe, the degree to which cleavages cross-cut or reinforce each other depends crucially on elite strategies (see, e.g., Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1999; Casal Bértoa 2014; Manow 2015). Outside Europe, an analogous (if rare) case of a very gradual process of suffrage extension and the sequential mobilization of a religious and an economic cleavage is Chile (Scully 1992). More broadly, a large number of divisions are potentially relevant in political terms in any society, and party systems are always more responsive to some con-

flicts than to others (Schattschneider ([1960] 1975). This also has implications for the representation of voters' substantive interests. To the degree that competitive divides are cross-cutting, voters face trade-offs in terms of choosing a party that best represents their interests: depending on parties' political offer, they may be able to maximize proximity to a party along the dimension that matters most to them only at the expense of reducing proximity along another dimension that is of secondary importance to them. We must therefore be careful to identify the relevant divides for voters, because we might otherwise misinterpret the lack of saliency enjoyed by a divide with a lack of responsiveness on the part of parties.

All of this makes the measurement of how well party systems represent voter preferences a very complicated task in old and new democracies alike. The presence of several competing dimensions with varying levels of salience, as well as the dynamic and evolving nature of party system divides, makes the identification of what Jaemin Shim (chapter 2, this vol.) calls *mass–elite policy discrepancies on key political dimensions* far from trivial. This might be illustrated with reference to the populist right in Western Europe: for those supporting the radical populist right in Western Europe, the economic dimension is indeed secondary to the cultural one. While their anti-universalistic preferences are represented well by right-wing populist parties, this is not necessarily the case with regard to the economic dimension (Ivarsflaten 2005; Bornschier 2010; but see Enggist and Pinggera 2021).² Overall, radical right parties have moved to the left on the economic dimension, but depending on the country, this may alienate some of their supporters, and these parties may therefore be reluctant to move too far to the left in the economic domain. A similar situation was well known in postwar Western Europe when religion was still a salient cleavage—indeed, more salient than the economic divide in many countries.³ Consequently, religious voters often faced a dilemma in terms of representation due to the cross-cutting nature of economic and religious cleavages. While the identification and measurement of competitive divides in new democracies is more demanding than in established democracies (Bornschier 2020), examples of cross-cutting cleavage abound. For instance, as noted in the previous chapters, numerous cleavages concerning foreign relations and defense cross-cut socioeconomic divides. By displaying more variance in terms of their strength, political cleavages in new democracies shed light on the nontrivial role of elite agency in cleavage formation.

5.1.2. *Weak Bottom-up Mobilization*

Critical junctures constitute moments in which the interaction between demands from below and elite agency crystallizes. They are moments in which elites acquire more room for agency (Collier and Collier [1991] 2002; Mahoney 2000; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010; Roberts 2017; this volume, chap. 4). If the social groups in question already enjoy the right to vote, critical junctures usually occur over several “critical elections,” as realignment theory postulates (Key 1959; Martin 2000; Mayhew 2000). Even in the classical cleavage model, which most of the time adopts a social group perspective, political actors play a key role in politicizing social divisions, in particular by forging coalitions of more specific electoral segments into cleavage groups (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1999; Enyedi 2005, 700–701). Many new democracies differ from this historical model, first, in that mobilization from below involved more than just one group or class. Second, weaker institutionalization meant that mobilization was more likely to occur in sudden outbursts, increasing the risk of an authoritarian reaction (Weyland 2012, 2014). The following paragraphs discuss how these two factors play out.

The leeway for political agency at critical junctures depends on the one hand on the nature of bottom-up social mobilization. Mobilization from below can either involve previously excluded groups that are clearly defined in terms of their group boundaries and political demands, or broader segments of the population. Although there is some variance across countries, the historical mobilization of the European working class is closer to the first scenario (Bartolini 2000a). The broader the groups demanding inclusion, the more important agency becomes in crafting coalitions and in developing a discourse that gives coherence to their demands. The difference between the class cleavage and the older cleavages in Western Europe illustrates this nicely. The cleavages triggered by the national revolution and the sectoral cleavage between agriculture and industry resulted in high levels of diversity between party systems—it is here that Lipset and Rokkan (1967; Rokkan 1999) discuss elite alliance options and choices extensively. Although the vigor of the subsequent class cleavage depended heavily on the strength and configuration of these older cleavages, the authors hardly discuss elite agency with respect to the class cleavage. It is almost as if they took its manifestation, which coincided with the forceful mobilization of the labor movement, for granted.⁴ The more that critical junctures coincide with large-scale processes of social change and the formation of new social groups, the more restricted the leeway for political agency seems to be. This will become even

clearer when we compare the European process of cleavage formation with that elsewhere and with respect to South America in the empirical part of this chapter. Although the formation of social groups along the class cleavage was aided by the consciousness-raising struggle for suffrage extension in Europe (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Collier 1999), the critical junctures were large-scale processes of *socioeconomic*, rather than more strictly political, change.

