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Elite Settlements

Michael G. Burton
Loyola College in Maryland
and
John Higley
University of Texas at Austin

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Michael G. Burton

Loyola College in Maryland

John Higley

University of Texas at Austin

*Address correspondence to Michael G. Burton, Department of Sociology, Loyola College in Maryland, 4501 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21210.

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ELITE SETTLEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Following the classical elite theorists' injunction to study variations in elite structure, we examine the elite settlement as a major, yet largely overlooked, form of political change. Elite settlements consist of broad compromises among previously warring elite factions, resulting in political stability and thus providing a necessary precondition for representative democracy. To identify the common features of elite settlements, we draw upon four historic cases: England in 1688-1689, Sweden in 1809, Colombia in 1957-1958, and Venezuela in 1958. We conclude by arguing for the extraction of elite settlements from their current embeddedness in such concepts as "bourgeois revolutions" and "democratic transitions," and we advocate greater attention to the elite paradigm in efforts to explain macropolitical outcomes.

ELITE SETTLEMENTS

Understanding how nations become politically stable and democratic is a central goal of political sociology and a matter of obvious concern to policymakers around the world. Current scholarly opinion on the subject differs markedly from the once-dominant "modernization" perspective, which saw stable democracy as a happy by-product of social, economic, and cultural development. Many scholars now see the establishment and maintenance of democratic institutions as decidedly political acts. These scholars divide broadly into two camps: adherents of the class or Marxian paradigm, and those working within the elite or managerial paradigm (Alford and Friedland 1985). The currently more influential class paradigm, despite many intricate nuances, essentially interprets stable democracy as established and maintained by the bourgeoisie, primarily for the bourgeoisie. This paradigm has customarily explained the exercise of bourgeois power through the democratic state in terms of basic economic processes. Responding to the limitations of such economic determinism, however, a number of Marxian scholars have recently stressed the "relative autonomy" of political actors, typically aggregated as "the state."

This latter trend has brought Marxian theorists closer to the elite paradigm's core contention about the

independence and centrality of explicitly political actors, or elites. But how does the elite paradigm explain the origins of stable democracy? We submit that readers will be hard-pressed to formulate an answer that reflects any consensus on this question among scholars working within the elite paradigm. Although a good deal of valuable work on the relationship between elites and democracy has been done (for useful overviews see Putnam 1976, pp.129-32; Peeler 1985, pp. 4-41), hardly anyone has located this work explicitly within the elite paradigm. Consequently, the paradigm has not been elaborated in this direction and, not surprisingly, research on the role of elites in the origins of democracy has not been especially cumulative.

Working explicitly within the elite paradigm, we hope to attack this problem by drawing on pertinent literature and on an examination of the origins of stable democracy in several countries to develop the concept of "elite settlements" as one route to stable democracy. Elite settlements are relatively rare events in which warring national elite factions suddenly and deliberately reorganize their relations by negotiating compromises on their most basic disagreements. Elite settlements have two main consequences: they create patterns of open but peaceful competition, based on the "norm of restrained partisanship" (Manley 1965; Di Palma 1973), among all major elite factions; and they transform unstable political regimes, in

which irregular seizures of government executive power by force are frequent or widely expected occurrences, into stable regimes, in which forcible power seizures no longer occur and are not widely expected. These changes in elite behavior and regime operation pave the way for, though they do not guarantee, the emergence of democratic politics.

In many ways, elite settlements are as consequential as social revolutions, yet they have not been systematically studied as a discrete class of events. There is some relevant literature, however, that stresses the importance of elite unification or "accommodation" in transitions to democracy (e.g., Rustow 1970; Levine 1978; Wilde 1978; Linz 1978; Karl 1981; Huntington 1984; Peeler 1985). We intend to build on this literature by focusing on elite settlements as one especially important mode of elite unification, thereby shifting attention from the establishment of democratic institutions to the empirically distinct, causally prior, circumstances and actions of elites. First, we want to locate the concept of an elite settlement within a broader set of concepts and assumptions about how elite structures vary and with what consequences for major political outcomes. Second, we want to draw on four especially dramatic and seminal elite settlements--England in 1688-1689, Sweden in 1809, and Colombia and Venezuela in the late 1950s--to specify their common features. Third, we want to discuss certain implications that the focus on elite

settlements has for theories of political change.

