

Situated political innovation: explaining the historical emergence of new modes of political practice

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Abstract Scholars have recognized that contentious political action typically draws on relatively stable scripts for the enactment of claims making. But if such repertoires of political practice are generally reproduced over time, why and how do new modes of practice emerge? Employing a pragmatist perspective on social action, this article argues that change in political repertoires can be usefully understood as a result of *situated political innovation*—i.e., of the creative recombination of existing practices, through experimentation over time, by interacting political agents for whom old repertoires were proving inadequate to the changing context of action. The utility of this approach is demonstrated by applying it to explain the historical emergence of a new set of populist mobilizing practices in early twentieth-century Peru. The results have implications for the study of political action and historical change.

Keywords Historical sociology · Peru · Populist mobilization · Political repertoires · Pragmatism · Twentieth century Latin America

The question of political stability and change is of longstanding sociological concern. Marx's (1969 [1852], 1968 [1871]) political sociology famously foregrounded the dramatic transformation of political structures; and subsequent studies of revolutions, regime transitions, political institutional change, voter

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realignments, and social movements have productively carried this emphasis forward.¹ Conversely, while also addressing issues of change, Weber (1978a [1922]) explored the crystallization and reproduction of stable political configurations. Later scholarship on state formation and political institutional resilience has usefully advanced this line of inquiry as well.² In considering such issues, historical sociology has moved beyond cyclical, evolutionary, and stage-based philosophies of history to converge around what might be thought of as an “episodic” vision of punctuated change (Gellner 1964, pp. 40–49; Mann 1986, 1993, 2016; Tilly 1984). Most recently, scholars have advanced our understanding of episodic change by developing more highly specified theories of critical junctures and subsequent path dependence (Collier and Collier 1991; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2004) and of “eventful” structural transformations (Sewell 1996).³ While different in many respects, these theories converge in calling attention to the power of at least partially contingent social dynamics in critical historical moments to reconfigure social structures and redirect historical trajectories. Inspired by such approaches, this article illuminates the processes by which *situated political innovation* can contribute to the emergence of new modalities of political practice, thus operating as a powerful mechanism of political change in eventful moments of marked instability. It does this by examining an episode of radical political innovation that had dramatic and long-term consequences for Latin American social and political life: the formulation and use of a distinctively Latin American style of populist mobilization over the course of Peru’s 1931 presidential election.

What, exactly, is meant by *populist mobilization*? As I have argued elsewhere, populist mobilization can be usefully understood as the mobilization of “ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publically visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people” (Jansen 2011, p. 82).⁴ It is a modality of political practice that combines, on the one hand, tactics meant to mobilize “the poor, the excluded, or others not previously mobilized, into coordinated—and often confrontational—political activity in public space,” with, on the other hand, rhetoric that “posits the natural social unity and inherent virtuousness of ... the majority of ordinary members of the national community,” which exists “in antagonistic vertical relationship” to what is constructed as a parasitic, anti-popular, even anti-national elite (*ibid.*, pp. 83–84). That is, it is a bundle of pro-popular

¹ On revolutions, see Goodwin 2001; Skocpol 1979; Wickham-Crowley 1992. On regime transitions, see Huntington 1991; Linz and Stepan 1978; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986. On political institutional change, see Clemens 1997; Mahoney 2001; Mahoney and Thelen 2010. On voter realignments, see Manza and Brooks 1999; Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995. On social movements, see Fligstein and McAdam 2011; McAdam 1982; Piven and Cloward 1977; Tilly 1978.

² On state formation, see Anderson 1974; Gorski 2003; Meyer et al. 1997; Tilly 1975. On political institutional resilience, see Huntington 1996 [1968]; Michels 1999 [1915]; Mills 1956.

³ See Clemens 2005 and Clemens 2007. See also Adams, Clemens, and Orloff 2005; Abbott 2001; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; and Skocpol 1984.

⁴ To be clear, this article is not concerned with understanding “populism”—the definition of which is hotly contested (de la Torre 2000, pp. 1–27; Ionescu and Gellner 1969; Jansen 2011; Laclau 1977, pp. 143–158; Canovan 1981, pp. 3–16)—but rather with explaining the historical emergence of a particular package of rhetorically-infused political practices that is common to many Latin American cases often considered under this rubric.

mobilizing activities, whose coherence and shape as a modality of political practice comes from the fact that it is animated by and infused with populist rhetoric.⁵

Because popular sectors can be mobilized in any number of ways, and because populist rhetoric can draw on a wide range of ideational resources, the specific characteristics of populist mobilization projects have historically varied across time and place. It is with the Latin American variety that this article is concerned.⁶ In this region, populist mobilization has usually involved top-down mobilization by a charismatic leader, drawing on the cultural tropes of a *caudillo*-type persona (which often include a sort of *machismo*, an impassioned unpredictability, a capacity for violence, and religious savior-type imagery). It has involved extensive grassroots organizing and efforts to channel supporters into personalistic party structures. It has involved contentious street mobilization and other public displays by the poor, socially marginalized, and politically excluded. It has articulated a popular-nationalist vision—often alongside tropes of *indigenismo* or *mestizaje*—that valorizes workers, peasants, and sometimes indigenous groups and the middle class as *together* forming the heart of the nation. And it has constructed as its target the image of a unified and oppressive political or economic oligarchy—whether a political class that can be painted as the agent of past social and political exclusion, or economic elites that can be blamed for poverty and exploitation. As evidenced by the recent political activities of figures like Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez and Bolivia’s Evo Morales, this practice is now solidly established in the Latin American political repertoire—meaning that there exists a stable cultural script or set of routines that facilitates, naturalizes, and encourages such political action.

But this was not always the case. It is easy to take populist mobilization for granted as intrinsic to Latin America’s political culture, if the mistake is made of reading history backwards, according to contemporary understandings of political possibility. But the practice was not widespread in the region until the 1940s—roughly 120 years after the establishment of independent republics. And prior to Peru’s 1931 election, it had never been practiced in the region in a sustained way at a national scale to secure elected office.⁷ Only at this critical moment, when confronted with novel challenges and possibilities, did collective political actors develop this radically new mode of practice

⁵ Due to space constraints, this article places more emphasis on the tactical, and less on the rhetorical, side of this equation, as the latter has been explored more thoroughly in the Peruvian historiography (see, for example, Alexander 1973 and Pike 1986). One consequence of this is that it is unable to explore as fully as it might the ways in which the ideas embedded in the populist rhetoric were not only tools for persuasion, but also recursively shaped the subjectivities and informed the strategic visions of those who developed and deployed them (although it does make some suggestive moves in this direction). This would be a fruitful avenue for further investigation. Similarly, as this article’s concern with political innovation leads it to focus on the strategic vision and actions of political leaders, it cannot address the important questions of why and how populist mobilization resonated as it did amongst different groups in Peruvian society. This is another important topic for additional research.

⁶ Thus, this article does not claim to explain the origins of populist mobilization writ large, nor is it advancing the argument that populist mobilization first emerged in Latin America. The world had clearly seen examples of large-scale populist mobilization *outside* of Latin America prior to 1931. Rather, this article is concerned with explaining the historical emergence of that particular set of rhetorically infused practices—the distinctly Latin American style of populist mobilization—that was developed with reference to this specific regional context.

⁷ My claim is not that the word “*populismo*” had never appeared in the Latin American context prior to 1931. Nor is it that there were no prior episodes in the region that historians might reasonably call populist. It is, rather, that Peru’s 1931 election was the first episode of populist mobilization *as defined here*, and that this marked a qualitative shift in repertoires of political practice.

that would ultimately change the face of Latin American politics. This article thus asks: why and how did the practice of populist mobilization emerge in Peru in 1931? Ultimately, answering this empirical question stands to shed light on a broader theoretical question that is at the heart of the political stability and change problematic: if social actors generally tend to reproduce existing political repertoires, under what conditions and by what processes do they elaborate new modes of practice?

An unusual historical twist complicates the Peruvian case. In this country's 1931 presidential election, not just one but *two* candidates—with radically different ideological orientations, institutional affiliations, and social origins—experimented with the development of populist mobilization at the same time. This fact is puzzling from the perspective of some classical social theories according to which political action is understood to follow from ideology, institutional position, or social identity. Answering the question of repertoire change in Peru thus also requires accounting for the *convergence* of strikingly different political actors in their practical innovations.

Given that political innovation involves the exercise of human creative capacities to transcend the stability of routine expectations and practice, explaining it is particularly difficult. At the very least, the centrality of creative action to the outcome in question means that an adequate explanation must go a step beyond the identification of necessary or sufficient structural conditions—traditionally the bread and butter of comparative-historical research (see Cyr and Mahoney 2012). Rather, explaining the historical emergence of a new mode of political practice requires stepping into the shoes of conscious and creative historical subjects for whom it *did not yet exist* in the political culture; and doing this requires a set of analytical tools for looking inside the structurally conditioned contexts of political action as they unfolded over time. To this end, I elaborate a pragmatist approach to the problem of political innovation and demonstrate that populist mobilization was developed in Peru through creative social action that was a product of the iterative interactions of collective political actors (i.e., the organized leadership of each party) who were confronting new social and political conditions, in a situation where old repertoires were repeatedly coming up short. Ultimately, such *situated political innovation* can be understood as a culturally-conditioned mechanism that plays a role in at least some types of episodic political change.

This article begins by evaluating existing research on political repertoires and identifying some of the limitations of Tilly's now-dominant theory of repertoire change. It then develops a pragmatist approach to situated political innovation that stands to resolve these issues. After discussing case selection and research methodology, the article goes on to demonstrate the utility of the pragmatist approach by applying it to the Peruvian case and using it to explain the historical emergence of a new mode of populist practice in early twentieth-century Peru. The article concludes by discussing the broader implications of these findings for political and comparative-historical sociology.

Theorizing change in political repertoires

One way to sharpen the question of political stability and change is to zero in on the domain of political practice—to focus on what political actors actually *do*. Over the past couple of decades, political sociologists have done just this. The turn to practice is evident in work on political spectacle and performance, on political violence, on

political organizing, and on social movement strategies and tactics, among other topics.⁸ All of this work usefully problematizes political action by challenging previous assumptions that it emanates more or less automatically from social identity, institutional position, or ideological stance. If, as this work suggests, political action is not a natural reflection of structural or ideological position, then stability and change in political practice becomes something to explain in its own right—and the issue of political *innovation* takes on a new significance.

Perhaps the most sustained attention to the issue of stability and change in political practice has come from scholars conducting culturally inflected research on political repertoires.⁹ The repertoire concept has been central to contentious politics research for more than twenty years, but it is most closely associated with the work of Charles Tilly—who introduced the term in a 1976 article and first made it the subject of sustained treatment in his 1986 book, *The Contentious French*. For Tilly, the concept was meant to “capture some of the recurrent, historically embedded character of contentious politics” (Tilly 2006, p. 34). It did this by highlighting the existence of scripts for the tactics and practices used in collective claims-making, and by pointing out that most political action is some sort of limited improvisation on these scripts (ibid., pp. 34–35). Whereas in the United States, for example, the modern social movement repertoire includes boycotts, rallies, marches, and non-violent acts of civil disobedience, the practice of blocking roads—and of enforcing such blockades with violence—is central to the repertoire in Bolivia, where a poorly developed transportation infrastructure is susceptible to disruption (Eckstein 2001, p. 11). Because they tend to be reproduced with minimal modification, such repertoires come to stabilize the meanings of those practices through which politically opposed groups routinely interact, and thus to circumscribe what is strategically “thinkable.” In this way, they play a role in constituting the political culture of a given time and place. A few strands of this scholarship merit particular attention here.

First, a good deal of research has been devoted to mapping the strategic terrain by describing the characteristics of existing repertoires. Some of this work has analyzed the tactical options and practical resources that have been culturally available to specific social movements at particular historical moments (Ennis 1987). Operating with a longer time horizon, other studies have traced the historical trajectories of particular repertoires in specific countries (Steinberg 1995; Traugott 1995). Still others have examined repertoires over time through the lens of their instantiation in broader waves of contentious political activity (Beissinger 2002; Tarrow 1989 and Tarrow 1995; White 1995). Finally, some have taken a more comparative approach in attempting to describe general historical patterns in repertoires across both time and geographical space (Roehner and Syme 2002). Overall, such scholarship has been valuable, establishing as a phenomenon worth explaining the existence of historically contingent yet relatively stable assemblages of political practices. But by and large, this work has focused more on charting the contours of the phenomenon than on explaining the emergence of *new* modalities of political practice.

⁸ On political spectacle and performance, see Alexander et al. 2006; Berezin 1997; Tilly 2008. On political violence, see Auyero 2007; Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Tilly 2003. On political organizing, see Clemens 1997; Morris 1984; Polletta 2002. On movement strategies and tactics, see Bloom 2015; Ganz 2009; Tarrow 1998; Zald 2000.

⁹ See, for example, McAdam et al. 2001; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 2008.

A second line of scholarship has attended to the question of why, given a relatively stable repertoire of possibilities, social movement actors choose to implement certain practices rather than others. Some of this work has attempted to explain strategic choices by focusing on factors *internal* to the movements in question. Such factors include a group's culture (Polletta 2002; Wickham-Crowley 1992), its organizational collective identities (Clemens 1997), its ideological commitments (Snow and Benford 1992), its members' "tastes in tactics" (Jasper 1997, pp. 229–250), and the qualities of its leadership (Ganz 2000, 2009). Other work on strategy selection has focused on factors *external* to movements. Such work has argued that movements' understandings of how their strategies will be perceived in a given sociopolitical environment play a role in shaping their activities (Brumley 2010), that the institutional characteristics of the *targets* of protest sometimes drive movements' tactical choices (Walker et al. 2008), and that movements' practical options are shaped by the dynamics of the strategic situations in which they find themselves (Jasper 2004). All of this work has attended more closely than the repertoire-mapping studies described above to the decision making of political actors. But because it has focused largely on contemporary social movements operating in contexts of relatively robust repertoire stability, it likewise fails to shed much light on the question of repertoire *change*.