In more recent instances of democratization, the extension of suffrage resulted from more genuine conflicts over political inclusion, although these were often coupled with socioeconomic demands. In sub-Saharan Africa, the struggle for independence against colonial powers constitutes a critical juncture or “genetic moment” that set in motion a path-dependent reproduction of these initial divisions (van Eerd 2017). Similarly, elite-driven political conflicts in the early rounds of electoral competition turned path-dependent in numerous East Asian and Eastern European countries (Slater and Wong 2013; Randall 2001; Zielinski 2002). In South America, where independence was achieved in the early nineteenth century, this process occurred decades before steps toward a broader suffrage were attained.⁵ Levels of industrialization were low relative to Europe at the time when pressures for democratization and redistribution mounted in the first decades of the twentieth century (Collier and Collier 2002; Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992). Suffrage expansion is then more heavily shaped by the strategic choices of elites that seek to bolster their support relative to others (Dix 1989; Collier 1999), rather than by a massive growth of the working class. The resulting cross-class nature of demands for political inclusion affords elites an important role in forging coalitions between different classes, some of which may be less organized than others. Likewise, in Africa, leaders combined Marxist ideology, however distant from social reality due to the fragility of the industrial working class, with nationalism in the struggle against colonialism and the definition of the postcolonial order (van Eerd 2017, 66–72). Asian countries highly resemble this in the sense that communism often deviated from the original doctrine (Belogurova 2014; Scalapino 1965) and became connected to nationalism during the anticolonial struggle. The class character of mobilization from below was far less clear-cut in new democracies; rather, demands for inclusion as well as for specific policies involved diverse social groups. This is all the more true when democratization occurs in the process of decolonization, where it often involves a direct transition to a regime with universal suffrage, sidestepping the establishment of a competitive oligarchic regime (Geddes 2011, 606; see also Randall 2001). In new democracies, elites are thus

afforded a more important role as they forge broad social coalitions around substantive political demands.

The socially heterogeneous basis of pressures from below, and the resulting difficulty in specifying policy-oriented demands beyond political reform, means that critical junctures are strongly defined by the struggle between elite actors. Political reform can result from the efforts of established elites to broaden their support, in a pattern Collier (1999) refers to as “electoral support mobilization.” But political newcomers will also find it easier to appeal to the masses than when social groups have preexisting linkages to parties deriving from older cleavages. In particular, populist actors are much more likely to rally broad coalitions in new, as opposed to older, democracies (Bornschieer 2018). Populist parties generally offer leaders more room for maneuver, since parties of this type have a weaker formal organization to hold leaders to account than mass-organic parties (Levitsky and Roberts 2011). Although populist movements differ in the degree to which they establish strong partisan organizations, Roberts (2006, 137) suggests that “given the weight of personalistic authority, partisan vehicles formed by populist movements are inevitably instruments that serve their leaders’ interests.” Hence, they offer their leaders—and usually one leader—more decision-making autonomy than classical left-wing mass parties. Charismatic leadership allows voters to project their desires and demands onto the leader (Madsen and Snow 1991; Kitschelt 2000), a psychological mechanism (Conover and Feldman 1982) that results in a greater potential for mass–elite discrepancy along competitive dimensions.

5.1.3. Elite-Led Transitions and Curtailed Political Competition

The more central role occupied by elite agency is coupled with a greater repressive capacity. In part, this is due to weaker mobilization from below, but also to the strength and greater independence of nonparliamentary elites such as the military (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Geddes 1999; Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2018). In part, this reflects the experience of numerous new democracies with top-down democratic transitions led by the military or a revolutionary/nationalist party. This difference renders the elite strategic game more complex in many new democracies; but, overall, it further reinforces the ability of elites to channel mass mobilization from below. What is more, in revolutionary moments in which the masses mobilize, the stakes for elites are often high because mobilization is

weakly channeled by political organizations (Weyland 2012), impinging on the way they assess the balance between the costs of toleration and the cost of repression of opposition (cf. Dahl 1971).