ELITES, POLITICAL STABILITY AND DEMOCRACY

The concept of elite settlements comprises an extension and modification of classical elite theory as developed by Mosca (1939) and Pareto (1935). At the heart of the theory was the contention of elite variability. That is, that elite structure and behavior vary significantly among societies and within them over time; that these variations occur independently of social, economic, and cultural forces; and that elite variations have important determinate effects for the character of political regimes. As Mosca put it (1939, p.51), "The varying structure of ruling classes has a preponderant importance in determining the political type, and also the level of civilization, of the different peoples." Pareto (1935, esp. paras. 2274-77) was similarly concerned with specifying variations among elites according to the mix of nonlogical "sentiments" that ostensibly guide their thinking and behavior, and he tied such variations to different kinds of political regimes. But neither theorist got far in developing the contention of elite variability, and certainly neither focused on elite settlements as one of the most important instances of it. The variability contention, therefore, constitutes the point of departure for examining elite settlements, but in most other respects one must start anew.

First, to what does the elite concept itself refer? In line with prevailing definitions of elites (Burton and Higley 1987), we avoid assumptions about their talents, moral qualities, degrees of consciousness and cohesion, or other properties. Elites are simply people who are able, through their positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes individually, regularly, and seriously. Elites thus constitute a nation's top leadership in all sectors--politics, government, business, trade unions, the military, the media, religion, the intellectual--including both "establishment" and "counterelite" factions. A national elite can be said to encompass "all those persons capable, if they wish, of making substantial political trouble for high officials (i.e., other elite persons who happen to be incumbents of authoritative positions) without being promptly repressed" (Field and Higley 1973, p. 8).

Although the subject of elite variation merits much more careful examination than it has received, there is loose scholarly agreement that national elite structures take three basic forms in the modern world. By "structure" we mean the amalgam of attitudes, values, and interpersonal relations among factions making up the elite. One form or type of elite structure, variously labeled "divided" (Beck and Malloy 1964), "competitive" (Putnam 1976), or "disunified" (Field and Higley 1985), is characterized by

ruthless, often violent, interelite conflicts. Elite factions deeply distrust each other, interpersonal relations do not extend across factional lines, and factions do not cooperate to contain societal divisions or to avoid political crises. A second type, termed "totalitarian" (Dahrendorf 1969), "monocratic" (Fleron 1969), or "ideologically unified" (Field and Higley 1985), is characterized by the outward appearance of nearly complete unity in that all elite factions publicly profess the same ideology and publicly support the same major policies. Moreover, all or nearly all elite persons are members of the same party or movement and their interpersonal relations are sharply centralized in this party or movement. The third type of elite structure, called "pluralistic" (Fleron 1969), "competitive-coalescent" (Putnam 1976), or "consensually unified" (Field and Higley 1985), displays substantial, but much less than monolithic, unity. Elite factions regularly take opposing ideological and policy stances in public, but they consistently refrain from pushing their disagreements to the point of violent conflict. Although they inveigh against each other on policy questions, they apparently share a tacit commitment to abide by common codes of political conduct centering on the norm of restrained partisanship, and there is an extensive web of interpersonal relationships that encompasses all factions and provides satisfactory access to key decisionmakers (Higley and Moore,

1981).

There is also loose scholarly agreement that each of these major forms of elite structure is closely associated with a distinctive type of political regime. Thus, divided or disunified elites operate unstable regimes in which coups, uprisings, revolutions, and other forcible seizures of government power occur frequently or are widely expected. Although representative democratic politics may be practiced intermittently in such unstable regimes, it usually breaks down in the face of a political crisis. Totalitarian or ideologically unified elites, on the other hand, operate stable, politically unrepresentative regimes in which overt coups or other forcible power seizures do not occur, and public conflicts of interest and opinion are consistently repressed in favor of some official ideology. Though institutional functioning may be formally democratic, elections and other representative processes are not seriously competitive or determinative of government personnel and policies. Finally, pluralistic or consensually unified elites operate stable, politically representative regimes in which the incumbency of top government positions passes peacefully among different persons and factions according to representative principles and processes, most notably periodic, competitive, and binding elections. However, the precise degree of political representation differs according to the extent of regional,

ethnic, religious, or other subnational conflicts, the (non)existence of external threats, and the extent of economic prosperity or other facilitative conditions. Thus two of the three elite types--the ideologically unified and the consensually unified--are associated with stable regimes. But only regimes operated by a consensually unified elite involve important degrees of sustained representative democratic politics.

Insofar as these associations between elite type and regime type appear to be widespread both in history and the contemporary world (Field and Higley 1980, 1985), one can say that a consensually unified elite is a precondition for, but not a guarantee of, stable democratic politics. The origins of this type of national elite are therefore highly relevant to assessing the likelihood of democratic transitions: Without a basic change to a consensually unified elite there can be no lasting transition from an unstable and, at best, only intermittently democratic regime, or from a stable but politically unrepresentative regime, to a stable regime in which the sustained practice of representative democracy is a real possibility. In what circumstances, then, do consensually unified elites originate?