In the end, Tilly's own historical studies of the development of modern protest repertoires in France and Great Britain provide the most useful jumping off point for addressing the question at hand (see for example Tilly 1986, 1995, 2008). Tilly's general argument is elaborated most fully in his synoptic 2006 book, *Regimes and Repertoires*. Here, as elsewhere, he takes a gradualist approach, focusing on how small changes at the margins of existing repertoires can eventually culminate in the slow birth of new repertoires over the course of decades. His substantive argument, in short, is that new protest repertoires tend to emerge in dialogue with changes in the political opportunity structure (see Tilly 1986, 1995). That is, Tilly's explanation for repertoire change foregrounds the importance of changing macro-historical conditions—and especially *political* conditions (in the cases of France and Great Britain, those associated with the development of the modern state)—as they slowly reshaped the terrain of contention.

But while Tilly's work provides a solid starting point for explaining repertoire change, it has at least three limitations. First, while it is indeed the case that some repertoires—including those studied by Tilly—change gradually, over the course of years or even decades, they sometimes change much more *rapidly*, through dramatic episodes of radical innovation (see Walder 2009). But Tilly did not offer the theoretical tools necessary for exploring such rapid change, as it was not his main focus. Second, while it is true that certain repertoires only make sense in the face of particular conditions—and that the political opportunity structure is perhaps the most regularly important of these—a priori assumptions about the causal primacy of a single condition can be misleading, because conditions can combine in complex ways and can be variably consequential in different historical contexts (see Mann 1986).¹⁰ Third, it is important to remember that historical preconditions alone do not produce new political practices—*people* do (albeit in specific, structurally-constrained contexts).

¹⁰ Indeed, Stamatov (2011) argues that Tilly missed a critical part of the story of the emergence of the modern protest repertoire in nineteenth-century Great Britain by neglecting the importance of another contextual element: the organizational field of religion.

Accordingly, it is necessary to attend to the interactional and iterative social processes by which political actors come to transcend their established routines to elaborate new lines of practice as contextualized situations unfold.¹¹ An adequate approach to explaining repertoire change must address all three of these concerns.

Situated political innovation

In response to the limitations of the existing literature, this article seeks to demonstrate that the historical emergence of new modes of political practice can be usefully understood as a product of contextually situated innovation by collective political actors. It is increasingly common in cultural, economic, and organizational sociology to treat innovation as a process of recombination—that is, of the fragmentary transposition, adaptation, and re-suturing of existing practical models into something new (Berk and Galvan 2009; Clemens 1997; Faulkner and Becker 2009; Stark 1996; Swidler 2001). *Political* innovation similarly involves the recombination and reshaping of practices from *here* and *there*, from *now* and *then*, into something novel that makes sense for and is useful in the context at hand.¹² But this is easier said than done. Recombinatory possibilities are often limited by experience and constrained by convention; and it is remarkably challenging to stitch together new packages of practices that are both internally coherent and appropriate to given situations—especially when those situations are hard to read, the future is uncertain, and the practices to be newly enacted are untested. Given these powerful constraints and contingencies, where can explanations of political innovation—and thus ultimately of repertoire change—find traction? The most promising place is in a systematic approach to practice that foregrounds the lived experiences of social actors who are capable of responding creatively to the unpredictable situations in which they find themselves.

Such an approach is provided by the pragmatist theories of social action originally formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce (1992 [1878]), William James (1975), John Dewey (1922 and 1925), and George Herbert Mead (1932 and 1934), and recently revived in American sociology by Hans Joas and others.¹³ This perspective departs from the action theories implicit in much political sociology by rejecting means-ends assumptions as teleological (Whitford 2002) and by theorizing explicitly the sources of *creative* social action (Joas 1996). Rather than assuming that social actors rationally assign means to the achievement of distinct, pre-formulated ends, pragmatist theories

¹¹ While I believe that this point is not inconsistent with Tilly's own view, especially as expressed in his later work (see, for example, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; cf., Gross 2010), his writings on repertoires provide few tools for this sort of analysis.

¹² As political innovation is often as much about repurposing and recombination as it is about outright invention, it is reasonable to identify a particular modality of political practice—a coherent bundle of tactics and ideas—as novel even when some of its specific elements are not. In the case of populist mobilization, for example, my claim is not that any of the specific tactics were in themselves entirely new, or even necessarily populist. (Indeed, many had figured in distinctly non-populist political projects at some point in the past.) My claim is rather that, when motivated by populist rhetoric and practiced in concert with other such tactics, they cohered in a distinctive—and distinctively populist—mode of political practice. It was *this* that was new.

¹³ See Joas 1985, 1993, and 1996. Good overviews of classical American pragmatism are available in Gross 2007; Scheffler 1974; and Shook and Margolis 2006. More recent works, representative of the new “pragmatist turn” in American sociology, include Bargheer 2011; Biernacki 2005; Dalton 2004; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Emirbayer and Schneiderhan 2013; Frye 2012; Gross 2008 and 2009; Mische 2009; Schneiderhan 2011; Silver 2011; Tavory and Timmermans 2014; and Whitford 2002.

view humans as problem solvers who, encountering “practical problems that arise in the course of life” (Gross 2009, p. 366), are embedded in unfolding situational contexts in which “ends and means develop coterminously” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, pp. 967–968). Action unfolds in a continuous stream in which “ends” and “means” are constantly shifting in relation to one another; in which “ends” are never *ultimate* ends, but *anticipated* final results (what Dewey [1922, pp. 225–227] called “ends-in-view”); in which anticipated “ends” can thus be understood as “means”; and in which “means” themselves become experienced as short-term “ends” (see Bargheer 2011, pp. 13–14). This makes it necessary “...to reconceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its historical aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 963). The possibility of *creative* social action emerges through this process of experimentation and social learning, in response to the contingent formation of subjectively understood problem situations (Gross 2009, p. 366; Joas 1996; Schneiderhan 2011, pp. 594–596; see also Dalton 2004), because—although habitual action may be the norm—there is always “the possibility, greater in some circumstances than others, that a novel way of responding to a problem could emerge for any of the actors involved” (Gross 2009, p. 369).¹⁴

Such activity always unfolds within a circumscribed context of action. This context is partially constituted by broader patterns of social structural conditions, but also by the field of other social agents interacting over time against the backdrop of these conditions. This means that, while not an automatic or easily predictable product of structural conditions, neither is human creativity somehow independent of these. Rather, it is situationally “anchored” (Joas 1996, pp. 132–133). Innovation, then—understood as the contingent product of creative recombination through temporally unfolding and problem oriented social interaction—is always *situated* in a particular context of action.

Accordingly—and returning to the political sphere—*situated political innovation* can be understood as a joint product of the careful reading by social actors of historical conditions and of the practical problem situations that these constitute; of the informed assessment of the expectations and strategies of others; of a stock of experience and the ability to recognize practical alternatives; of anticipating the likely outcomes of possible lines of action; of intelligent experimentation; and of reassessment, self-correction, and redirection—in short, of contextualized learning through trial and error, with only an incomplete comprehension of the immediate reality and a hazily uncertain (if hopeful) view of the future. Only when this tenuous process produces success—in this case, the development of a new mode of political practice—does the result have the potential to become routinized and recognized after the fact as an instance of political innovation (see Dalton 2004).

Thus, for the historical study of repertoire change, it is necessary to attend to: the nature of the social and political conditions shaping a given context of action and structuring the possibilities for political innovation; the situational construction of the

¹⁴ The sociological question, with regard to innovation, is thus not, *who has exceptional levels of innate creativity, and who lacks it*—as if there were dramatic inequalities in the distribution of this human capacity— but rather, *what triggers creative responses to particular situations* (given that these are significantly less common than are habitual responses).

relevant collective political actors; the formation of the problem situations that these actors confront; the tipping of these actors' practical responses from routine action into political innovation; and the solidification of the new mode of practice as a "sticky" innovation that can be taken up by others.¹⁵ Specified in this way, a pragmatist approach is able to account for *rapid* repertoire change; it disposes the analyst to take historical preconditions seriously without assuming the causal primacy of any one factor and without slipping into an implicit structural determinism; and it encourages the systematic examination of how, in rare moments, political actors *translate* existing conditions into new forms of political action. Viewing repertoire change as a result of situated political innovation thus remedies some of the limitations of Tilly's approach and facilitates the historical explanation of the case at hand.

Case selection and methods

The first step toward explaining why and how populist mobilization emerged historically in Latin America is to identify when and where the region's politicians first practiced it. As already noted, the practice is widespread today. Indeed, according to the definition outlined above, eight Latin American countries had already experienced a first episode of populist mobilization by 1955.¹⁶ In the pre-1955 period—commonly referred to as the "classic" age of Latin American populism—three politicians have received the lion's share of scholarly attention: Argentina's Juan Domingo Perón, Brazil's Getúlio Vargas, and Mexico's Lázaro Cárdenas. Perón and Vargas first practiced large-scale populist mobilization in 1943, and Cárdenas initiated his project of national populist mobilization in 1934 (Jansen 2011, pp. 87–88). But these are only the most high profile of the classic era cases, and they were preceded by an even earlier example. This earlier case thus constitutes a critical site for examining the historical emergence of this practical modality.

Peru, 1931

In Peru's hotly contested 1931 presidential election, which took place in a rare democratic opening in which the traditional political forces had been severely weakened, *both* of the two most prominent candidates developed a novel set of populist practices, which they practiced at a national scale. Each stood at the helm of his own recently formed personalistic party. On one side was Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, a former leader of student and worker movements who had spent the second half of the 1920s in exile. He and his Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, henceforth APRA) party were progressive; Haya was a civilian; and, while descended from a moderately aristocratic family, he had a long history of involvement with radical movements. Opposing Haya was Luis M. Sánchez Cerro, who had led a hugely popular coup d'état the previous year that toppled the eleven-year dictatorship of Augusto B. Leguía. Sánchez Cerro and his Partido Unión Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Union Party, henceforth UR) were largely conservative; he was a professional military

¹⁵ This formulation builds on Gross's (2009) lucid distillation of a "pragmatist theory of social mechanisms."

¹⁶ Excluding Central America, the Caribbean, and the Guianas, these countries are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela (see discussion in Jansen 2011, pp. 87–90).

officer; and, although he was the son of a middle-class notary, Sánchez Cerro and his party's leadership were imbricated in a network of elite supporters. Yet despite these differences in ideological orientation, institutional affiliation, and social origins, the two candidates and their parties converged in developing remarkably similar sets of populist practices in their heated struggle for the presidency.¹⁷

Over the course of seven months, from April to October of 1931, the APRA and UR parties competed to mobilize more or less the same groups of urban and rural workers—using strikingly similar rhetoric and tactics. Their claims aligned in valorizing the ordinary, often stigmatized and marginalized, members of Peruvian society as forming the true heart of the nation, and in identifying as the source of these citizens' (and thus the nation's) troubles the continuing political power of an anti-popular oligarchical elite.¹⁸ These rhetorical claims animated and were infused into political mobilization projects that grew ever more contentious as the pressure cooker of electoral competition drove each party to experiment with increasingly audacious tactics. Most conspicuously, the two parties staged unprecedentedly large and contentious mass rallies in Lima and other cities to demonstrate their political power and construct constituencies. They undertook much more extensive campaigns to the provinces than ever before, in efforts to incorporate potential supporters who had been previously excluded from national politics. And they relied extensively on local level, grassroots organizing to build loyalty and solidarity among adherents, to coordinate recruitment efforts, and to turn out bodies to the mass demonstrations. Such tactics and rhetoric had never been jointly employed so systematically, so extensively, or so powerfully in Peruvian history.¹⁹ Peru's 1931 election thus represents a critical moment

¹⁷ This comparison will be controversial in some circles. Many historians object to labeling Sánchez Cerro a "populist," because he lacked the thoroughgoing commitment to social change evidenced by Haya de la Torre. Indeed, some historians prefer the label of "fascist" (Dobyns and Doughty 1976, p. 231; Molinari Morales 2006). Needless to say, the disagreement hinges on how "populism" is defined. As this article adopts a practice-based approach (under the rubric of "populist mobilization"), and as the mobilizing practices of these candidates shared a great deal in common in 1931, the comparison is appropriate. Indeed, it is precisely *because* of the substantive differences between the candidates that their convergence on similar practices is so intriguing.

¹⁸ The candidates of both parties sang the praises of Peru's Incan heritage, elevated the indigenous population, valorized workers, reached out to the growing middle class, and painted an inclusive picture of the national body that transcended traditional cleavages of ethnicity, class, region, and party. Beyond this, however, they differed somewhat in the specifics of their rhetoric and argumentation. Haya was more intellectual and verbose; Sánchez Cerro's speeches were shorter and simpler. Haya's assessment of the state of Peruvian social and economic realities was more complex, informed by socialist, anti-imperialist, and *indigenista* thought. Sánchez Cerro's reading of reality was more conservative and patriarchal, focusing less on the importance of restructuring social relations than on morally cleansing the national body. And importantly, the candidates constructed their targets—the anti-popular elite—differently. For Sánchez Cerro, it was the political allies of the recently removed dictator. For Haya, it was the traditional liberal oligarchy. Of course, since both candidates were making such claims, each strove to identify *himself* with the Peruvian people and his *opponent* with the parasitic elite, such that a genuinely popular stance would imply identification with and support for his own political party (and opposition to that of his opponent).