Pacted transitions to democracy constitute key instances where elites decisively shape the contours of future party competition (Rustow 1970; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Bejarano 2011; Bornschier 2019). To the extent that it results in the exclusion or marginalization of key actors, this mode of transition from authoritarian rule or civil war is damaging for representation. Not only are certain interests excluded from parliamentary representation, the more far-reaching consequence is that a lack of real contestation strongly weakens the incentives of established parties to respond to voter preferences. Cases in point are the exclusion of communist or other radical left parties in many countries in twentieth-century South America, which will be analyzed in detail in the empirical part of this chapter. By contrast, in Spain's democratic transition, the socialist and communist parties—"to the outrage of the Franquist hardliners" (O'Donnell 1992, 27)—were able to push for their legalization in the negotiations.

The contingent logic of pacted democratization does not apply only to representation along economic divides. As a case in point, the difficult translation of religious divides into politics in the MENA region has important implications for representation along the highly salient religious-secular divide in these countries (see Farag, this volume; Wegner and Cavatorta 2019). Regardless of the policy dimension involved, curtailing competition narrows the political spectrum by excluding certain political demands. More damaging still is the impact on the strategic incentives of the established parties: with their more radical competitors outlawed, the costs for colluding ideologically with their competitors are almost absent in the short run, because those voters lacking representation have nowhere else to go (Bornschier 2019). Curtailing competition therefore risks the gradual dealignment of party systems, and it also destroys parties' incentives to adapt to new social demands.⁶ As a consequence, restricted competition in the medium or long run leads to representation deficits. These culminated in the breakdown of the party system and the election of Hugo Chávez as a political outsider in Venezuela (Morgan 2011; Bornschier 2018, 2019), and in a progressive deinstitutionalization of the party system in Colombia (Bejarano and Pizarro 2005; Pizarro Leongómez 2006), as we will see later.

An alternative to outright bans on certain parties is for established elites to insulate their voters from programmatic appeals by their competitors

by investing in nonprogrammatic linkages (Shefter 1977; Kitschelt 2000). Often, this strategy is sufficient to restrict programmatic pluralism. Again, the examples of Venezuela and Colombia will show that this strategy can extend incumbent advantage even as formal restrictions on competition are lifted. Another case in point is Brazil, where rampant clientelism was able to retard the emergence of a party mobilized from below during the entire post-1945 semidemocratic regime and well into the 1980s (Chalmers 1972; Schmitter 1971; Weyland 1996; Hagopian 1996). This pattern can also be observed in the East and Southeast Asian regions. As will be made clear by Kenneth McElwain (chapter 8), Japan's LDP furthered its electoral advantage through pork barrel projects and patronage, thereby muting ideological issues. Similarly, Andreas Ufen's analysis of the Indonesia case (chapter 7) shows how key party elites dampened the mass-level religious cleavage, while maintaining their dominant position over time through clientelistic, oligarchic, and personalistic forms of politics.

5.1.4. Democratic Breakdown and Discontinuity in Political Cleavage Reproduction

Ongoing party differentiation and interparty conflict—which I will call “polarization” here—is crucial to keep programmatic alignments between parties and voters alive, as I have emphasized above. In a process that operates similarly in old and new democracies, polarization nourishes the ideological schemas that guide voters and help them to navigate the political space (Bornschieer 2010, 2019). Strong programmatic linkages also put pressure on parties to adapt to voters' evolving preferences and new demands, because mass–elite discrepancy leads to voters shifting to other parties. Because of frequent authoritarian backlashes and the fragility of programmatic linkages, however, the reproduction of cleavages according to this mechanism is much more difficult in new democracies.

One reason, which follows from the preceding discussion on the openness of competition, is that each transition back to democracy after an authoritarian interlude offers the possibility for elites to exclude actors from future competitive elections. Whether this is the case or not depends also on the international system. Some historical periods are more propitious to democracy, and in particular to differing degrees of open or restricted competition. The Cold War era was particularly inimical to democracy and open contestation (Levitsky and Way 2010; Boix 2011; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013; Weyland 2019), in that strong pressures existed in the Western

Hemisphere to exclude communist parties from competition. This affected redemocratization processes in South America and put other countries that experienced uninterrupted democratic rule at an advantage, since it proved much more difficult to outlaw radical competitors in these contexts. In addition, due to the overriding focus on winning the regime competition, Western democracies turned a blind eye to many authoritarian governments in their hemisphere. As a result, military coups d'état overturning civilian regimes, for example in South Korea and Indonesia, did not face resistance from the West.

More generally, authoritarian backlashes and interruptions in the electoral calendar mitigate the reproductive mechanism that underlies cleavages. Based on data from Argentina, Lupu and Stokes (2010) show that every interruption in the electoral calendar weakened the formation of programmatic partisan identities. The same argument is made by van Eerd (2017) with respect to the countries he studies in Africa. Likewise, Ufen (chapter 7) demonstrates how the institutionalization of economic and religious cleavages in Indonesia was halted by the authoritarian turn in the 1950s.