Except where a country has been defeated in international warfare (e.g., Germany, Italy, and Austria in World War II), no ideologically unified elite has ever been

transformed into a consensually unified elite. The effects of international warfare aside, ideologically unified elites and the stable, unrepresentative regimes they operate appear to be reliably self-perpetuating (e.g., Bialer 1980). So the origins of consensually unified elites and stable, representative regimes must be sought in other circumstances. Colonial experience is the most obvious and most widely discussed of these (Rustow 1970; Huntington 1984). Consensually unified elites have most frequently originated in the habituation of major elite factions to open but peaceful competition while their society is still a colony or territorial dependency. By operating representative political institutions under some form of "home rule," or by keeping a large and complex independence movement intact politically, or both, national elites in a significant minority of former colonies emerged as consensually unified upon attaining independence. An early example is the elites of Holland and certain other Dutch provinces when they emerged from Spanish domination toward the end of the sixteenth century. Other examples are the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, India, and Malaysia, all former colonies of Britain, as well as, from the French colonial empire, Tunisia, the Ivory Coast, and possibly Senegal. More or less immediately after these countries became independent, the existence of consensually unified elites operating stable political

regimes permitted important degrees of sustained representative democratic politics.

A second, less frequent, origin of this elite type appears to involve the gradual attenuation of radical, antisystem stances among one or more major factions in a disunified national elite. Over a period of two or three decades, more specifically, radical elite factions discover there is nothing approaching majority support for their programs and no real chance of taking power forcibly. As in the cases of the once-radical Social Democratic elite factions in Denmark and Norway earlier in this century, and of the until recently intransigent Communist and Socialist elite factions in Italy, France, and Japan, doctrines and programs that hamper the mobilization of electoral majorities are progressively abandoned and replaced by promises to defend existing political institutions and to abide by existing rules of the political game. With this moderation of radical left factions, right-wing factions "relax," feeling increasingly certain that their basic interests are no longer threatened. In such cases, the national elite gradually becomes consensually unified so that, where representative democratic politics was at best a precarious tradition, it becomes a secure one.

Neither of these two origins of elite consensus and unity, and thus routes to democratic politics, appears likely or even possible in many contemporary countries,

however. The dismantling of colonial empires after World War II, which in most instances left the former colonies in the hands of disunified elites, has essentially ended prospects for the colonial-experience origin. And the other origin, involving a gradual attenuation of elite radicalism, apparently depends on a society achieving a level of organizational and economic complexity sufficient to discredit radical egalitarian alternatives in the minds of a majority of voters--obviously not a current or foreseeable condition in most non-Western countries. So unless elite consensus and unity originate in still another way, political stability and sustained democratic politics will not extend much beyond their present locations in the world. Much, therefore, depends on elite settlements, the third origin of consensually unified elites, in societies with disunified elites and unstable regimes.

COMMON FEATURES OF ELITE SETTLEMENTS

We think elite settlements have occurred in four, and perhaps in half a dozen or more, countries during the modern period. A number of settlements were also attempted but failed, for example, the efforts of Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish elites to construct broad coalitions or to take turns in government office during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and similar efforts by Uruguayan, Colombian, and Peruvian elites during the first part of this

century. Such failed elite settlements deserve closer scrutiny, but here we focus on four clearly successful settlements: England in 1688-89, Sweden in 1809, Colombia in 1957-58, and Venezuela in 1958. We examined the relevant historical and social scientific literature on these countries in considerable detail, and what we learned constitutes the basis of the following discussion.¹ A less detailed examination of the relevant literature on Mexico in the late 1920s and early 1930s (e.g., Purcell and Purcell 1980; Tardanico 1982), Costa Rica in 1948 (e.g., Montealegre 1983; Peeler 1985), Austria before 1955 (e.g., Steiner 1972; Stiefbold 1974), and Spain in the late 1970s (e.g., Maravall 1982; Gunther 1985; Gunther et al. 1986) turned up indications of possible elite settlements that warrant further investigation.