¹⁹ It is widely accepted that the 1931 election represented a watershed in Peruvian political history (Basadre 1999 [vol. 13], pp. 3181–3183; Castillo Ochoa 1990, p. 57). As Pedro Ugarteche—Sánchez Cerro's personal secretary—would later reflect, the campaigns of 1931 "had neither precedent nor equal in all the republican life of Peru" (1969 [vol. 2], p. xli). (Note that Ugarteche 1969 is a four volume work that both reprints important documents related to Sánchez Cerro and compiles Ugarteche's own recollections. Hereafter, references to specific documents reprinted in this work will be identified as such. Otherwise, as in the present footnote, references to pages in this source can be assumed to point to Ugarteche's own words.)

of radical innovation that marked the historical birth of a new mode of political practice.

Methods

The nature of this outcome—the occurrence of unprecedented political innovation that, because rooted in human creativity, was by no means a foregone conclusion—diminishes the explanatory potential of conventional comparative-historical methods for the case at hand. Even if such methods were to eschew outmoded styles of “single factor” reductionism to entertain the possibility of causal complexity—as this case certainly requires—they would remain inadequate both to the general phenomenon and to the particular case. Such methods typically proceed as if identifying the presence and determinative power of some combination of necessary or sufficient conditions amounts to an adequate explanation of political action (regardless of whether this assumption is embraced or hedged). But the fact that political innovation involves social actors *pushing the limits* of convention and context—doing something novel, with no guarantees of success, that others confronted with the same conditions would likely themselves neither *do* nor even *predict*—means that structural factors alone cannot explain such political action. Thus, it is not enough to assume that propitious conditions automatically generate a given political outcome; it is rather necessary to interrogate the situated social processes by which political leaders interpreted and responded to these conditions as they selected and elaborated specific lines of action.²⁰

Following from the theoretical considerations outlined above, an adequate explanation of the historical emergence of populist mobilization in Peru requires a four-part analytical strategy. First, pursuing a conventional line of structuralist analysis as far as it will go (see Cyr and Mahoney 2012, pp. 440–441), it is necessary to identify the social and political conditions that set the stage for the practice. This is done by examining Peruvian history from 1900 to 1931, taking seriously the insights of existing theories of populism and political mobilization. Second, the limitations of a purely structuralist mode of explanation must be highlighted. This is done by developing a historically informed counterfactual analysis (Weber 1978b [1906]) demonstrating that this moment in Peruvian history might well have passed *without* any populist mobilization had things played out just a little bit differently. Third, it is necessary to analyze the unfolding political situation in 1931, as Haya de la Torre, Sánchez Cerro, and their parties interpreted the conditions that they faced, tried to read their opponents and potential supporters, started down certain lines of action, reassessed, and corrected—ultimately elaborating a new, coherent, and stable package of political practices. In doing this, it is necessary to attend as much as possible to the dynamics of the political field and to play the historical tape forward, as it was experienced by living people with limited perspectives. In keeping with the pragmatist framework, this is done by

²⁰ A further problem with the application of conventional comparative-historical methods to the Peruvian case is the impossibility of establishing an appropriate set of comparison cases. The fact that this case was the first in which populist mobilization was practiced in Latin America means that other potential comparison cases—i.e., subsequent episodes of populist mobilization in the region—are neither independent (in that their political leaders were aware of the effectiveness of the practices developed by Haya de la Torre and Sánchez Cerro) nor comparable (in that they do not represent similar cases of political *innovation*).

focusing on the situational construction of the main collective political actors, on the formation of problem situations for these actors, and on the actors' dynamic shifts from routine action to political innovation. Finally, it is important to address the resonance, stabilization, and routinization of the new mode of practice once established. This is done in the fourth part of the historical section.

Such an investigation requires detailed historical data of various types. Unfortunately, the historiography on Peru in the 1920s and 1930s remains fragmentary. Indeed, there has been only one monograph-length study, in English or Spanish, that focuses specifically on the 1931 election and that treats both candidates equally (Stein 1980).²¹ Reconstructing the historical puzzle thus required the use of archival and other primary source data. Among the various types of documents consulted were census records, government publications, party records and propaganda, newspapers and other periodicals, correspondence, and memoirs. Some of these materials speak to the historical conditions, some to the dynamics of the political situation, some to the political actors' decision making, and some to their political practices. And as none of the relevant sources are fully comprehensive—there are, for example, no stockpiles of collected party records for either APRA or Unión Revolucionaria for this time period—the analysis required triangulation among various data points drawn from a fragmented and uneven body of material.²² The data were collected during eleven months of archival research in Lima and through work at various research libraries in the United States.²³

Explaining the historical emergence of populist mobilization in Peru

The following historical analysis proceeds in four parts. The first identifies the historical conditions that political actors confronted in Peru in 1931. The second elaborates a historically informed counterfactual analysis that explains why the development of populist mobilization at that time was not a foregone conclusion. The third demonstrates that the emergence of this new mode of political practice was the result of contextually situated political innovation that unfolded over time, as actors confronted new problem situations and created novel solutions to these. The fourth speaks to the routinization of the practice after 1931.

²¹ In addition to this work, there is just one scholarly book on Sánchez Cerro and his UR party (Molinari Morales 2006)—and this devotes only thirty-one pages to the 1930–1931 period. The slightly larger literature on Haya de la Torre and his APRA party tends to focus overwhelmingly on Haya's changing ideology and to skip quickly over the 1931 election (see, for example, Alexander 1973 and Pike 1986). The best work on the early years of ARPA is Klarén 1973, which devotes one chapter to the election. The secondary historical literatures are more helpful on other contextual issues (like understanding the development of the Peruvian labor movement in the 1920s or shedding light on the biographies of specific political actors).

²² Most of APRA's organizational records from the period have been destroyed; there are very few records for UR, apart from those collected in Ugarteche 1969; and state surveillance of the parties was far from systematic.

²³ In Lima, I collected and analyzed primary and secondary materials in three archives (the Archivo General de la Nación, the Centro de Documentación de Ciencias Sociales of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, and the Instituto Riva-Agüero [also affiliated with the Universidad Católica]) and at three libraries (the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, the Biblioteca Central of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, and the library of the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos).

1. Socio-political conditions in Peru, 1900–1931

Before the turn of the twentieth century, a host of factors kept populist mobilization off the table in Peru. But by 1931, interrelated changes in economic conditions, forms of social organization, infrastructure, political ideologies, and political opportunity structures presented political actors with a new social and political context of action.

Economic Development and Depression First, increasing economic development—and its catastrophic curtailment by the worldwide depression of 1929—played a critical role in reshaping the terrain of political possibilities in Peru. The country experienced gradual economic development throughout the nineteenth century; but while the mid-century *guano* boom had played an important role in the expansion of the Peruvian state and in the political ascendance of a liberal, export-oriented elite, it did not dramatically reconfigure social relations or democratize access to political power (Gootenberg 1989; Klarén 2000, pp. 158–172). The pace of development quickened, however, in the early twentieth century—and especially in the 1920s—when foreign investment, rising prices for oil and copper, and a cotton boom fueled unprecedented economic growth (Klarén 2000, pp. 242–244, 263–265). At the same time, however, increasing dependence on exports and international finance left the country vulnerable to the crash of 1929. As foreign investment and demand for exports dried up, the mining, sugar, cotton, textile, and construction industries were hit particularly hard (*ibid.*, pp. 262–271). Urban unemployment skyrocketed, despite the government's best efforts to combat it.²⁴ Indeed, by 1931, in Lima and the nearby port city of Callao, around 25 % of men between the ages of fourteen and sixty-nine were out of work (Departamento de Lima 1931, p. 250).²⁵ The combined result of rapid development followed by depression was that new urban workers and an embryonic middle class experienced economic hardship precisely when they had first begun to enjoy a taste of modest prosperity, increased access to imported consumer goods, better educational opportunities, and improved employment prospects for themselves and their children (Blanchard 1982; Parker 1998; Stein 1986). But while previous generations of populism and collective behavior scholarship have shown how the sense of relative deprivation accompanying economic hardship can lead to the formation of powerful grievances that might encourage mobilization (Di Tella 1965; Germani 1963; Gurr 1970; Smelser 1963), social movement scholars have since demonstrated convincingly that grievances alone cannot account for political action (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978). Thus, while important, economic hardship is only part of the story.

²⁴ See Decreto-Ley 7103 (Congreso de la República del Perú, Archivo Digital de la Legislación del Perú [<http://www.congreso.gob.pe/ntley/default.asp>], hereafter cited as ADLP). For the official governmental account of its efforts to respond to unemployment between 1931 and 1934, see Departamento de Lima 1935.

²⁵ In construction, the unemployment rate was nearly 70 % (Departamento de Lima 1931, p. 257). It is difficult to assess the reliability of official government statistics for nineteenth and early twentieth century Peru, but such figures are the only ones available. The 1931 census of Lima and Callao—cited here and relied upon elsewhere—was commissioned by a government committee charged with measuring the impact of the depression on the metropolitan area. For a critique of this census, see Derpich et al. 1985.

Changing forms of social organization Second, Peru's economic development resulted in a gradual but fundamental transformation in the social organization of civic life. In the Andean highlands, where the majority of the indigenous population had lived prior to the turn of the twentieth century, independent civic organizing had historically been discouraged, and political loyalties and grievances were channeled through clientelistic relationships with local *hacienda* owners or community leaders (Aljovín de Losada 2005; Forment 2003; Mallon 1983). But these relationships were disrupted in the early twentieth century, when agricultural and industrial development combined with economic hardship in the highlands to encourage high levels of internal migration to coastal sugar plantations, urban textile mills, and new jobs in construction and shipping (Bourricaud 1970, pp. 15–16; Klarén 1973 and 2000, p. 251).²⁶ As indigenous peasants migrated down from the highlands, they left the spheres of influence of their former patrons and entered into new productive relationships that did not capture their political loyalties in the same way (Klarén 1973). But while the populism literature has long recognized that such social mobilization can play a critical role in disrupting traditional controls on political action (Di Tella 1965; Germani 1963), the loosening of such controls in Peru did not produce an atomized mass society.

Rather, traditional forms of social organization gave way to new artisanal guilds, labor organizations, and civic associations. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the formation of a broad array of associations, including mutual aid societies, Masonic lodges, ethnic and patriotic societies, professional associations, and leisure clubs—with a full 115 founded in the years between 1876 and 1879 alone (Forment 2003, p. 285). By the end of the late nineteenth century, artisanal guilds were forming in urban areas (García-Bryce 2004); and in rural areas the increasing industrialization of agriculture brought workers together onto residential plantations where they lived and worked in close proximity (Klarén 1973). These rural plantations and new urban industries became targets for increased labor organizing in the 1910s and 1920s (Blanchard 1982; Drinot 2011; Klarén 1973; Sanborn 1995). Lima in particular saw a florescence of labor organizing and civic associationalism in the 1920s, with increasing participation by poor and working class residents (see Stein 1986 and Stein 1987). Indeed, a city directory of civic associations published in the 1920s documents the existence of no fewer than seventy-seven workers' societies (including artisanal guilds, labor unions, and confederations) and forty-eight associations catering to provincial migrants to the capital (Laos 1928, pp. 270–290).²⁷ While the connections between the rise of populism and emerging forms of *labor* organizing have been well

²⁶ While provincial capitals like Arequipa and Cuzco grew during this period, Lima expanded tremendously. The population of the province grew by nearly 30 % between 1908 and 1920 (from 172,927 to 223,807) and then by another 67 % between 1920 and 1930 (when it reached 373,875 people, nearly 40 % of whom had been born in provinces other than Lima or Callao) (Departamento de Lima 1931, pp. 45, 187). This migration was further encouraged by the increasing availability of modern amenities in the cities and was facilitated by the expansion of Peru's transportation and communication infrastructures (discussed below). Projects to modernize cities and expand infrastructure were spearheaded during this time by the politically ascendant liberal elite (Karno 1970; Pike 1967).

²⁷ This valuable source, produced by the "Touring Club Peruano," provides what appears to be a comprehensive catalogue of all major civic associations active in Lima in the mid-1920s (Laos 1928, pp. 185–379). The data seem to have been gathered mostly in 1925. In addition to the workers' and regional societies already noted, the guidebook provides information on seventeen elite social clubs, seventeen cultural societies, twelve professional and four scientific societies, eleven religious and four patriotic societies, sixteen women's societies, nine university student societies, twenty-seven shooting clubs, and various sporting clubs—including eighty-one soccer clubs.

attended to in the populism literature (e.g., Collier and Collier 1991; French 1989; James 1988), these other modes of civic association that were developing around the same time *also* had the potential to provide an organizational infrastructure for populist mobilizing, and constitute a critical—if often overlooked—piece of the historical puzzle.²⁸

Infrastructural development Third, while social scientists have highlighted the importance of national infrastructures to the operation of political power (Mann 1984; Soifer and vom Hau 2008), this condition has been remarkably absent from treatments of populism (although see Conniff 1999). But in Peru—where rough terrain and formidable distances had long impeded national-level political organizing—economic development went hand in hand with the efforts of liberal politicians to modernize the country’s transportation and communication infrastructures. This expansion reached its height under the Leguía dictatorship of the 1920s (Capuñay 1952; Karno 1970; Pike 1967, pp. 217–249). In the single year of 1928 alone, as a result of Leguía’s reinstatement of a colonial-era system of obligatory labor on road projects, the total length of the Peruvian highway system was increased from 12,614 km. to 18,069 km.²⁹ The pace of railroad construction also reached its height in the 1920s: of the 4,522,323 km. of track existing in Peru in 1929, nearly 23 % had been laid by Leguía since 1920 (República del Perú 1939, p. 185).³⁰ This expansion in conventional rail complemented the development in the Lima metropolitan area of a system of electrified tramlines linking the city center with the port of Callao and the districts of Magdalena del Mar, Miraflores, Barranco, and Chorrillos—making it easier for supporters from outlying areas to journey to the city center for political events.³¹ Even airline service was blossoming in these critical years (with the number of air passengers jumping from 145 in 1928, the year of the founding of the first national airline, to 5768 just two years later [ibid., p.