In the next section, I flesh out how three specificities of the South American context account for a more important role for elite strategic action than in the old democracies. Because the region first democratized in the early twentieth century, the relevant period to focus on is the initial period of party system formation in the advent of mass politics, rather than the period of redemocratization in the 1980s.

5.2. Empirical Analysis: Elite Agency and Substantive Policy Representation in South America

Although there are exceptions, the working class played an important role in the final step to manhood suffrage in Western Europe (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Collier 1999), making mobilization from below and the crystallization of the class cleavage coincide. In this context, the fact that elites are held accountable by powerful social movements from below restricts their room for maneuver. Because large scale-processes of social change and suffrage expansion coincided less in South America, mobilization from below was generally weaker and had a more strongly multiclass character. In the empirical section of this chapter, I present evidence for three structuralist configurations in early twentieth-century South America—the critical juncture of democratization—that make elite agency more important than in the Lipset-Rokkan universe.

First, democratization pushed by established parties—a pattern labeled “electoral support mobilization” by Collier (1999)—is more prevalent in South America than in the old democracies. As a consequence, the quality of substantive policy representation after the extension of the franchise depends heavily on elite choices. Second, pacted transitions to democracy impinge heavily on the openness of competition, since the political survival of the parties entering the pact often depends on their ability to exclude competitors. As explained, this results in a loss of programmatic responsiveness and dealigns the party system in the long run. Third, when suffrage expansion occurs in leaps—because it is not triggered by the sequential mobilization of social groups for inclusion, but rather by more strictly political dynamics and populist mass mobilization—electoral coalitions tend to be more heterogeneous. Mass-organic parties of the left then face strong competition by populist left parties, which affords considerable discretion to charismatic leaders. In the next section, based on a number of paired comparisons, I demonstrate that these contexts make mass–elite congruence heavily dependent on elites’ strategic decisions. The comparison is focused on the economic state–market cleavage due to the fact that conflicts surrounding the religious cleavage had largely been pacified in South America, with a few exceptions (cf. Middlebrook 2000).

5.2.1. Electoral Support Mobilization and Elite Agency

The one case in South America that experienced a gradual expansion of suffrage similar to most European countries and the subsequent emergence of strong religious and economic cleavages is Chile (Scully 1992). Elsewhere, suffrage expansion coincided less with the critical junctures of state formation and industrialization, giving elites considerably more leeway in terms of agency. Even in the earliest cases of democratization outside Europe and North America, leaders had more foresight when the working class started to organize. Seeking to take advantage of the growth of this potential new political constituency, elites adopted platforms to incorporate the working class into broad multiclass alliances. I demonstrate this pattern by drawing on the cases of Uruguay and Colombia, which present interesting similarities and contrasts that underline both the importance of elite strategic action in general and the role of open contestation in shaping elite choices.

In the context of party systems that mirrored the nineteenth-century conflict between Liberals and Conservatives, the Liberals in Colombia and

their equivalent in Uruguay, the Colorados, took steps to appeal to the nascent working class and other progressive social groups (Collier and Collier 2002). Their shift to the left precluded the growth of a strong left and, in terms of their configuration, party systems in both countries remained “elitist” (Roberts 2014, chap. 4). In Uruguay, José Battle y Ordóñez moved the Colorado Party decisively to the left and initiated a far-reaching project of social reform in the first years of the twentieth century, with the intent of preempting mass unrest by reducing inequality (Collier and Collier 2002, 271–314). This immediately triggered resistance from the Blancos, the other traditional party, which displayed more of a center-right profile. The result was a polarization of the party system along the economic state–market dimension that was sustained for roughly half a century (Bornschieer 2019). When the Colorados moved to the center in the 1960s, they rapidly lost their dominant position in the left-wing spectrum to a competitor, the Frente Amplio (Luna 2007; Lanzaro and Piñeiro 2017). This process of realignment testifies to the programmatic nature of party competition: as soon as the Colorados increased the distance from their traditional electorate, open competition resulted in the growth of a new left-wing pole in the party system (Bornschieer n.d., chap. 5).