Let us first consider the gross historical circumstances that motivate disunified elites to enter into settlements. These appear to be of two basic kinds. One is the recent elite experience of costly, but also essentially inconclusive, conflict. Precisely because no single faction has been a clear "winner," and all factions have more nearly been "losers," elites are disposed to compromise if at all possible. The recent experience of civil war, which entailed considerable elite fratricide but had no clear victor, in England during the 1640s and in Colombia after 1948 exemplifies this kind of circumstance. Bloodied but

not wholly bowed, English Tories and Whigs and Colombian Conservatives and Liberals had, for the moment at least, no stomach for more fighting (Schwoerer 1981; Wilde 1978). Moreover, the unleashing of leveling social revolutionary tendencies in both civil wars made the two national elites keenly aware that continued conflict could ultimately cost them their tenure. Whereas no clear civil war preceded the elite settlements in Sweden and Venezuela, national elites in both countries had experienced several decades of intense but inconclusive struggles for factional ascendancy, struggles that were accompanied by indications of the potential for leveling tendencies to take control: a peasant uprising and march on Stockholm during the ongoing struggle between the two major elite factions, the "Hats" and the "Caps," in 1743; and, in Venezuela, mass protests against the dictatorship of Marcos Perez Jimenez during 1956-1957, combined with an increasingly mobilized working class and peasantry.

The second kind of circumstance that disposes elites to seek a settlement is the occurrence of a major crisis, which serves as a catalyst for elite action. Such crises appear usually to center on the incumbent head of state and are the culmination of his or her policy failures, power abuses, and demonstrated personal weaknesses, made manifest by a particular action or event that brings elite discontent to the boil. In England the crisis was the news that King

James II would have a Catholic heir, a development that climaxed bitter resistance on the part of the predominantly Protestant elite to James's aggressively pro-Catholic policies and that occurred in the context of growing elite alarm about the possibility of an alliance between the Catholic kings of England and France. In Sweden the crisis involved the loss of Finland to Russia in 1808, impending Russian and Danish-French invasions of Sweden proper, and economic disarray, all of which were viewed by elites as outcomes of King Gustav IV Adolf's ill-considered policies and personal failings (Brown 1895). The crises in Colombia and Venezuela were sharp economic downturns punctuated by efforts of the military dictators Rojas Pinilla and Perez Jimenez, respectively, to extend their tenures. In Colombia the crisis surrounding Rojas was made particularly intense by continuing civil strife. In each of the four cases, in short, a crisis partly brought about and made intolerable by the incumbent head of state's blunders and ambitions motivated elites not only to remove him and to exclude the clique closely associated with him, but, more important, to transform the system that produced him.

Once such circumstances motivate elites to seek a settlement, the ensuing process has several common features. One is speed. It appears that elite settlements are accomplished quickly or not at all. Triggered by a serious political crisis that threatens renewed elite warfare,

settlements involve intensive efforts to find a way out. Fear of the consequences of not doing so loosens the fixed positions and principles of various factions and disposes them to consider concessions that in other circumstances they would not countenance. In none of the cases under discussion did a settlement take much longer than a year. The coming together of Tory and Whig factions in England began in earnest during the first half of 1688 with a conspiracy among key Tory and Whig leaders and the Dutch stadholder, Prince William of Orange, to unseat King James II. The key components of the settlement were agreed to by the major factions less than a year later, in February 1689. The Swedish settlement was even more rapid, involving a similar elite conspiracy against the king during the winter of 1808-1809, followed by the drafting and acceptance of a new constitution during May and June 1809. In Colombia the overthrow of Rojas Pinilla was orchestrated by a coalition of Liberal and Conservative party leaders between July 1956 and the following May. The constitutional components of the Colombian settlement were negotiated by the same coalition from July to October 1957, and overwhelmingly approved in a plebiscite two months later. The Venezuelan settlement got under way with a meeting of the heads of the three major parties and two business leaders in New York City in December 1957; the settlement agreements were finalized exactly a year later.

This is not to suggest that an elite settlement becomes complete and secure in such a short time; rather, creation of its essential components is accomplished rapidly. One must distinguish between the initial, basic settlement and its subsequent implementation. In each of the cases being considered, for example, the new rules of the political game embodied in the settlement faced dangerous challengers: the Jacobites, who wanted to return the Stuarts to the English throne, the attempt to organize a royalist counter coup in Sweden in 1810, coup attempts by supporters of the ousted Rojas Pinilla in Colombia, a leftist guerrilla insurgency in Venezuela during the early 1960s. Extending over several years, possibly a generation, the sudden and deliberate elite cooperation that makes a settlement possible in the first place must be sustained to thwart such challenges if a settlement is to be fully consolidated.

A second feature of the settlement process is face-to-face, partially secret, negotiations among the paramount leaders of the major elite factions. It is there that, through a combination of skill, desperation, and accident, impasses are broken and crucial compromises are struck. Such meetings must number in the scores, even hundreds, in each case, for a settlement not only requires negotiating compromises between major factions but also within them. Indeed, in the cases under discussion one gets the sense of an almost continuous round of secret meetings and

consultations.