²⁸ On how the development of civic associations can provide an organizational infrastructure for new forms of political practice, see Riley 2010.

²⁹ This is according to the 1939 statistical report released by Peru’s Dirección Nacional de Estadística (República del Perú 1939, p. 175). Leguía reinstated what was called the Conscripción Vial (Highways Conscriptation Act) in 1920 (Klarén 2000, p. 250). This act “... transformed the unconnected roads built over old Inca and colonial paths into a proper highway system that became the material base essential for mass migration ...” (de Soto 1989, p. 8).

³⁰ It is important to remember that Peru’s infrastructural expansion was uneven. While rail service began in 1851, for example, the great Incan capital of Cuzco was not connected to Lima by rail until 1908 (Jacobsen 2005, p. 281). Also, Peru’s level of rail connectivity at the time of the 1931 election was still comparatively low. In Peru in 1932, for example, there was 0.4 km. of track for every 100 km.² of national territory and 6.9 km. for every 10,000 inhabitants. By way of comparison, Argentina (in 1933) had 1.4 km. of track for every 100 km.² and 32.8 km. for every 10,000 inhabitants; the United States (in 1934) had 4.5 km. of track for every 100 km.² and 37.7 km. for every 10,000 inhabitants; the United Kingdom (in 1934) had 13.6 km. of track for every 100 km.² and 7.0 km. for every 10,000 inhabitants (República del Perú 1939, pp. 48*–49*).

³¹ Passenger use on conventional and electric rail grew accordingly. The number of annual passages on conventional rail lines increased from 2,943,465 in 1908 to 5,784,710 in 1919, then held steady in the six million range through 1929 (República del Perú 1939, p. 186). Lima’s first electric tramline was inaugurated in 1904. The city did not begin to record tram passenger data until 1908, when the electrified lines sold 22,575,083 passages over the course of the year. By 1930, that number had increased to 29,239,045 (ibid.). For more information on the development of the tramlines, see Bromley and Barbagelata 1945 (pp. 96–97).

179]). But airplanes did more than transport people—they conveyed information. While only 2315 kg. of air mail was carried in 1928, this number rose to 10,438 kg. in 1931 (*ibid.*, p. 182). Other modalities of communication likewise expanded under Leguía. Between 1916 and 1931, there was a 53 % increase in the annual number of pieces of domestic mail sent and received (from 21,263,313 to 32,421,142) (*ibid.*, p. 165). And the years 1922 through 1930 saw the laying of an additional 4072 km. of telegraphic wire (an increase of roughly 31 %) and a 97 % increase in the total number of telegrams transmitted (*ibid.*, pp. 169–170).³² Overall, infrastructural development took off in the decade prior to the 1931 election, enabling politicians to organize effectively at a national scale and to reach potential supporters who they had not been able to court in the past.

New political ideologies Fourth, changing social conditions and easier communication facilitated the rise and dissemination of new political ideologies—especially nationalism, *indigenismo*, anarcho-syndicalism, and socialism—that provided some of the cultural materials out of which populist appeals would later be crafted. In the early republican era, elite imaginings of the Peruvian national community distinctly excluded the indigenous population.³³ At the same time, neither did the nineteenth century see a well articulated popular-national vision of structural injustice or class confrontation (Aljovín de Losada 2005, p. 72). Such ideas were only elaborated with any systematicity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as new sociopolitical movements took the stage. Perhaps the earliest example of this was the development of a proto-nationalism among mobilized peasant groups during the War of the Pacific (with Chile), although these groups were promptly repressed by the Peruvian state upon the close of the war (Mallon 1995). Then, in the early twentieth century, workers in new urban industries who confronted poor living and working conditions discovered anarcho-syndicalist ideas and began to organize (Hirsch 1997; Pareja Pflucker 1978; Tejada 1988). Further, the emergence of a small middle class, greater accessibility to education, and the rise of student radicalism in the early twentieth century led to the development of new *indigenista* and socialist movements by the 1920s, propelled especially by the prominent Peruvian intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui’s famous synthesis of *indigenismo* and socialism (Davies 1974; Klarén 2000, pp. 245–262; Martínez de la Torre 1947 [vol. 1]).³⁴ Together, these new mobilizing ideologies provided a rich body of discursive materials that creative politicians could later work with, elaborate, and recombine into a more clearly populist mode of thought that would have the potential to

³² The figure on telegrams transmitted is for the 1923–1930 period, as no data are available for 1922. The total number of telegrams transmitted jumped from 826,777 in 1923 to 1,625,508 in 1930.

³³ This is contra Benedict Anderson’s (1991) famous argument locating the world-historical origins of nationalism in the Americas. (See Itzigsohn and vom Hau 2006; Lomnitz 2001, pp. 3–34; Méndez 1996.)

³⁴ Mariátegui is most famous for his *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Mariátegui 1995 [1928]). For a recent collection of his writings, see Flores Galindo and Portocarrero Grados 2005.

resonate at a grassroots level in 1931. But while much of the populism literature has focused on political ideology (e.g., Green 1996; Hawkins 2009; Laclau 1977 and Laclau 2005), the availability of ideological materials can only go so far in explaining the historical emergence of actual populist *practice*.

Openings in the political opportunity structure Finally, at the same time that the above conditions stood to contribute to the availability of potential supporters and to make new mobilizing practices possible, a breakdown of elite party politics and the promulgation of electoral reforms provided a political-institutional opportunity for non-traditional political actors (and actions) in 1931. For most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a succession of military governments and the operation of various forms of elite control over electoral politics had effectively prevented the involvement of non-elites in politics (Burga and Galindo 1979; Chiaramonti 2005; McEvoy 1997). But this began to change in 1919, when infighting amongst leaders of the traditional parties culminated in a power grab by the head of one faction, Augusto B. Leguía (Basadre 1999 [vol. 11], pp. 2857–2868).³⁵ In an unprecedented defensive move, initiated almost immediately upon assuming office, Leguía began to dismantle what remained of the traditional parties, which he viewed as a threat to his personal power (Karno 1970, pp. 227–233; Stein 1980, pp. 41–48). Leguía thus set the stage for later political opportunity by undermining the capacity of traditional political elites to participate effectively in politics upon his ouster.

This day finally came eleven years later, in August of 1930, when a junior army officer stationed in the provincial southern city of Arequipa—Luis M. Sánchez Cerro—staged a successful coup against Leguía’s (by then) largely unpopular regime. After his triumphal arrival in the capital city, Lieutenant Colonel Sánchez Cerro established himself as the head of a new military *junta*, arrested Leguía, and initiated a campaign to persecute the former leader’s allies and supporters (Basadre 1999 [vol. 12], pp. 3093–3113). But Sánchez Cerro’s power would be short lived. Just a few months into his provisional military government, his intention to install himself in the presidency became known (*ibid.*, p. 3123). The other members of the *junta* disapproved of Sánchez Cerro’s plans and, in early March of 1931, forced his resignation and exile (*ibid.*, pp. 3126–3127).³⁶

On May 26th of that same year, the *junta*, now headed by David Sámanez Ocampo, lifted martial law, declared elections, and instituted electoral reforms.³⁷ These reforms attempted to eliminate corruption by instituting the secret vote and establishing decentralized scrutiny of ballots. They also significantly expanded suffrage by removing property qualifications—growing the voting-eligible segment of the national

³⁵ The once formidable parties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the Partido Constitucionalista, the Partido Liberal, the Partido Demócrata, and the most powerful Partido Civil—had been built around the personalities of their founding members. By 1919, these politicians were aging and struggles for succession by the younger generation had left the parties fragmented (see Karno 1970).

³⁶ Sánchez Cerro’s letter of resignation is reprinted in Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 2), pp. 91–92.

³⁷ See Decreto-Ley 7160 and Decreto-Ley 7177 (ADLP). For an extended discussion of the reforms, see Basadre 1980, pp. 141–160.

population by roughly 92 % between the 1919 election and the 1931 election.³⁸ Significantly, those with new access to the political process due to the expansion of suffrage were mostly urban workers and the lower middle class—precisely those groups that APRA and Unión Revolucionaria would target most aggressively in their campaigns.³⁹ In the end, in early June of 1931, the *junta* even grudgingly allowed Sánchez Cerro to return from exile to undertake a legitimate campaign for the presidency (Masterson 1991, p. 45).⁴⁰

Political opportunity theory (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989; Tilly 1978) thus usefully spotlights a critical precondition for the historical emergence of populist mobilization in Peru. By March of 1931, the old parties were gone, the Leguía dictatorship that had replaced them had been overthrown, and Sánchez Cerro—the military leader who had filled the gap—had been exiled by his own *junta*. At the same time, the electoral reform brought changes to the rules of the political game. Thus, by early 1931, Peru had seen significant changes to the social and political context of action. But, as is demonstrated next, this did not render the emergence of populist mobilization inevitable.

2. Counterfactual analysis

If the relational dynamics of the situation had not prompted the formation of new collective actors with pooled experiences that primed them to recognize the changing conditions just described, the limitations of the existing repertoire in the face of these, and the possibilities for new creative responses, this moment would likely have passed

³⁸ This figure is in tension with the one offered by Klarén (2000, p. 269), when he notes that “the size of the electorate rose 59 %, from 203,882 in 1919 to 323,623 in 1931.” This is because Klarén appears to have been comparing the number of *registered* voters in 1919 with the number who *actually voted* in 1931. The more appropriate comparison for present purposes is between registered voters in both periods. According to the electoral census of 1933, the number of registered voters in 1931 was 392,363 (República del Perú 1933, p. 23). It is important to note that suffrage remained limited. The new electoral laws continued to exclude women, kept the voting age at twenty-one, and retained a literacy requirement that effectively disenfranchised the country’s Quechua-speaking indigenous population.

³⁹ That the expansion of male suffrage was mainly among urban workers and the lower middle class was a result of the interaction between the continuation of the literacy requirement and the removal of property qualifications. The male rural indigenous population remained largely disenfranchised by the literacy requirement. (The 1933 electoral census reports that 74.1 % of registered voters in 1931 were white or *mestizo* and only 25.0 % were indigenous—although these figures are suspect for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that the assignment to racial categories was done by survey registrars based on their personal assessments of respondent skin tone [República del Perú 1933, pp. 25, 218].) Those *newly* eligible in 1931 were adult men who now had enough education to meet the ongoing literacy requirement, even if they still did not own property. This characterization applies most distinctly to the expanding sector of urban laborers, artisans, and lower level administrative workers who, although still working in low-earning occupations, were increasingly more likely to be educated and living in cities. One comparison illustrates this point particularly well: in the largely rural and indigenous department of Cuzco, only about 14,000 people were eligible to vote in 1931 (out of a total population of around 700,000); whereas roughly the same number (14,276) were eligible in the urban and mostly working class province of Callao, out of an overall population just one tenth the size (70,141) (Departamento de Lima 1931, p. 259; República del Perú 1933, p. 216; República del Perú 1939, pp. 13–14).

⁴⁰ This was after initially declaring that Sánchez Cerro would *not* be allowed to return from exile to campaign (Basadre 1999 [vol. 13], pp. 3178–3179). The preliminary ban was largely the work of Lieutenant Colonel Gustavo Jiménez, commander of the Lima garrison and Sánchez Cerro’s main political rival within the armed forces (Masterson 1991, p. 45).

without the elaboration of new political practices. It is true that many of Peru's traditional elites had been hit hard by the depression, and that Leguía had repressed the most prominent leaders of the once-dominant Partido Civil. But just because the old parties were in a state of disarray did not mean that the political field was vacant. A brief consideration of how various political actors from across the ideological spectrum responded to the newly declared elections can help to provide a sense of how history might have unfolded differently, had Haya de la Torre and Sánchez Cerro not appeared on stage, found themselves at the centers of non-traditional political movements, or been allowed to run. Most political actors failed to understand the situation as “problematic,” in the pragmatist sense of being something to which routine practices might not be adequate, and so were slow to recognize how the changing social conditions might shape the political strategizing of their opponents. And even among those who read the situation clearly, populist mobilization was not appealing across the board. Indeed, most politicians, regardless of the existence of the conditions just described, were not about to develop anything like populist mobilization in 1931. Instead, they continued to act in routine ways, reproducing existing repertoires.