While Uruguay was a forerunner in terms of development and the emergence of an urban working class, Colombia lagged behind in this respect. The fact that the Liberals in Colombia only moved to the left in the 1930s is thus rooted in the timing and extent of industrialization. Regardless of these differences, however, what Colombia and Uruguay have in common is that the opening toward the working class occurred when the labor movement was still weak (Collier and Collier 2002, 93–99). Colombia only experienced partial democratization, yet it conforms to the same pattern in which a middle-class party hopes to win electorally from rallying emerging social groups. In Colombia, safeguards for union organization and the right to strike were cornerstones of the polarization that occurred between the two traditional parties (Collier and Collier 2002, 289–95, 299–303). Individual agency was crucial: in the 1946 presidential elections, the Liberals were split between their moderate wing and the populist figure of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (Hartlyn 1988, 36). Gaitán had initially formed a party of his own, the Revolutionary Leftist National Union, but now led the Liberals’ progressive wing, which pursued a successful strategy of populist mass mobilization (Betz 2018). But, contrary to Uruguay, the party system did not sustain the resulting polarization. Gaitán’s assassination in 1948, after winning the 1947 parliamentary elections, triggered the twenty-year civil war known as

“La Violencia.” The civil war ended the country’s experiment of offering representation along the entire political spectrum.

By absorbing the progressive momentum brought about by the initial growth of the working class and other progressive sectors, the traditional parties succeeded in dominating politics for decades in both countries. However, the crucial difference is that this occurred in the context of open contestation and the presence of competing left-wing parties in Uruguay, while the traditional parties restricted competition in Colombia when they engineered the country’s return to democracy. In the pacted transition of 1958, the Liberals and the Conservatives outlawed and repressed the left (e.g., Hartlyn 1988, 54–65; Bejarano 2011, 90–129). According to Bejarano (2011), the communists themselves were too weak to forcefully demand their inclusion, while the Cold War political climate produced powerful pressures from within and without the country to outlaw them. In Uruguay, on the other hand, the two established parties never outlawed the communists, forcing the Colorados to remain responsive to left-wing voters if they were not to lose them to left-wing competitors (Collier and Collier 2002, 453–56; Bornschier n.d., chap. 5).

As a consequence, politics in Colombia began to center more and more on clientelist exchanges, and programmatic responsiveness was lost (Wilde 1978; Martz 1997; Morgan 2011, 216–25; Collier and Collier 2002, 671–73). Empirical assessments of the responsiveness of parties to voter preferences after the redemocratization wave in the 1980s reveal a striking contrast between Uruguay and Colombia in terms of party system responsiveness, with Uruguay consistently scoring at the top, while the performance of Colombia is dismal (Bornschier 2013; Bornschier 2019, 170; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Luna and Zechmeister 2010). The comparison between the two cases shows that where democratization occurs at lower levels of industrialization and working-class mobilization, elite choices are crucial even in the “older” democracies outside Western Europe.⁷ In both cases, elite actors managed to rally the nascent working class behind middle-class parties. While the Uruguayan party system withstood the resulting polarization, establishing power-sharing after the civil war in Colombia required safeguards for the established parties and resulted in the exclusion of the communist left (Hartlyn 1988). The degree of mass–elite congruence thus depended crucially on whether the competitive situation provides incentives for parties to remain responsive to their voters, or whether restrictions in contestation allow them to abandon their voters with no immediate electoral cost.

5.2.2. *Elite Pacts and Restrictions on Competition*

Colombia is not the only case of return to democracy that involves an elite pact between parties with roots in a prior (semi-)democratic regime. Venezuela witnessed a similar pact when it returned to democracy in 1958 after a 10-year dictatorship that followed its short-lived democratic experiment between 1945 and 1948 known as the “Trienio,” which was characterized by a very high degree of polarization (Coppedge 1994). As in Colombia, the pact agreed upon by the signatory parties in Venezuela narrowed the political spectrum by excluding the communist parties, although it was less rigid than that in Colombia in not outlawing all opposition parties (Bejarano 2011; Karl 1986). Nonetheless, the outcome was similar in two respects: programmatic distinctiveness was lost and politics centered almost exclusively on the distribution of clientelistic benefits (Coppedge 1994, chap. 6; Roberts 2003; Lyne 2008, chap. 3; Morgan 2011, chap. 4; Ellner 2008, chap. 3). Indeed, the three signatory parties of the pact not only agreed on a number of policy principles but also to the sharing of both power and patronage resources, including “access to state jobs and contracts, a partitioning of ministries, and a complicated spoils system which would ensure the political survival of all signatories” (Karl 1986, 213). During most of the decade that followed redemocratization in 1958, Venezuela was governed by coalition cabinets including Acción Democrática (AD, which was strongly left-wing back in the 1940s, but centrist after 1958), the Christian Democratic Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI, born out of opposition against AD in the 1940s and taking more conservative positions both in the economic and the religious domain, but converging ideologically with AD from 1958 onward), and at times the smaller Unión Republicana Democrática (Lyne 2008, 112).