The settlement process in England originated in 1687 with secret meetings among a small group of key Tory and Whig leaders and a Dutch adviser to Prince William. These meetings gave rise to William's invasion in November 1688, and they produced the broad outlines of the new political system he helped establish. Further meetings among the principal actors generated the decision to hold a special Parliamentary Convention to address the issues still in conflict: Who would be king, or queen? What would be the line of succession? What would be the relative powers of the monarchy and parliament? What would be the nation's religious posture? This three-week Convention, itself a flurry of secret meetings, produced the Declaration of Rights, the formal expression of the elite settlement, which William and Mary accepted at their coronation on February 13, 1689. In Sweden, two weeks of intensive, secret deliberations among a fifteen-man committee, plus its pivotal secretary Hans Jarta, produced the concessions and draft constitution that were then ratified in three more weeks of discussion by the four Estates of nobles, clergy, merchants, and free farmers. One of the earliest important meetings in the Colombian settlement occurred in Spain in July 1956 between just two people: Laureano Gomez, the exiled former president and still leader of a major faction of the Conservative party, and Alberto Lleras, a former

president and leader of the Liberal party. The two met again in Spain in July 1957, signing the Pact of Stiges, which set the framework for a succession of talks within and between party factions from July to October 1957. The result was the National Front platform for constitutional reform, which was overwhelmingly approved in the December 1957 plebiscite. The broad outlines of the Venezuelan settlement were shaped in the previously mentioned New York City meeting in December 1957 among three party heads and two business leaders, and the written expressions of the settlement--the Pact of Punto Fijo and the "Statement of Principles and Minimum Program of Government"--were fashioned in meetings at the home of a party leader, Rafael Caldera of COPEI, during the fall of 1958.

Such formal, written agreements constitute another common feature of elite settlements. Written agreements commit elite factions publicly to the concessions and guarantees they have made. In all four of the present cases, the most immediately visible manifestation of an elite settlement was one or more "constitutional" documents: a Declaration of Rights and then a Bill of Rights in England; a new constitution as such in Sweden; a fourteen-point National Front Agreement, which was incorporated into the constitution in Colombia; the Pact of Punto Fijo and the "Statement of Principles and Minimum Program of Government," which were incorporated into the Venezuelan constitution in

1961.

But formal agreements and constitutions by themselves hardly suffice to produce the common elite acceptance of a new code of political conduct, which is the most fundamental and lasting consequence of an elite settlement. Behind such agreements there must be a great deal of forbearance and conciliatory behavior among the most central elite actors. By their nature, historical records contain few indications of these subtle retreats from intransigence and enmity, but several important examples can be discerned in each of the settlements we are discussing.

English legal experts at the time generally agreed that the Declaration of Rights, acceded to verbally by William when he and Mary were crowned, was not legally binding. As king, William could have ignored the restrictions imposed on his authority. Yet he honored them and acquiesced to further restrictions added in late 1689. Very importantly, he also distributed offices among his supporters to achieve a balance between Tories and Whigs (Jones 1972, pp. 31-2). Continuing to act in the spirit of the settlement, William accepted additional restrictions during his reign: annual parliamentary sessions became the norm even though not required by law, and the House of Commons gradually assumed a significant role in foreign policy, despite this being the crown's prerogative. Similarly in Sweden, the interim king regent, Karl XIII, uncle of the deposed Gustav IV Adolf,

refused to support efforts to organize a royalist counter coup in 1810, thereby giving leaders of the 1809 settlement vital time to consolidate the new regime. And the crown prince, Bernadotte, who had been recruited from France to become Sweden's new king, agreed to delay his ascendance to the throne for a full eight years so as to ensure a gradual and peaceful transition from the old order to the new one. In Colombia, the pressing question of whether the Liberal-Conservative coalition--which had agreed to a fifty-fifty split of all government offices for sixteen years--should have a Conservative or a Liberal as its first presidential candidate was resolved through informal agreements among the factions just ten days before the 1958 election. In Venezuela, almost three years passed before the terms of the elite settlement were given legal status in the constitution. But though not legally bound to do so, Romulo Betancourt, the new president, immediately evidenced his commitment to power sharing by appointing members of the two major opposition parties to his cabinet, and he moved in other ways to create a climate favorable to those parties.

Another notable feature of the settlement process is the predominance of experienced political leaders; "new men" play only peripheral roles. In England, the instigators of Prince William's invasion, the members of the parliamentary rights committees, and William and his advisors were all veterans of many previous conflicts. In Sweden, Hans Jarta

and the members of the fifteen-man constitutional committee had been politically active for several decades. In Colombia, the leading negotiators of the settlement, Laureano Gomez and Alberto Lleras, were both former presidents; they and most other principal actors had been involved in the failed effort to form a Liberal-Conservative coalition a decade earlier. In Venezuela, the central negotiators of the settlement were the AD, COPEI, and URD party leaders, each with at least twenty years of political experience.