On the ideological right, a small handful of former party notables initiated their own presidential bids and proceeded to campaign in the traditional style. The two most prominent of these—Antonio Osores and José María de la Jara y Ureta—ran all the way through the October vote. But neither seemed to grasp fully the new political reality (Miró Quesada Laos 1947, pp. 160–163). Indeed, Osores—an old veteran of the Partido Constitucionalista and former member of Leguía's cabinet—spent most of his time attempting to wrangle a coalition of traditional elites to his side, apparently deaf to popular cries for political change. La Jara, for his part, did not even return to Peru (from his post as ambassador to Brazil) to participate personally in the contest. In keeping with a traditional political practice, he instead relied on his elite colleagues to mount a letter-writing campaign on his behalf (Basadre 1999 [vol. 13], p. 3199).⁴¹ In the end, both performed exceptionally poorly at the polls. Of the 299,827 valid votes cast, Osores won just 19,640 (6.6 %) and la Jara secured only 21,950 (7.3 %) (Tuesta Soldevilla 2001, p. 607). Neither candidate attempted anything like populist mobilization. In failing to recognize how changing conditions had reconfigured the political terrain—and thus failing to appreciate the inapplicability of old routines to the new situation—both Osores and la Jara appear to have been somewhat naïve in their political assessments and strategies.

Another mode of elite response to the political situation can be seen in the formation, early on in the campaign season, of a coalition group calling itself the *Concentración Nacional* (National Unity, henceforth CN).⁴² Instead of campaigning, this group tried—in thoroughly traditionalist fashion—to circumvent the electoral process by making overtures to the *junta* to arrange a peaceful transfer of power, through a negotiated pact that would have been generally acceptable to most elite factions. Peru's elites had put their differences aside to reach a similar agreement in 1915, and the CN leadership

⁴¹ Carlos Miró Quesada Laos (1947, pp. 162–164) remarks that the candidacy of la Jara had been premised on the misguided notion that there was a broad political center that would support him as a representative of the traditional elite. La Jara believed that it was unnecessary to hold rallies and marches to court this silent majority, but that they (“our masses”) would make themselves known on Election Day.

⁴² On the *Concentración Nacional*, see Basadre (1999 [vol. 13], pp. 3177–3178) and Ugarteche (1969 [vol. 2], pp. xxxv–xxxvi). Its founding document is reprinted in Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 2), pp. 118–121.

hoped that a similar arrangement would be possible in 1931. But the *junta*, determined to proceed with the election, rejected the proposal, leaving the CN adherents to play their cards as they had been dealt. Ultimately, the CN project represented an attempt by some elites to cling to the old politics of backroom dealing, having failed to realize that “the gentlemanly and aristocratic times when such a solution might have been possible were long gone from Peruvian politics” (Klarén 1973, p. 135).

Thus, as the APRA and UR campaigns picked up steam, the actors of the traditional elite faced a dilemma. It was becoming increasingly clear to savvy observers that electoral success would come only to a candidate who was willing to encourage—and who could successfully channel—popular participation. Lacking the organizational capacity or control of political institutions necessary to disrupt this new political reality, the elites had only three options: to abstain from the electoral process, to support one of the two main elite candidates’ unrealistic presidential bids, or to throw in behind one of the two non-traditional candidates. To be sure, some opted for one of the first two choices. But the rest ultimately decided that Sánchez Cerro was the lesser of two evils and gave him their grudging support (Castillo Ochoa 1990, p. 60; Ciccarelli 1973, p. 23).⁴³ On what was referred to as the “black night of the oligarchy,” a group of elites met at the prestigious Club Nacional to chart their collective political response to the dynamics of the election (Adrianzen 1990). Realizing that they “were displaced and playing on a chess board that was not their own,” and that they did not have a plan that could defeat the dual threats of APRA and socialism, the group decided to support Sánchez Cerro—even though they despised him (Yepes 1990, pp. 78–79). Nevertheless, although their willingness to support Sánchez Cerro demonstrates that they (at least eventually) understood the political reality better than either Osorio or la Jara, this group of elites disapproved of the populist mobilization that was being elaborated in the course of the election—and they certainly would never have developed it on their own.

Finally, on the ideological left, the Partido Comunista Peruano (Peruvian Communist Party, henceforth PCP) also strongly opposed populist mobilization, albeit for very different reasons.⁴⁴ In 1928, anticipating a revolutionary opportunity, the Comintern had directed its affiliated parties to focus their efforts on building communist trade unions and preparing for imminent revolution. Accordingly, and especially in the wake of the depression that began in 1929, the leadership of the PCP understood Peru in 1930 to be confronting an “objectively revolutionary situation.”⁴⁵ Although the party did run protest candidates in the 1931 elections “to make our program known and understood to the masses,” it maintained a doctrinaire stance and refused to collaborate with other political organizations.⁴⁶ Ultimately, its leadership viewed the elections as a

⁴³ In their estimation, Sánchez Cerro was more likely to safeguard their interests and could be more easily controlled than Haya de la Torre.

⁴⁴ Mariátegui’s former Partido Socialista became the Partido Comunista upon the leader’s death in 1930, when the former Aprista and now Moscow-aligned communist Eudocio Ravines assumed leadership. Shortly thereafter, Sánchez Cerro persecuted party members during his brief tenure as head of the provisional military government (Decreto-Ley 6926 [ADLP]; see also Basadre 1999 [vol. 12], pp. 3114–3116). After Sánchez Cerro’s ouster, the Sámanez Ocampo *junta* suspended active repression of the party, but nevertheless impeded its electoral participation.

⁴⁵ “Resolución del Comité Ejecutivo” (p. 1, see also p. 7), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Centro de Documentación de Ciencias Sociales, Colección Moisés Arroyo Posadas [hereafter cited as C.MAP], folder 3.12 “P.C.P.”

⁴⁶ “Resolución del Comité Ejecutivo” (p. 2), C.MAP, folder 3.12 “P.C.P.”

“farce” because they would never produce substantive change.⁴⁷ In this context, they viewed Haya de la Torre as a demagogue and thought that APRA’s opportunism—its willingness to court supporters broadly in pursuit of electoral victories—was dangerous.⁴⁸ In effect, they believed that Haya’s populist mobilization was liable to produce an unstable cross-class movement that would be easily co-opted by political elites, providing a veneer of popular legitimacy to exploitative class relations. They even went so far as to claim, in internal party correspondence, that APRA was organizing the bourgeoisie and *petit bourgeois* to attack directly the revolutionary workers (i.e., party members).⁴⁹ The party stated variants of these views publically, in intense polemics with APRA.⁵⁰ In the end, the fact that they favored a more disciplined and militant approach to revolutionary social and political change meant that the PCP leadership was dismissive of electoral strategies—and therefore unresponsive to the opportunities for political innovation that the situation provided.

Overall, it is reasonable to envision a scenario in which this set of political actors constituted the whole of the political field in 1931; and in this scenario, for the reasons outlined above, it is unlikely that any of them would have responded to the situation by developing a new populist mode of practice. On the left, the PCP would have continued organizing militant communist labor unions and advocating revolutionary action. On the right, squabbling elites would have campaigned in the traditional fashion. And in the end, the *Concentración Nacional* initiative would likely have been successful in brokering a deal with the *junta*. The counterfactual argument is thus: That in the absence of the outsider candidates and their parties, driven to creative action by the dynamics of the situation, conventional political routines would have been reproduced and there would have been no political innovation in Peru in 1931.⁵¹ Considering this counterfactual makes it clear that a structuralist mode of analysis, while supplying critical pieces of the historical puzzle by illuminating the social and political context of action, cannot alone explain the historical emergence of populist mobilization. And so it is necessary also to attend to the situated actions of the political actors that were prompted to move in creative new directions as they confronted the limitations of routine practice while attempting to circumvent the established channels of elite politics.

⁴⁷ Eudocio Ravines to the Comité Regional de Junín (p. 3), 20 August 1931, C.MAP, folder 7.1 “P.C.P., 1931.” See also Giesecke 1992, p. 82.

⁴⁸ Eudocio Ravines to the Comité Regional de Junín (p. 4), 20 August 1931, C.MAP, folder 7.1 “P.C.P., 1931.” See also Ravines 1951, pp. 96–98.

⁴⁹ In correspondence to a provincial party cell, Ravines explained that “APRA disciplines the bourgeois and *petit bourgeois* reactionary forces as armed bands to pounce against the revolutionary proletariat” (Eudocio Ravines to the Comité Regional de Junín [p. 4], 20 August 1931, C.MAP, folder 7.1 “P.C.P., 1931”).

⁵⁰ See for example *La Noche* (Lima, Peru), April 28, 29, 30, May 2, 4, 8, and June 7, 1931. Because the PCP anchored the far left and exercised influence among significant sectors of the working class, it remained an important actor in the political field of 1931. It is for this reason that the party’s polemical exchanges with APRA in the months before the election were so important.

⁵¹ This argument should not be interpreted as suggesting that the various elites and members of the PCP did not innovate because they lacked the capacity for creativity—and that Haya de la Torre, Sánchez Cerro, and those assembled around them had deeper reservoirs of this human potential—as creativity is available to and utilized by all actors (in tandem with habit). Rather, the point is that the elite and communist actors, shaped by their developmental experiences and relationships, did not interact with the context of action in a way that would trigger a shift from habitual to creative responses; and that the outsider candidates and their parties did. This is what remains to be explained—and the task to which a structuralist mode of analysis is inadequate.

3. Situated political innovation in Peru's 1931 election

The arrival on the scene of Haya de la Torre's APRA party and Sánchez Cerro's Unión Revolucionaria party led to an outcome quite different from the counterfactual scenario just described. These outsider parties and their candidates circumvented the established political actors of both the left and the right and escalated the popular drama of the election to such a point that the Concentración Nacional's backroom deal quickly became impossible. Along the way, they converged in developing a new mode of populist practice that would soon become commonplace in Peru and throughout Latin America. Explaining this outcome requires a more detailed analysis of how these collective political actors interpreted and responded to the changing social and political conditions already described. According to the pragmatist approach outlined above, this means detailing the situational constitution of the collective actors, explaining how each party's leadership came to understand the situation as problematic, and tracing each actor's transition from routine habits of thought and action to political innovation. These analyses are presented in the following three subsections, each of which treats the APRA and UR parties in turn.

Situational constitution of collective political actors It is first necessary to demonstrate that the two principal collective political actors of Peru's 1931 election (i.e., referring not just to the candidates themselves, but to those organized elements within each party that directed party practice) were constituted through this dramatic, unfolding situation—and in relation to one another. This requires substantiating three things. First, that in both cases, the parties were formed quite late in the game because of opportunities afforded by the situation. Second, that these parties did not form independently, but rather each with reference to the emerging power of the other. Third, that the social composition of each party's centralized corps of advisors—who worked out strategic decisions amongst themselves and in dialogue with the candidates—was shaped by the pressures of the situation.

Although Haya de la Torre had founded APRA from exile in Mexico in 1924 (as a pan-continental Latin American movement), it was only in late March of 1931—after the ouster of Sánchez Cerro and in anticipation of the junta's move toward a democratic opening—that the party began organizing extensively in Peru (Villanueva Valencia 1975, p. 23). Haya's previous political experiences with students, workers, and socialist intellectuals had provided him with a small network of potential supporters, many of whom had also been exiled by Leguía or jailed by Sánchez Cerro's short-lived provisional government (Basadre 1999 [vol.12], p. 3118; Klarén 1973, pp. 84–105).⁵² In April of 1931, sensing an opportunity and emboldened by the junta's release of jailed Apristas, Haya encouraged his exiled supporters to return to the country to form the Partido Aprista Peruano—the Peruvian branch of the APRA party (Klarén 1973, pp. 122–127). These supporters organized themselves, founded a party newspaper (*La Tribuna*), and made preparations for Haya's return from Germany (Basadre 1999 [vol.

⁵² Haya had stayed in contact with these supporters from abroad through extensive correspondence (see, for example, the letters excerpted in Enríquez 1951, pp. 79–101; and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre to La Célula del Apra del Cuzco, 25 February 1930, Archivo General de la Nación, Lima [hereafter cited as AGN], Prefectura de Lima, legajo 3.9.5.1.15.1.14.1, folder 5, "Documentos del P.A.P. Cartas Confidenciales 1930–32–33–34–35 y 1937").

13], p. 3181). When the junta declared elections in late May, the party began campaigning in earnest and Haya made his way back to Peru.⁵³ The electoral opening thus provided both the opportunity and the impetus for the formation of APRA as an organized political force in Peru in 1931.

The fact that Sánchez Cerro and his supporters still posed a significant threat also played a role in prompting APRA to begin organizing when it did. Sánchez Cerro's overthrow of Leguía had been hugely popular; and many Peruvians believed that he deserved to be granted the Presidency as a reward for his actions (Stein 1980, p. 94). This popularity was ominous for Haya's followers. A Sánchez Cerro presidency would likely have meant more exile, or even prison, for many Apristas.⁵⁴ Thus, even though APRA leaders began organizing in Peru about three months before the official formation of Sánchez Cerro's political party, it must be understood that they were doing so with a stark awareness of the threat posed by the figure's sustained popularity.

Not only did the dynamics of the situation in 1931 contribute to the occurrence of APRA's formation as a collective political actor, but they also played a role in shaping the social constitution of its leadership corps. While Haya de la Torre had emerged out of the protests of the late teens and early 1920s as a prominent figure among a broad group of student, anarcho-syndicalist, and socialist radicals—and although the 1931 APRA leadership was composed largely of intellectuals and workers who had been involved with Haya in these earlier struggles—situational dynamics prompted two important moments of schism that shaped APRA's inner circle. The first split came in 1928, when Haya broke definitively with Mariátegui over issues of political leadership and strategy (Burga and Flores Galindo 1979, pp. 185–196). A former ally, Mariátegui had become critical of Haya's personalism and his willingness to pursue electoral politics.⁵⁵ Haya's defection thus forced Peruvian leftists to choose sides in an internecine rivalry that would endure for decades. A second schism came in 1931, as Haya made preparations for a renewal of political activity in Peru. While the Apristas who had been charged with orchestrating a mobilizational push in the country were

⁵³ Haya returned from exile and began campaigning in person on July 12th (Basadre 1999 [vol. 13], p. 3179). He landed first at the northern port city of Talara and finally arrived in Lima, to much fanfare, on August 15th (see Luis Eduardo Enriquez's recollections [1951, p. 75] and *La Tribuna* [Lima, Peru], August 17, 1931).