Open contestation was reestablished in Venezuela in 1968, and parts of the communist left merged into the Movement for Socialism. However, at that point, the inherited loyalties from the phase of polarization, along with AD’s and COPEI’s capacity to deliver particularistic benefits to their voters, allowed them to govern the country for another three decades until the devastating blow delivered to them by Hugo Chávez in the 1998 elections, from which they did not recover. For Mona Lyne, the prevalence of clientelism explains why “two decades of economic decline [in the 1980s and 1990s] fail to generate parties challenging the status quo” (2008, 67). The inability of parties to represent voters’ substantive policy preferences thus only became fully apparent when alternative linkage strategies failed as well

(Morgan 2011). Indeed, an empirical analysis of party placements in a mass-level survey shows that as early as the 1983 elections, *Acción Democrática*, the former left-wing pole in the party system, was perceived as rather right-wing by voters (Bornschieer n.d.).

In summary, to the extent that elite pacts impose restrictions on competition, they harm substantive policy representation. By weakening parties' incentives to retain their original spatial positions, the parties involved in these pacts can abandon their voters without immediate cost, as we have seen in the Colombian case. Quantitative analyses of the quality of representation in the 1990s (the first point in time for which cross-national data is available) show that the performance of party systems in this respect was dismal in Venezuela and Colombia (Luna and Zechmeister 2005; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Bornschieer 2013). The two cases also underline the point made earlier regarding the importance of historical timing: democratization was much less likely to involve full contestation and electoral competition after the advent of the Cold War. In particular, after the Cuban Revolution, the fear of communism fostered elite suspicion toward radical actors that might succumb to revolutionary action (cf. Weyland 2019).

5.2.3. *Populist Leadership and Divergent Choices*

The importance of elite agency is also put in evidence by a third configuration, where labor demands are articulated by competing parties on the left. As we have already seen in Uruguay and Colombia, working-class organization emerged in the first two decades of the twentieth century throughout South America, at a point when industrial occupation was still extremely limited. In certain countries, this was due to the spatial concentration of the working class in mining enclaves (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, chap. 5), but early organization was also aided by the example of similar organizations and ideologies from abroad, as well as the presence of migrants from Europe. Consequently, communist parties linked to unions existed in most countries (Collier and Collier 2002). Given the more heterogeneous nature of social groups potentially available for progressive social and political projects, however, these parties found themselves in strong competition with populist left-wing actors with weaker formal party organizations. Indeed, the struggle for political and economic inclusion in the early twentieth century had an anti-oligarchic character as it rallied broad swaths of the population against elite parties representing only a small strata of society (Roberts 2002, 2014). It is here that we witness the first histori-

cal instances of populist mobilization (Jansen 2017). Populist appeals were often more successful than communist or socialist mass parties in attracting a broad coalition pushing for social and political change, such as lower-class urban constituencies outside manufacturing, as well as middle-class sectors favoring social protection and anti-oligarchical political reform. Weaker party organizations, in turn, afforded charismatic leaders more leeway for agency than was the case for organized working-class parties. While I would argue that left-wing populist parties at least in theory are able to offer similar levels of substantive policy representation as mass-organic parties, whether they do so depends more heavily on discretionary elite choices.

In this section, I focus on two emblematic examples of left-wing populist mobilization, the APRA in Peru and Peronism in Argentina. APRA established a dominant position in the Peruvian labor movement in the 1930s and was initially a staunchly left-wing party. The Peronists (or, by their official names, the Partido Justicialista or Partido Peronista) in Argentina were founded by Juan Domingo Perón, who originally came to power as the labor minister of a non-elected military government in 1943. Although the status of the Peronists as a left-wing party is sometimes disputed (e.g., Ostiguy 2009), Perón's policies clearly favored the industrial working class and protectionist sectors more generally, and the Peronists became the dominant force in the Argentine labor movement (Gibson 1996; O'Donnell 1999). The two cases demonstrate the ability of charismatic leaders to sidestep organized working-class organizations and appeal to a broad coalition that might be considered the natural constituency of mass parties of the left (see also Roberts 2006). After substantiating this claim, I show how the contrasting trajectories of the Argentine and Peruvian party systems are due to the strategic choices of charismatic leaders that can determine whether populist movements remain responsive to their voters in the longer term.