Political experience probably facilitated the settlements in several ways. Through past experience these leaders had developed power and prestige, which were essential resources as they attempted to persuade others to accept their plans. Also, these individuals had deep knowledge of the issues and of how their political systems worked; they knew what had to be done and how to go about doing it. In addition, past experience allowed for political learning (Levine 1978, p. 103): after suffering from previous conflicts, elites who were once intransigent could more clearly see the value of compromise.

In addition to these common processual features of speed, face-to-face negotiations, formal agreements, informal forbearance, and experienced leadership, do elite settlements share some more clearly structural feature? It is probably significant that at the time English, Swedish,

Colombian, and Venezuelan elites achieved settlements, all four countries were at a relatively low level of socioeconomic development. England in the late seventeenth century and Sweden in the early nineteenth century were predominantly rural, agrarian societies. Although Colombia and Venezuela were substantially more urbanized in the 1950s than were England and Sweden at the time of their settlements, neither of the Latin American countries was highly industrialized. Together with some special circumstances of Colombian and Venezuelan elites, to be mentioned in a moment, this suggests that all four national elites enjoyed considerable autonomy from mass followings and pressures. Elite factions and their leaders were able to compromise on questions of principle without strong pressures to stand firm. Members of traditional oligarchies rather than leaders of large and complex mass organizations and movements, the four elites were comparatively free to make the concessions and deals that elite settlements require.

Outwardly at least, Colombian and Venezuelan elites seem to have possessed less autonomy than did the elites of preindustrial England and Sweden. Most of the key Colombian and Venezuelan actors were leaders of organized political parties, and they were presumably constrained by calculations of electoral costs, party splits, and the like. Yet, under the dictatorial regimes of both countries during

the 1950s those parties were hardly vital, full-bodied mass organizations. Indeed, several key party leaders were in exile at the time, and it is probably of no small consequence that some of the meetings that produced the Colombian and Venezuelan settlements took place abroad--in Spain, in Puerto Rico, in New York City. In short, the absence of full-scale industrialization in Colombia and Venezuela during the 1950s, combined with the partially repressed situation of parties and other mass organizations in those countries, implies that, like English and Swedish elites, elites in Colombia and Venezuela also enjoyed substantial autonomy.

This is not to suggest, however, that elite autonomy is ever total, that elites fashion their settlements without regard for nonelite reactions. We have already mentioned elite fears of leveling sentiments as a prod to quick action. Beyond this, mobilized nonelites frequently serve as resources, whether in bringing down a government or defending a particular position as elites jockey toward compromises they can live with. Indeed, elites in each of the cases under discussion demonstrated substantial concern with public opinion: Even in their day, the English elites who plotted William's invasion and subsequently worked out the rules under which he would be king felt compelled to mount a huge public relations campaign announcing and defending their actions. Their principal opponent, the

royalist faction around King James II, responded with its own campaign for public support. Public discussion of the settlement process was further informed by leaks from secret meetings about who was taking what position. Similar patterns appear in each of the other cases. This public aspect of elite settlements is also seen in the promulgation of eminently public documents, especially constitutions, in all four cases.

In short, although settlements are primarily the result of private negotiations among substantially autonomous elites, they have an important public, or nonelite, aspect. The significance of this aspect probably has grown with the expansion of information about elite activities disseminated by modern news media and with the development of opinion polling.

Nonelite involvement presents a tricky problem for elites who would fashion a settlement. On the one hand, it is essential that compromising moderates be able to mobilize widespread, probably overwhelming, nonelite support against intransigent elite persons and groups. On the other hand, these compromisers run the risk of losing nonelite support if they are perceived as selling out their followers.

Taken with the other features we have noted, the need for substantial elite autonomy helps us to understand why elite settlements are so rare in modern history and in the contemporary world. The historical circumstances, short-

term processes, and elite autonomy that apparently provoke and facilitate such settlements seldom occur together. This is why disunified elites and unstable political regimes are such persistent features of today's developing countries no matter how much change occurs in other aspects of their social structures or in their economic and international circumstances.

ELITE SETTLEMENTS AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

To further clarify what elite settlements entail, and to suggest their theoretical implications, it will be useful to situate our analysis within the larger discussion of transitions to democracy in the four countries we have considered and elsewhere. Possibly the best-known sociological analysis of the conditions that facilitated England's eventual transition to democracy is that of Barrington Moore (1966). Moore focuses on the Civil War of the 1640s, giving primacy to the presence of a strong, relatively independent, landed upper class bent on capitalist expansion, chafing under the fetters of the old order and royal prerogatives, and facing a peasantry whose power and cohesion were being undermined by the enclosures. Moore contends that (1966, p. 19):

Through breaking the power of the king, the Civil War swept away the main barrier to the enclosing

landlord and simultaneously prepared England for rule by a 'committee of landlords,' a reasonably accurate if unflattering designation of Parliament in the eighteenth century.