⁵⁴ See, for example, Haya de la Torre's trusted advisor Luis Alberto Sánchez's letter to Haya, dated December 21, 1930, informing him of Sánchez Cerro's persecution of Apristas (reprinted in Haya de la Torre and Sánchez 1982 [vol. 1], pp. 27–30). Sánchez opens his letter with the following summary of events: "You will have already been informed by the *compañeros* of the true situation that began on the 23rd of this past month, as a result of which [Carlos Manuel] Cox has been imprisoned, [Manuel] Seoane has left [the country], others remain underground, and others—myself included—are persecuted" (ibid., p. 27). See also Luis Eduardo Enriquez's letter to Sánchez Cerro, dated December 9, 1930, asking him to end this persecution (AGN, Prefectura de Lima, legajo 3.9.5.1.15.1.14.1, folder 5, "Documentos del P.A.P. Cartas Confidenciales 1930–32–33–34–35 y 1937").

⁵⁵ Mariátegui was not wrong in this assessment. Haya indeed *did* intend to pursue electoral options and to make himself the figurehead of such efforts. This became patently clear in 1929, when Leguía held a presidential election. Although it was broadly understood that the election would be rigged, Haya made plans to run anyway (Klarén 1973, p. 117 and 2000, p. 260). Moreover, rumor had it that he was also orchestrating a rebellion and military mutiny to respond to his inevitable electoral defeat (Salisbury 1983, p. 6). Mariátegui refused to back this plan, taking issue not only with the electoral participation, but also with the subsequent insurrectional strategy—not to mention the personalism that both evidenced (Klarén 1973, p. 113 and 2000, pp. 261–262). Although he would later abort his plan, Haya took Mariátegui's opposition as a fundamental slight. On the relationship between Haya and Mariátegui, see Luis Alberto Sánchez's own reflections in his memoir (1969 [vol. 1], pp. 295–320).

enthusiastic about the new atmosphere of political openness, there were disagreements both about whether to participate in the elections and about Haya's vision for leadership and political organization.⁵⁶ Such dissension led to a second, though more limited, wave of defections and purges. In the end, Haya allowed only his most trusted allies to become party leaders. In this way, the social constitution of APRA's leadership corps was critically shaped by the unfolding dynamics of the political situation.

Sánchez Cerro's party, Unión Revolucionaria, was likewise a product of the context of action. Nothing about Sánchez Cerro's social origins or early institutional roles could have predicted that he would become a prominent figure in national politics by 1930.⁵⁷ Rather, this junior officer's rise to prominence through coup d'état was the highly contingent result of his ability to read Leguía's waning popularity, to predict the acquiescence of the national police force, to understand the potential utility of schisms between junior and senior officers in the Arequipa garrison, and to foresee the willingness of the military bureaucracy in Lima to support a change of leadership (Stein 1980, pp. 86–87; Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 1], pp. 107–109). It may be that Sánchez Cerro's situational intelligence reached its limits after the coup, when he failed to comprehend the extent to which other members of the junta would oppose his efforts to install himself in the presidency. But although the "Hero of Arequipa" was effectively disempowered when the junta removed him from office in March of 1931, his amorphous movement of popular supporters was not. A large number of "pro-Sánchez Cerro" clubs had formed in the wake of his August coup; and while not organized in any coherent way, the members of these clubs supported their hero through his exile, pressured the junta for his return, and were elated when he arrived back in Peru in July of 1931.⁵⁸ Sánchez Cerro officially announced his candidacy on July 13th—just three months before the election—and his UR party was formed on the 30th of the same month (*El Comercio* [Lima, Peru], July 13, 1931, p. 3; Molinari Morales 2006, p. 32). The UR party's formation was thus a product of the events that unfolded between August of 1930 and June of 1931.

But Sánchez Cerro might not have gone so far as to form his own political party, had it not been for the emergence of APRA as a viable political force. Indeed, in his search for a route to the presidency, Sánchez Cerro had first considered linking up with the Concentración Nacional initiative discussed above (Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 2], pp. xxxv–xxxvi); and many of the elites who eventually formed UR's central leadership corps had initially supported more traditionalist political options. But even in its first months on the ground, APRA was quickly becoming a formidable political organization. And unlike the other adherents of the CN, Sánchez Cerro and a handful of his elite

⁵⁶ See the recollections of and correspondence reproduced by Luis Eduardo Enríquez, one of the early organizers of the Partido Aprista Peruano on the ground in Peru (Enríquez 1951, pp. 79–101).

⁵⁷ Sánchez Cerro was a product of the professionalization of the Peruvian armed forces that began in the wake of the War of the Pacific and that continued through the 1920s (see Masterson 1991, pp. 23–37 and Villanueva Valencia 1962). Born in the northern town of Piura to middle class parents, he attended public schools and later enrolled in the national military academy at Chorrillos (Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 1], pp. 1–4). Yet while military careers had always provided a unique route to social mobility in Peru, they rarely led to real political power, economic wealth, or social prestige.

⁵⁸ Sánchez Cerro arrived by ship at the port of Callao on July 2nd and disembarked on July 3rd (see *El Comercio* [Lima, Peru], July 3, 1931; Basadre 1999 [vol. 13], p. 3179; Miró Quesada Laos 1947, pp. 151–152). His sustained popularity must be viewed in the context of the intense opposition to Leguía that had developed by 1930 (Molinari Morales 2006, pp. 18–19).

supporters recognized APRA's growing power and understood that the CN was doomed to failure.⁵⁹ With the encouragement of his advisors, Sánchez Cerro came to see that it would be necessary to organize his own mass party if he wished to defeat APRA at the polls. Thus, the evolving competitive dynamic between APRA and UR played an important role in the crystallization of both political actors.

Finally, the social constitution of Unión Revolucionaria's leadership corps was largely a product of the concrete political realities of 1931. Like with APRA, there was a measure of historical continuity behind UR's party leadership, in that it had its origins in a group of young university students who had held clandestine meetings during the Leguía dictatorship (Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 2], pp. vii–xi). But the group also eventually included various lawyers, middle class professionals, and elites with ties to the old oligarchy. Sánchez Cerro's support amongst these well-situated allies solidified only as the threatening realities of the political situation became clear (Cossío del Pomar 1977 [vol. 1], p. 336). Indeed, many core UR leaders were involved more because they wanted to defeat APRA than because of their love for Sánchez Cerro, and some because they saw their participation as a way to keep the candidate from doing too much to upset the status quo. Sánchez Cerro, for his part, was more than happy to accept help from all quarters. The result was a party leadership that was considerably less cohesive than that of APRA, but that was nonetheless unified in its immediate practical goals by the pressures of the situation.

In summary, the APRA and UR parties were formed specifically because of the unique historical situation presented by the 1931 election; they were formed with reference to one another; and the constitution of their leadership was conditioned by social and political realities as they unfolded. Thus, it is nonsensical to talk about the “preferences,” “rationalities,” or “strategic tendencies” of either of these collective political actors in the abstract, since the actors themselves (and thus their preferences, rationalities, and tendencies) were a product of the situation. Recognizing this fact is a critical prerequisite for assessing the lines of political action that the candidates and their parties would pursue in their campaigns and especially for understanding how such different actors could converge in their practices.

Formation of a problem situation Having demonstrated that the collective political actors were constituted as such by the situation, the next step is to make sense of why this particular situation presented itself to them as problematic. According to the pragmatist theories discussed above, problem situations emerge when actors experience their ordinary habits of thought and action as inadequate to the reality at hand—that is, when habit fails (Gross 2009, p. 366). The equivalent in the political domain is when routine political practices, drawn from existing repertoires, cease to yield favorable results. This was the case for the leadership of both APRA and UR in the run-up to the election. Although these leaders emerged out of political traditions with their own routine practices that had made sense under previous conditions, by 1931 their reliance on these practices had been frustrated.

Haya de la Torre and his APRA leadership had cut their political teeth among leftist movements for whom grassroots organizing, disruptive protests and strikes, and even attempts at insurrection and mutiny had become regular practice. Having first

⁵⁹ See Luis M. Sánchez Cerro to A. E. Pérez Aranibar, 30 July 1931 (reprinted in Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 2], pp. 122–124).

participated in student politics in his north coast hometown of Trujillo, Haya left for Lima in 1917 to play a larger role in the national university reform movement that was heating up around that time (Klarén 1973, pp. 84–105). In the capital city, he quickly maneuvered himself into a position of leadership, becoming the principal liaison between students and workers in the 1919 general strike for the eight-hour work day (Stein 1980, p. 130). This movement was ultimately successful; and Haya's critical role as chief negotiator—along with his powerful oratorical skills and open defiance of government troops in the street—earned him popularity among both students and workers (ibid., pp. 130–132). He then leveraged this popularity to play a prominent role in labor organizing and, along with those who would eventually help him to lead APRA, continued to be involved in student and worker movements throughout the early 1920s. During this period, Haya founded the radical student-worker periodical *Claridad*—the editorship of which he eventually handed over to Mariátegui—and established a system of “popular universities” that brought students and workers together for educational and consciousness-raising purposes (Chanamé 2006; Klaiber 1975). His role in student-worker leadership reached its pinnacle in May of 1923, when he led a successful series of protests (for which he was punished with exile) against Leguía's attempt to consecrate Lima to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Sánchez 1985, pp. 101–117).⁶⁰ Haya then continued his political activities from abroad, formulating plans in 1929 (that he later abandoned) for a popular rebellion and military mutiny against Leguía (see fn. 55, above). In the repressive context of the 1920s, such strategies made good political sense for the radical left.

But although they resulted in minor successes in 1919 and 1923, these strategies did not produce enduring political change—and worse, they tended to provoke state repression. Striking workers were frequently jailed and protesters were occasionally killed by government troops. The popular universities were driven underground and their leadership deported (Klaiber 1975, p. 710). And along with other student and worker leaders who were similarly expelled, Haya was compelled to leave the country. All the while, Leguía remained in power. And even once the dictator had fallen, leftists who remained in Peru were persecuted by Sánchez Cerro's provisional government (Basadre 1999 [vol. 12], pp. 3093–3144). Thus, by 1931, a problem situation had emerged for Haya and his APRA leadership. Although returning to the political stage with a good deal of experience in radical politics, they recognized that the old strategies were not adequate to the present situation and that something new would be required.

Sánchez Cerro and his UR leadership, although more varied in their political experiences than the Apristas, likewise entered into the new political situation with a repertoire of routine strategies that had been better suited to prior conditions. Many founding members of the party came from elite families with ties to the old parties, and so embraced traditional methods of political practice premised on social control. Prior to Leguía's rise to power, such methods included the repression of labor organizing, declarations of martial law, the maintenance and enforcement of tight restrictions on suffrage, the proscription of radical parties, the brokering of backroom political deals, electoral manipulation, and coup d'état. For his part, during his time in the military, Sánchez Cerro had expressed clearly his distaste for the direct involvement of non-

⁶⁰ This consecration had been an attempt on Leguía's part to improve relations with the Catholic Church and to secure its support for an unconstitutional reelection bid (Klarén 2000, pp. 253–254).

elites in politics; and although he had strong political ambitions, his actions make it clear that he did not see elections as necessary for realizing these.⁶¹ Instead, he embraced strategies that were more typical for his institutional position. He spearheaded two failed coup attempts prior to his successful 1930 coup.⁶² And once in power as head of the provisional government, he did not attempt to mobilize his already enthusiastic supporters into a formidable political force motivated by populist rhetoric, but rather (in a caudillo-like move that would have been fairly routine in previous times) to orchestrate a sham election.⁶³ In the end, it is clear that Sánchez Cerro and his UR leadership shared an initial aversion to mass mobilization, preferring instead to ply the tried and true political tools of the traditional elite.

But although these political routines had been effective in previous eras, they confronted their limits in 1931. Sánchez Cerro had personally experienced the shortcomings of a military route to power. His two failed coup attempts had earned him, first, banishment to an obscure military outpost in the Amazon, and then later, full-blown exile.⁶⁴ And even once successful in toppling Leguía, his backdoor route to the presidency had been effectively blocked by the junta. Later, after elections had been declared, Sánchez Cerro and the future UR leaders watched as the junta rebuffed the Concentración Nacional's corrupt overtures. Thus, as with APRA, a problem situation had emerged for Sánchez Cerro and his collaborators by 1931. And it was only in light of their frustrated options that these leaders felt compelled to explore new political strategies.

For both collective political actors, then, the circumstances leading up to the election precluded the effectiveness of the practices on which they had relied in the past. Each group recognized that the election presented a unique opportunity; but each also understood that routine practices would be inadequate for capitalizing on this. It is precisely when confronted with such problem situations—when actors recognize that habit has failed—that creative practical innovation is spurred.