Although Argentina was much more developed in the early twentieth century, Argentina and Peru are similar in that Peru exhibited an atypically high level of labor movement development relative to its level of industrialization in the 1930s, which was due to the country's status as mineral export economy (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992). Left-wing parties representing the interests of the middle and working classes had formed in the 1920s in Peru, the most important being the Socialist Party. Allied with the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers, it became the Communist Party of Peru in 1930. Like the Peronists later on, APRA, formed in 1924 by Haya de la Torre, succeeded in establishing a predominant position in the labor movement by the 1930s (Collier and Collier 2002, 325–27).

The 1931 presidential elections are considered a watershed in Peruvian politics. The established elite had been wiped out by two successive dictatorships between 1919 to 1931 that were shaped by the rivalry between two authoritarian rulers. With the embryonic precoup party system destroyed and the communists barred from participating in the election by the military junta, the political field was wide open (Jansen 2017, chap. 3). The result was that two candidates without links to established parties—Haya de la Torre and former military dictator Sánchez Cerro—ran against each other, pushing each other to pursue innovative mobilization strategies involving mass rallies across much of the country (Jansen 2017, 48–55, chaps. 4–5). Jansen identifies this election as the first instance of populist mobilization in South America and possibly beyond, in the contemporary use of the term. In this and later elections, APRA was thus able to forge an anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist alliance including the middle and the working classes (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 184, 186, 191, 193–94). Because its organizational basis was so clearly middle class, Di Tella (2004, 188–99) considers APRA the archetypical case of a radical middle-class party. When the 1931 election was over, Haya de la Torre did not accept its result, claiming that he had won the contest. He organized a military insurrection, launching a tradition of violence that persisted alongside efforts to moderate and gain acceptance from the political establishment (Collier and Collier 2002, 151; Coppedge 1998, 195).

Organization in Argentina's labor movement had surged since 1930, when the *Confederación General del Trabajo* (General Labor Confederation), the country's first national labor confederation, was formed. In part due to the influence of anarcho-syndicalism, however, the labor movement had remained largely outside party politics. Juan Domingo Perón took advantage of this fact by rallying the labor movement after a brief antilabor phase of the military government he was part of. Later on, the General Labor Confederation later became closely linked to Peronism (McGuire 1995, 208; Collier and Collier 2002, 331–35), yet due to the weak organizational structure of the party itself, Perón maintained extensive control over the party's course. Similarly to Haya de la Torre in Peru, Perón's charisma enabled him to unite a new social coalition and to establish what Madsen and Snow (1991) call the "charismatic bond." A spontaneous mass rally on October 17, 1945, after Perón had been deposed by his rivals within the military, marks the "mythical founding event of Peronism," according to Ostiguy (2009, 21). Perón gave a famous speech after his liberation the same day. "Within a few days [after the demonstration on October 17], several union leaders announced the formation of a Labor Party, which almost

immediately nominated Perón as its presidential candidate” (Madsen and Snow 1991, 50). The speech showed his unique capacity to appeal to the lower classes by utilizing colloquial style, while employing highly elaborate rhetorics and symbols (Ostiguy 2009, 20–21). The lower classes in Argentine society were given expression in politics for the first time. But in their elaborate analysis of the “charismatic bond” between a leader and his followers, Madsen and Snow (1991) underline that the link between Perón and his voters was not maintained on the basis of illusion, but rather by the policies enacted by the Peronist government to improve the situation of the lower classes.

Both the Peronists and APRA were thus multiclass parties: while APRA united the working and the middle classes in an anti-oligarchical coalition, the Peronists formed a sectoral coalition between the working class and protectionist groups in the countryside. Mass support suggests that both APRA’s and the Partido Justicialista’s programmatic profile resonated with voters. Although we have no measure of congruence, there is little to suggest that, during their initial mobilization, these movements represented left-wing voters to a lesser extent than the communist or socialist parties they displaced. But without a party apparatus of the kind characteristic of mass-organic parties to hold leaders to account, the choices made by the two movements’ founding fathers played a pivotal role in maintaining or diluting substantive policy representation.