The resulting destruction of the peasantry, he argues, spared England both the reactionary and the social revolutionary responses to modernization that appeared in other nations such as Germany, Japan, Russia, and China.

Much in line with Moore, Theda Skocpol (1979, pp. 140-44) treats England as a negative case in her analysis of social revolutions in France, Russia, and China. She views England's "political revolution" as spanning the period from 1640 to 1689, but asserts that "most of the relevant action took place between 1640 and 1660" (p. 141). According to Skocpol, the Civil War established the dominance of the landed upper class over the monarchy; when, in the 1680s, James II ignored this fact, he was removed "with very little fuss" (p. 144). Like Moore, Skocpol concludes that the strength of the landed upper class relative to the monarchy and the weakness of the peasantry combined thereafter to immunize England against social revolution.

From our perspective, Moore and Skocpol are certainly right that the events of the seventeenth century secured upper-class dominance of the English political regime. But unlike them, we think the crucial development in this process was the settlement fashioned by previously

disunified, mainly upper-class elite factions in 1688-1689. As Jones (1972) demonstrates, this settlement was much more than a simple "postscript" to the events of 1640-1660. The Civil War and its Cromwellian aftermath had underscored the depth of disunity among elite factions. And, as evidenced by their numerous and bitter conflicts during the reigns of Charles II and James II, disunity persisted for nearly thirty more years before the major elite factions were able to transcend their deadly divisions. Without the elite settlement of 1688-1689, the accumulating conflicts of the Restoration period could well have produced another civil war, something elites seriously feared at the time (Schwoerer 1981, p. 211). More than anything else, then, the unification of predominantly upper-class elite factions via a sudden and deliberate settlement secured upper class control of the regime, enabled England to avoid the civil wars, revolutions, and coups that subsequently plagued most other European nations, facilitated England's rapid rise to world dominance, and permitted its peaceful evolution toward democracy.

As noted, Moore and Skocpol stress the peasantry's weakness in the seventeenth century as a key factor in England's subsequent political development. Although a weak peasantry was doubtless important, viewed comparatively, it cannot sustain the weight they place on it; for, as Castles (1973) has pointed out, Sweden had a strong peasantry whose

"free" members constituted one of the four traditional Estates and as a class comprised an important political force throughout that country's modern history. Yet after the elite settlement of 1809, Sweden's political development was even more placid and untrammelled by social revolution or fascist reaction than England's. The point seems clear: Whatever role one assigns to a weak or a strong peasantry, the key variable for the establishment of political stability and an eventual peaceful transition to democracy is the unification of previously disunified elites, a unification that in England and Sweden occurred through highly distinctive elite settlements.

On the other hand, our analysis parallels a number of elitist approaches to democratic transitions (e.g., Rustow 1970; Rokkan 1970; Almond et al., 1973; Linz 1978; Hartlyn 1984; Peeler 1985). Thus, we find few indications that in arranging settlements elites were mainly reflecting broader social or economic or cultural forces. Rather, the settlements apparently grew out of deliberate, relatively autonomous elite choices among an array of possible strategies for protecting their diverse factional interests. And success in creating settlements was due in part to the skills of specific elite persons who happened to occupy pivotal positions at the time.

One of the most important of these elitist approaches is Dankwart Rustow's (1970) attempt, drawing on the cases of

Sweden and Turkey, to develop an ideal-typical description of democratic transitions. Rustow (pp. 352-61) emphasizes the importance of a "prolonged and inconclusive struggle" among well-entrenched elite factions, deliberate elite choices, a willingness to compromise, agreement on procedures rather than on fundamentals, and a period of "habituation" as indispensable to democratic transitions. All these elements are evident in the cases we examined. The crucial difference between our analysis and Rustow's is that he is talking about democratic transitions per se, whereas we are focusing on elite settlements as a precondition for democratic transitions. We believe it is necessary to separate the two phenomena: to extract elite settlements from their embeddedness in the concept of democratic transitions. Doing this allows one to see that elite settlements sometimes long antedate democratic transitions but are still apparently a precondition for them. At least two centuries separated the English elite settlement from that country's democratic transition, and one can hypothesize that while an elite settlement may well have occurred in Mexico during the late 1920s or early 1930s--involving the creation of the PRI as an omnibus vehicle for elite cooperation--the country is today only beginning its democratic transition.