From routine action to situated political innovation But simply encountering a problem situation does not guarantee a solution. To innovate successfully, the individuals constituting these collective political actors had to have the skills and capacities to break with routine, as well as adequate exposure to alternative practices that they could draw on

⁶¹ See for example his condescending depiction of striking workers in a 1916 letter to his brother: “I’ve always maintained that this misunderstood system of strikes—typical of the rabble—is the worst of the ills recently introduced to this already degenerated and convulsed country. The stupid masses, who only give in when the stick is brought into play, are completely ignorant of who they should be listening to...; in the best of cases, the result obtained [by a strike] doesn’t remedy the ills that the strikers bring upon themselves. It truly irritates me, as if I were being personally attacked, every time such wretchedness is produced” (Luis M. Sánchez Cerro to Antonio Sánchez Cerro, 4 June 1916 [reprinted in Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 1), p. 17]). See also Stein 1980, pp. 86, 104–105.

⁶² These attempts were in 1919 and 1922. For a brief discussion of the latter, along with a collection of primary documents pertaining to the event, see Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 1), pp. 28–61, 63–67. It is notable that Sánchez Cerro had also taken part in one *successful* coup many years before: as a young officer, he was seriously wounded while participating in the 1914 overthrow of Guillermo Billinghurst (Basadre 1999 [vol. 12], p. 3094; Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 1], pp. 11–14).

⁶³ It is important to note that, while mass support erupted in *response* to Sánchez Cerro’s 1930 overthrow of Leguía, the coup itself was a *military* act and not strategically premised on the mobilization of widespread popular support.

⁶⁴ On Sánchez Cerro’s removal to a post in La Pampa and subsequent exile to fascist Italy (where he remained from late 1925 through early 1929), see the summary and supporting documents collected in Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 1), pp. 68–73.

to construct something new. Both APRA and UR did this in 1931. Each found inspiration in a range of other practices; and each adjusted its understanding of the situation and reformulated its political strategies on the basis of these influences. At the same time, the parties learned from and were constantly trying to upstage one another. In this way, each developed a similar practical response to the problem situation that it faced.

Haya de la Torre and his APRA leadership were exposed to a wide range of political models throughout the 1920s. Not insignificant among these were the models elaborated by the radical movements with whom they had been previously affiliated. As already discussed, these had not proved adequately effective on their own; but exposure to them nevertheless colored Aprista thinking (see Hirsch 1997 and Tejada 1985). At the same time, Haya encountered a range of new political ideas and practices during his eight years in exile.⁶⁵ After beginning his wanderings in Panama and Cuba, he spent a period of time in Mexico, where he came to know the leaders presiding over that country's agrarian reform and consolidation of a corporatist party-state (see Ibáñez Avalos 2006). Haya then travelled to Moscow (via Texas and New York) in 1924, where he was a "visiting spectator" at the fifth World Congress of the Comintern and participated in the World Congress of Communist Youth. After travelling through Switzerland and Italy, he enrolled at the London School of Economics and then at Oxford, where he studied anthropology, constitutional law, English politics, and economics. In 1927, on a break from his studies, Haya and other Peruvian exiles founded an APRA cell in Paris; and that same year, he led an Aprista delegation to Brussels to attend the International Congress Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression. On a return trip to the Americas, Haya organized APRA cells in New York, Mexico City, Quetzaltenango (Guatemala), and Santa Ana (El Salvador); and he spearheaded an anti-imperialist campaign in Costa Rica. Finally, when the United States prevented him from disembarking to change ships at the Canal Zone (Panama), Haya was in effect shanghaied back to Europe (Salisbury 1983, pp. 13–14). There, he spent his last years in exile working for the German economist Alfons Goldschmidt in Berlin, just as the Nazi party was beginning its rise to power (Chang-Rodríguez 2007, p. 100). Ironically, then, the unintended consequence of Haya's expulsion by the Leguía regime was that the eager young activist was exposed to an eclectic array of political ideas, strategies, and tactics.⁶⁶

This exposure provided Haya and his advisors with new tools for understanding the possibilities offered by domestic conditions in 1931. Haya had already demonstrated that he was a political opportunist, open to whichever strategies appeared most likely to result in success; but, to evaluate his strategic options in 1931, he would first have to formulate an accurate and subtle reading of APRA's immediate political situation.⁶⁷ His time organizing students and workers in the early 1920s, and his ongoing correspondence from exile with observers who remained in country, gave him a leg up over other politicians of the day by attuning him to changing conditions in urban centers and along the northern coast—and by alerting him to the conduciveness of these conditions to novel mobilization practices. Likewise, Haya's experiences in exile provided him with new lenses for evaluating domestic

⁶⁵ On Haya de la Torre's activities in exile, see Cáceres Arce 2006 (pp. 94–143); Chang-Rodríguez 2007 (pp. 94–101); Salisbury 1983; and Sánchez 1985 (pp. 118–223).

⁶⁶ Many other future Aprista leaders had similar experiences in exile, in countries ranging from Chile and Argentina, to the United States and United Kingdom, to France and Germany. These experiences are less well documented and assessing their full impact on APRA's strategy would require substantial additional research.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Haya's attempt to do this in his January 31, 1931, letter to Luis Alberto Sánchez (reprinted in Haya de la Torre and Sánchez 1982 [vol. 1], pp. 30–34).

political realities. His studies of economics and exposure to anti-imperialist thought informed his understanding of depression-era Peru (Salisbury 1983; Stein 1980, p. 149). And many influences prompted him to cultivate a deep sensitivity to the historical plight and political potential of social groups that had been previously marginalized. Perhaps most importantly, Haya's exposure to early German fascism encouraged him to recognize that moments of electoral openness in contexts of profound social and political dislocation provided tremendous opportunities for outsider politicians. Thus, Haya's comprehension of domestic conditions—and of the possibilities that these afforded—was not automatic, but rather shaped through a decade-long period of political learning.

Along similar lines, APRA leaders synthesized foreign and domestic influences as they crafted new political ideas and strategies that would make the most of contemporary conditions. During his exile, Haya drew on various strains of thought to elaborate a complex political philosophy that he would translate into a galvanizing populist rhetoric in 1931.⁶⁸ In the same way, his strategic thinking about political organization and mobilization was shaped by his exposure to diverse movements during his years abroad. Haya had long been interested in questions of political organization; and APRA's continued reliance on grassroots popular organizing drew heavily on his and his leadership's earlier experiences with Peruvian student and labor movements.⁶⁹ But APRA's emphasis on organization was further invigorated by Haya's exposure to corporatist, Marxist-Leninist, and fascist organizational models.⁷⁰ Applying insights from these models to APRA as a whole, Haya and his leaders organized their party according to a complex hierarchical structure intended to facilitate disciplined mobilization, with functionally differentiated units reflecting the structure of Peruvian society.⁷¹ Further, although he rejected many elements of fascist thought, Haya's exposure to fascist movements led him to understand charismatic, nationalistic, election-oriented mass mobilization as a promising route to political power (Sánchez 1985, pp. 220–223).⁷² Such strategic insights

⁶⁸ Haya's writings of this period carried heavy doses of anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical thought and were clear about the importance of coordinating active political support from various social sectors, including students, urban laborers, coastal plantation workers, highland peasants, and middle class professionals (Alexander 1973; Pike 1986; for Haya's collected writings, see Haya de la Torre, 1984).

⁶⁹ Haya had been interested organization from an early age. In a 1971 interview with historian Steve Stein (1980, p. 134), he described his childhood obsession with organizing: "We had some very spacious rooms to play in, and we created a republic there. We had a President, we had cabinet ministers, deputies. We had politics. And there we practiced ... at reproducing the life of the country with spools of thread. [...] I used to receive very nice toys: locomotives, trains. But I was not interested in these things. What interested me was to have an organized setup, like a country.... When I recall this, you can see how early I had a political imagination. It was quite noteworthy, because we imitated life, but we assured a life of order. Now I tell myself, how I've always had this thing about organizing." As Stein notes, this childhood game is also discussed in Cossio del Pomar (1977 [vol. 1], p. 33).

⁷⁰ See, for example, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre to La Célula del Apra del Cuzco, 25 February 1930, AGN, Prefectura de Lima, legajo 3.9.5.1.15.1.14.1, folder 5, "Documentos del P.A.P. Cartas Confidenciales 1930–32–33–34–35 y 1937."

⁷¹ For indications as to APRA's organizational structure, see *La Tribuna* (Lima, Peru), May 24 and August 8, 1931.

⁷² See, for example, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre to Luis Eduardo Enríquez, 31 August 1930 (excerpted in Enríquez 1951, p. 95, my italics). In this letter, Haya explains: "In Germany it is different: now the communists, similar to the fascists, go to the elections with a program to revise the Treaty of Versailles—the first principle of extremist German patriotism. *This is tactical*. In the elections that will be held in two weeks, the parties (fascist and communist) that advance this slogan are going to win a large number of votes." Indeed, Haya emulated fascist mobilization strategies to such an extent that his opponents accused him of importing dangerous foreign ideas.

were consonant with—although not an automatic result of—the populist rhetoric that he had been developing in his political writings. All together, then, Haya de la Torre and his APRA leadership started down a path of populist mobilization in 1931—of organizing and mobilizing previously excluded social groups into public contentious action, and motivating this action with anti-elite, nationalist, pro-popular rhetoric—by stitching together a package of ideas and tactics from diverse sources that, repurposed and enacted in concert, represented something new for the Latin American context.

This populist path was reinforced over the course of the campaign, as APRA leaders recognized both the success that the strategy was bringing and that Sánchez Cerro was enjoying similar successes with similar rhetorically-infused practices. Haya's first tour through the northern provinces, in which he reached out to citizens who had been previously ignored by national-level politicians, was so successful that it was followed up by a second tour. APRA's political rallies grew bigger as the campaign progressed; and its grassroots organizing efforts became more extensive as they began to bear fruit. At the same time, although APRA mounted vicious attacks against its principal opponent, the party also realized that Sánchez Cerro was enjoying success with comparable strategies—and it calibrated its tactics accordingly. As early as August of 1930, observing Sánchez Cerro's charismatic appeal, Haya noted in a letter to a political ally that “it will be necessary to create ‘Hayismo,’ just like today's ‘Cerrismo.’”⁷³ It was no accident, for example, that APRA chose to introduce its party program at a mass rally on the very same weekend (August 22 and 23) that Sánchez Cerro would be staging his own rally to commemorate the one-year anniversary of his triumphant coup. Both events were populist spectacles: they centered on mass public gatherings in which a series of charismatic speakers enthralled crowds with lofty populist rhetoric; and both involved mass processions down similar routes through the capital city, past symbolically important sites and centers of social and political life. Indeed, the emerging strategies of both candidates were similar enough—and the competitive-mimetic dynamic between them heated enough—that APRA sent an observer to spy on Unión Revolucionaria's practices at its rallies.⁷⁴ Thus, the iterative and interactional dynamics of campaigning added fuel to APRA's elaboration of a new mode of populist practice in 1931.

Just as the leaders of APRA drew on a range of experiences in formulating their new populist strategies, so were Sánchez Cerro and his UR leadership influenced by the various political models (both domestic and foreign) to which they had been exposed. Because the UR leadership was less cohesive than that of APRA, its political influences may appear to have been even less obviously consonant—ranging from nineteenth-century Peruvian party practices to Italian fascism. Sánchez Cerro himself was a military man without much experience in Peruvian politics; but many UR leaders had ties to traditional parties. And so earlier, paternalist, socially unthreatening ways of turning out supporters—through clientelist political clubs and Election Day mobilization around the ballot box—still resonated with some UR leaders as acceptable means of harnessing mass support. For Sánchez Cerro, the time that he spent in exile

⁷³ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre to Luis Eduardo Enríquez, 31 August 1930 (excerpted in Enríquez 1951, p. 82).

⁷⁴ As Luis Alberto Sánchez recalled in his memoir: “In the late afternoon, Víctor [Raúl Haya de la Torre] called me aside and said, ‘I beg you to go in person to see what this rally is like; getting in will be risky, but I trust your objectivity’” (Sánchez 1969 [vol. 1], p. 355).

in Mussolini's Italy (prior to his overthrow of Leguía) was particularly important. Just as influential was his first-hand education (in the wake of his 1930 coup) about the power of popular support to carry a leader past entrenched opposition. His overthrow of Leguía “produced a veritable popular explosion” of support (Villanueva Valencia 1962, p. 65); and his triumphal arrival in Lima a few days later sparked “the largest public demonstration in Peruvian history up to that time” (Stein 1980, p. 84).⁷⁵ Further, as head of the initial *junta*, Sánchez Cerro received a constant stream of visitors to his temporary residence; the newspapers brimmed with congratulatory telegrams from military officers, politicians, political clubs, and ordinary citizens; and patriotic Sánchezcerrista clubs formed throughout the country—all with minimal coordination on his part. This experience of having been the object of such adulation made a powerful impression on the young officer. Finally, after his ouster by the *junta*, Sánchez Cerro spent a brief period of exile in Paris, where he met with others who had been exiled by Leguía.⁷⁶ As was the case with Haya, Sánchez Cerro's experiences abroad, both before and after his 1930 coup, were profoundly formative—and the effects of exposure to new ideas and tactics, which these experiences provided, ricocheted back into the Peruvian context in ways that the *junta* had not anticipated.

These political experiences shaped Sánchez Cerro and his UR leadership's understandings of the opportunities afforded by conditions in 1931 Peru. Although lacking the more organic ties that APRA leaders had with organized students and workers, Sánchez Cerro received useful soundings of the political situation by virtue of his privileged political profile. Indeed, the declarations of support with which the leader was inundated painted a vivid picture of his adherents' grievances and desires.⁷⁷ Against the backdrop of his previous exposure to the politics of Mussolini's Italy, this understanding of political conditions led Sánchez Cerro to see his political opportunities in a new light. As Pedro Ugarteche, one of Sánchez Cerro's closest advisors, later recalled: “times had changed, and leaders could no longer be elected by small coteries of distinguished personages, but only by powerful political organizations” (Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 2], p. xxxvi). Thus, Sánchez Cerro and his advisors came to understand how they could take advantage of existing conditions.