The crucial difference between the two cases in terms of the long-term representation of left-wing interests was that APRA moved to the center in a delusionary quest to gain acceptance by the military establishment, while the Argentine Peronists stubbornly pushed polarization, despite similar military involvement in politics. Even faced with the threat that democracy could be overturned, the Peronist party never moderated its programmatic position after its rise in the 1940s, and only on one occasion did the Peronists form a short-lived alliance with political opponents. Contrary to most other cases in which labor parties were faced with a strong conservative reaction following the incorporation of the labor movement into politics, according to Collier and Collier (2002, 494), Perón did not exclude the left from his movement. This constitutes another factor that mitigated moderation. In terms of this pluralism inside the Peronist party, Argentina resembles Uruguay, where we have seen that competition with the communists prevented the Colorados from abandoning their left-wing stance on economic policy. In Peru, on the other hand, the only way for APRA to have a chance of governing once repression softened was to moderate its profile, and it is this route that Haya de la Torre chose (Collier and Collier 2002,

327–28, 474–83, 694–709). When the APRA-supported government came to adopt austerity politics after the 1956 elections, APRA even helped to restrain opposition from the labor movement. Collier and Collier (2002, 477) compare this agreement with the right to the pacts between AD and COPEI in Venezuela, and between Liberals and Conservatives in Colombia, although the agreement in Peru remained informal and APRA denied that a pact had been agreed upon.

Overall, then, the openness of political competition was crucial in setting party systems in South America on a path toward strong or weak programmatic representation. Elite political actors and their repressive capacities were not the only things to impinge on the direction that countries took at this forking path; the strategic behavior of left-wing parties was relevant as well. The discretionary power that leaders of populist parties enjoy is of course an advantage when it comes to forging large social coalitions. But it also makes representation outcomes more contingent on these leaders' choices, leading to higher odds for representation failure.

5.3. Conclusion

While it is hardly disputed today that mobilization from below and from above invariably interact in cleavage formation, we know less about the factors shaping the relative weight of bottom-up and top-down processes. By enlarging the universe of cases, studying cleavage formation in new democracies beyond the “usual suspects” helps to shed light on various ways in which the role of elite political agency remains hidden if we consider only the advanced democracies. The aim of this chapter was to advance this discussion and to theorize why elites may have greater leeway in shaping the representation of salient social divides in new democracies and how this impinges on the substantive representation of citizen preferences.

There are at least three ways in which the experience of new democracies differs from those considered in Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) treatment of the European cases. First, the social groups the franchise was extended to often did not correspond to specific social classes or sectoral interests. As a consequence, the social basis of cleavages is more heterogeneous, and elites acquire a more important role in forging these diverse coalitions and in holding them together. The diversity of these groups also gives an advantage to populist movements with charismatic figureheads. While they may be effective in representing hitherto neglected preferences, the leaders of populist movements face weaker accountability mechanisms internal to the party

than those of classical mass parties that would commit them to a specific policy stance. While this does not rule out that such leaders will remain responsive to their constituents, it does mean that they have the opportunity to strategically abandon their constituents if need be, for example when democracy is in danger. This first difference between old and the new democracies is thus directly linked to a second difference: a greater repressive capacity on the part of the established elites in new democracies. Established elites have more opportunities to manipulate the extent to which elections are open and truly competitive, again with important consequences for the representation of citizen preferences. Third, frequent reversals of democratization mitigate the reproduction of cleavages expressed in party systems and consequently offer more room for political maneuvering on the elite side.

This brief comparative analysis of South American case studies in the early twentieth century offered in this chapter illustrates that differences in the way elites mobilize mass-level political cleavages in the region have been important, and that these contrasts were consequential for representation. The following four full-fledged empirical chapters based on new democracies in four world regions will further demonstrate the influence of elites on muting mass-level political divisions or, sometimes, even creating their own elite-level political divisions.

Notes

1. The literature on these topics is too extensive to quote in full. For a recent overview, see Ford and Jennings (2020), and Borschier et al. (2024).

2. Enggist and Pinggera (2021) show a higher degree of alignment of voters and radical right parties with respect to welfare state preferences than is usually assumed.

3. France and Switzerland are cases in point; see Bartolini (2000a, 494); Knutsen (2004, 228); Lijphart (1979).

4. Elite agency and coalition formation certainly matter for party systems, but more in terms of the makeup of the left than in shaping whether the class cleavage manifests itself at all and how salient it becomes with respect to the older cleavages (see Bartolini 2000a).

5. Conflicts over state structure after independence can be considered critical antecedents in that they shaped the antagonism between liberals and conservatives, but this conflict in general did not survive mass politics and impinged on later critical junctures only indirectly (Borschier 2019; on “critical antecedents,” see Slater and Simmons 2010).

6. Bartolini (1999; 2000b) refers to this mechanism by means of the concept of “vulnerability” as a precondition for competition.

7. The same is true in the cases of particularly early democratization in Western democracies. In Switzerland and the United States, for example, established parties

initially appealed to and mobilized the working class, delaying or partially preempting the formation of left-wing parties relative to the timing of industrialization (see Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, chap. 4; see also Collier 1999).

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