But while sharing largely similar assessments of the political situation, the UR leaders did not always agree about what their strategic response should be. For his part, having long ago set his sights on the presidency, Sánchez Cerro was both ambitious and opportunistic enough that the promise of victory trumped his otherwise conservative, anti-popular political tastes.⁷⁸ In effect, his experience of his own

⁷⁵ For a description of Sánchez Cerro's arrival in Lima, see *La Prensa* (Lima, Peru), August 28, 1930.

⁷⁶ On Sánchez Cerro's 1931 exile, see Miró Quesada Laos 1947, pp. 138–145; Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 2], pp. xxxvi–xxxvii.

⁷⁷ See *El Comercio* (Lima, Peru), March 7, 1931, as well as Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 2), pp. xxxix–xliv, lxvii, 100.

⁷⁸ In an account that clearly illustrates Sánchez Cerro's ambition, former head of the PCP Eudocio Ravines reported (in his narrativized remembrances of Peruvian communism in the 1930s) that Sánchez Cerro expressed his intent to overthrow Leguía upon his return from his first European exile, in early 1930. At the home of José Carlos Mariátegui, which had become an intellectual salon of sorts, he declared: “I must be president; I must overthrow this rogue” (Ravines 1952, pp. 168–169; see also Ugarteche 1969 [vol. 1], p. 100). In response to the disbelief of his hosts, Sánchez Cerro continued: “I'm not bluffing—I do what I say I'll do, even though you don't believe me;... I swear on my mother that you haven't heard the last of me” (Ravines 1952, pp. 168–169). Molinari Morales (2006, p. 20) emphasizes the opportunistic side of Sánchez Cerro's political character, referring to him as “Machiavellian.”

popularity and exposure to Mussolini’s mobilizational successes quickly cured him of his previous aversion to seeing the masses in the streets (so long as those masses were supporting him). Thus, in his correspondence from exile, Sánchez Cerro praised Mussolini and wrote of the urgency of forming a party in Peru—which should remain under his absolute control—to channel his pre-existing support and serve as an apparatus for winning the election through mobilization (Molinari Morales 2006, pp. 42–43). At the same time, less than comfortable with the candidate’s newfound enthusiasm for seemingly extreme mobilizing practices, some of Sánchez Cerro’s advisors tried to nudge him in more conservative directions. These UR leaders were more comfortable resurrecting and recombining ideas and practices from the recent Peruvian past, like basic nationalist principles, internally hierarchical political clubs, and elite-controlled street thuggery. The result was a process of political innovation that involved ongoing practical negotiations between Sánchez Cerro and his top advisors. A middle ground coalesced around ideas and practices that were somewhat more authoritarian, paternalistic, and reactionary than those of APRA, but that nevertheless amounted to the contentious public mobilization of ordinary people motivated by populist rhetoric. Thus, while drawing on different building blocks than APRA, Sánchez Cerro’s UR party was moving in a similar strategic direction.

This direction was reinforced over the course of the campaign, as its utility became increasingly clear and as APRA’s mounting successes upped the ante. Sánchez Cerro’s rhetoric crept in an increasingly populist direction between the Augusts of 1930 and 1931, from the xenophobic nationalism, paternalism, and anti-*Leguismo* of his August 22nd (1930) “Manifiesto of Arequipa” (released at the time of his coup) to the decidedly pro-popular sentiments expressed in his August 22nd (1931) speech on the Plaza San Martín (delivered at the high water mark of his presidential campaign).⁷⁹ And as petitions to recognize pro-Sánchez Cerro political clubs accumulated at the UR party headquarters, more active efforts were made to fund, develop, and coordinate such clubs as grassroots party affiliates.⁸⁰ At the same time, as APRA’s populist mobilization became more pronounced, UR followed suit. In his biography of Haya de la Torre, Aprista writer Felipe Cossío del Pomar claims, for example, that upon witnessing a successful Aprista march on August 15th, Sánchez Cerro declared, “These swine have deceived me! They’ve lied in assuring me that such Aprismo didn’t exist!” (1977 [vol. 1], p. 341). Sánchez Cerro then made sure that his own rally the following weekend would be larger still. But while increasingly vigorous in its own mobilization, the UR party also mocked APRA’s mobilizational style as a foreign import—that is, as deviant from Peruvian political traditions (see Klarén 2000, p. 273).⁸¹ And so a veritable war of populist framings emerged, with each party claiming that its own practices were the only true expression of popular virtue.⁸² In this way, the iterative and interactional

⁷⁹ The full text of the 1930 manifesto is reprinted in Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 1), pp. 113–117. The 1931 speech is reprinted in Ugarteche 1969 (vol. 2), pp. 178–181.

⁸⁰ On Sánchez Cerro’s political clubs, see Drinot 2001 and Stein 1980.

⁸¹ In describing an Aprista march, for example, Pedro Ugarteche (1969 [vol. 2]:liv) claimed that Haya de la Torre’s “followers had marched through the streets of the city imitating the Italian fascists and the German Nazis, in squadrons in military formation, as if they were a civil army.”

⁸² See, for example, *El Comercio* (Lima, Peru), August 23, 1931, p. 4; *La Tribuna* (Lima, Peru), August 24, 1931, p. 3. See also: Cossío del Pomar 1977 (vol. 1), p. 342; Miró Quesada Laos 1947, p. 157.

dynamics of campaigning also played a role in shaping UR's elaboration of populist mobilization in 1931.

In the end, while the parties and their agendas may have been different, the situationally constituted leaderships of both the APRA and UR parties responded to their perceptions of a problem situation in 1931 in ways that were quite similar. Each transcended routine and stitched together bits and pieces from a wide range of influences to construct a new package of political ideas and tactics that can be reasonably understood as *populist mobilization*. Thus, informed by pooled experiences that shaped their strategic vision—and via iterative and interactional dynamics of trial and error over time—these collective political actors converged in developing a new mode of political practice in 1931.

4. The routinization of a new mode of political practice

This new mode of political practice was not ephemeral. Rather, populist mobilization resonated with the social and political conditions outlined above to such an extent that its strategic potential could not be ignored once demonstrated. Between Haya de la Torre and Sánchez Cerro (who ultimately won the election), 86 % of the votes cast in 1931 went to a candidate who relied heavily on the practice (Tuesta Soldevilla 2001, p. 607).⁸³ The non-populist candidates were thoroughly trounced. With this outcome, it became increasingly clear that populist mobilization made good political sense.

This was a game changer for Peruvian politicians. After the 1931 election, populist mobilization had a track record. Politicians and the general public alike had witnessed it first hand; and more importantly, they had seen its power to overwhelm the traditional strategies of the political elite. Although populist mobilization was by no means endemic in Peru after 1931, the introduction of this mode of political practice shifted the terrain of political possibility. Thenceforth, the majority of successful democratic candidates (and even some military dictators) would at least toy with the practice at one time or another (Stein 1999; Stepan 1978). And those conservative politicians who remained opposed to it—of whom there were still many—would increasingly have to rely on military rather than democratic means for securing power (Masterson 1991). Indeed, the history of Peruvian politics from 1931 until at least the early 1980s can be characterized as a series of back and forth alternations between episodes of populist mobilization and reactive responses to these (Collier and Collier 1991; Villanueva Valencia 1972, Villanueva Valencia 1975). But the very fact the populist mobilization so quickly became such a polarizing practice is evidence that it had been recognized as a potentially useful go-to strategy by at least some political actors. And once crystallized in the Peruvian context, it became available to other Latin American politicians.⁸⁴

⁸³ Sánchez Cerro won the election with 152,149 votes to Haya's 106,088 (Tuesta Soldevilla 2001, p. 607). For the best explanation of this ultimate outcome, see Stein 1980, pp. 188–202.

⁸⁴ It is beyond the scope of this article to assess how, and the extent to which, the Peruvian case influenced the subsequent development of the practice elsewhere in Latin America. It is clear that, once the mode of practice had crystallized and been demonstrably successful in Peru, it appeared on the radars of, and so became available to, other political actors in the region facing comparable conditions. But a simple diffusion argument—appealing as it might be—is unlikely to prove adequate, at least on its own, for explaining this complex historical phenomenon.

Conclusion

Starting from the premise that Latin American populist mobilization was first practiced at a national scale to win elected office in Peru in 1931, this article shows that its historical emergence was the product of situated political innovation by problem-solving collective actors. It emerged where, when, and how it did, in part, because changing social and political conditions (economic development and depression, changing forms of social organization, infrastructural development, new political ideologies, and openings in the political opportunity structure) presented political actors with a new social and political context of action. But, as demonstrated by the counterfactual analysis, these conditions alone were not sufficient to produce the outcome in question. Rather, the new mode of political practice emerged only when collective political actors, constituted in part by the situation, recognized a crisis in the applicability of routine practices to the present situation; and it emerged only because these actors had the broad experience necessary to develop savvy understandings of how changing conditions were unsettling their political routines and to cobble together novel packages of ideas and tactics that were appropriate to the new context of action. Through these processes, strikingly different actors ended up converging to elaborate a new mode of political practice in Peru in 1931. Once demonstrably successful, this mode of practice became increasingly routinized in Peru and was subsequently available to other Latin American political actors facing comparable conditions. A macro-structuralist explanation on its own would have stopped at the point of establishing the context of action; but the counterfactual analysis deployed here demonstrates that this did not definitively produce the outcome (although it played an important role in shaping its contours). Explaining the historical emergence of a new mode of political practice required introducing a pragmatist approach to relational and iterative social action capable of accounting for breaks with routine and the formulation of creative solutions to problem situations.

This speaks to the broader question of repertoire change that was at the heart of Tilly's historical studies. Based on the above analysis, three emendations are notable. First, while repertoires may often change gradually, they can also change through dramatic moments of radical innovation. Tarrow (1995) recognized this fact nearly two decades ago and suggested the need for more careful qualitative studies of such moments, but his call fell largely on deaf ears. The approach outlined here is well suited to explaining such rapid change. Second, while political repertoires change partly in response to shifts in structural conditions, and while political opportunity is one of these, other conditions can matter just as much—or even more. In the Peruvian case, political opportunity was critically important; but also, economic conditions produced new grievances, changing forms of social organization reconfigured political loyalties and provided new organizational bases for mobilization, infrastructural development made it possible to reach the population more directly, and new political ideologies provided discursive materials that could be reformulated in novel ways. This article suggests that it is possible to take structural conditions seriously and to assess their importance systematically while still beginning from a point of agnosticism as to which will matter the most (and *how* these will matter) in any given case. Third, necessary as they might be, such conditions are not in themselves sufficient for producing the emergence of new modes of political practice. Rather, new modes of practice emerge

as a result of creative human action at moments when the reproduction of old repertoires no longer suffices for the situation at hand. This means that it is necessary to attend to the situational processes by which structural conditions translate into political action. Thus, by illuminating the important linkages among historical conditions, political practice, and political outcomes, a pragmatist approach to situated political innovation provides a critical set of tools for understanding the internal dynamics of a distinct mechanism of political change.

While building productively on Tilly's studies of repertoire change, this analysis has broader methodological and theoretical implications as well. First, by demonstrating that the historical emergence of Latin American populist mobilization was not an automatic result of structural conditions, it challenges an assumption built into more traditional approaches to comparative-historical sociology. These approaches tend to obscure the causal significance of situated human action, and instead assume a relatively easy translation of structural conditions into political outcomes. This article problematizes that translation process and provides the tools necessary for producing rigorous explanations of consequential but at least partially contingent political action. In so doing, it joins with others who have emphasized the need to understand the internal dynamics of critical situations or events when endeavoring to explain (at least some types of) macro-historical stability and change (Abbott 2001; Ermakoff 2008; Gould 1995; Kurzman 2004; Sewell 2005; Wagner-Pacifici 2010). Such an emphasis should not be interpreted as a blanket call to shift the focus entirely from macro-historical to micro-historical sociology, but rather as a reminder that each must inform the other through the careful and systematic integration of these levels of analysis.

Second, by showing that populist mobilization was not a natural outgrowth of the ideological orientations, institutional affiliations, or social origins of those who first practiced it, this study challenges approaches in political sociology whose implicit or explicit theories of action have assumed otherwise. Through zeroing in on the ways in which political actors work through their strategic options in relationally and processually unfolding situations, it becomes clear that social and cultural experiences condition their understandings of these situations, shape their habits and routines, color their senses of the strategic options, and provide materials for creative action that can have truly significant consequences. In this way, this article can be understood as specifying one mechanism by which culture channels political processes and outcomes—thus playing a critical role in the balancing act between political stability and change (see Sewell 2005, pp. 318–372).

Third, the analysis presented here demonstrates the utility of pragmatist approaches for historical research on politics. As a few have recently argued, pragmatist theories of action hold great potential for comparative-historical sociology (Biernacki 2005; Gross 2010; Schneiderhan 2011); but this potential has yet to be fully realized. This is likely because pragmatism is often assumed to deny the power of those structural conditions that the subfield has long regarded as critical to historical explanation. But this article stands as evidence that embracing a pragmatist perspective on social action does not have to mean giving short shrift to the broader social structures that shape specific contexts of action. Indeed, a pragmatist approach can provide tools for interrogating this mutually constitutive relationship as it produces patterns of political stability and change.

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