Rustow's treatment of the Swedish case illustrates the utility of this distinction. Preoccupied with democratic

transitions, Rustow concentrates on the period around 1907, when Swedish elites adopted universal suffrage and proportional representation. He does not mention the 1809 elite settlement we described, which produced a century of peaceful conflict management--including the Swedish Estates' voluntary dissolution in 1866--and thus laid the foundations for Sweden's democratic transition. In other words, Rustow's characterization of conditions and phases of democratic transitions omits the fundamental precondition. Failure to recognize the centrality of an elite settlement also accounts for Rustow's judgment that Turkey had accomplished a democratic transition by the late 1960s, when he wrote. Turkey's 1971 coup and subsequent political instability and repression clearly showed that its shift to democratic politics during the 1960s was merely temporary. This might well have been Rustow's conclusion had he seen that a democratic transition depends on the prior occurrence of an elite settlement, of which there was little or no evidence in Turkey.

Another work with which our analysis bears an affinity is Stein Rokkan's (1970) treatment of stable democracy as the outcome of elite choices at particular historical junctures that created elite structures that incorporated rather than excluded challenger elites. We are attempting to clarify what such an elite structure entails and to pinpoint one way it originates. Samuel Huntington's (1984)

recent assessment of the prospects for more countries becoming democratic also has a definite elitist thrust: "[Democratic] institutions come into existence through negotiations and compromises among political elites calculating their own interests and desires" (p.212). Huntington implicitly recognizes that a fundamental change in elite structure must occur for there to be a transition to stable democracy, and he argues that this change may happen either through "transformation" or "replacement" of the existing elite. But he does not elaborate on the characteristics of the new elite structure that is created, and, like Rustow, he treats elite changes as part and parcel of democratic transitions. Moreover, military conquests apart, we disagree with Huntington's suggestion that democratic transitions can occur through the replacement of an existing elite. Probably, our disagreement mainly involves semantics, but semantic clarity is crucial here. Huntington's apparent meaning of "elite" when he speaks of replacement is those controlling a government. By contrast, we construe elites as including all persons with power to make serious trouble even if they cannot make government policy. Though a settlement may involve changes in top government personnel, it is primarily a transformation of relations among existing elite factions.

Greater awareness of this basic characteristic of elite settlements can be seen in some case studies. For example,

in his study of Venezuela, Levine (1978, p. 93) contrasts the behavior of essentially the same elite persons before and after the 1958 settlement, concluding that:

The most striking feature of Venezuelan politics after 1958 is the conscious, explicit decision of political elites to reduce interparty tension and violence, accentuate common interests and procedures, and remove, insofar as possible, issues of survival and legitimacy from the political scene.

This shift to elite cooperation, conciliation, and the muting of conflict is also stressed by Peeler in his analysis of Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela. Asking by what mechanisms elites in these countries maintain liberal democratic regimes and give them legitimacy, Peeler answers (1985, p. 123):

Fundamentally, they have replaced the old, highly visible party or personal hegemonies by a much more subtle and flexible joint hegemony of elites who quietly cooperate on the big issues while publicly competing with each other on the smaller issues (emphasis added).

More clearly than most other analysts, Peeler distinguishes the condition of elite consensual unity, or "accommodation,"

from the institutions of liberal democracy, hypothesizing that "...an ongoing spirit of elite accommodation is requisite to the establishment and maintenance of liberal democracy in Latin America" (p. 145, emphasis added). We concur with Peeler's thesis, and we suggest further that it holds for all nations with disunified elites and undemocratic regimes. We would stress, however, that a sudden and deliberate elite settlement is possibly the only way in which an "ongoing spirit of elite accommodation" can be achieved in the less developed countries of today's post-colonial world.

In his important, still-evolving analysis of Spain during the late 1970s, Richard Gunther (1985; Gunther et al. 1986) sharpens this focus on the causal role elite settlements play in transitions to democracy. He highlights the secret negotiations that occurred among all significant Spanish elite groups during 1977-1978, the care they took to give each other more or less proportional representation in these negotiations, and their deliberate avoidance of recriminations over the actions of the Franquist regime. The result was "a textbook case of elite settlement,"² which was followed by Spain's successful transition to a stable, representative democratic regime during the early 1980s.

Nevertheless, we think a serious limitation of most elitist work on the conditions for stable democracy is its ad hoc theoretical status. Awareness of this problem can be

seen in the efforts of students of the Colombian and Venezuelan democratic transitions (e.g., Wilde 1978; Dix 1980; Hartlyn 1984; Levine 1978) to fit their elite-centered analyses into Lijphart's (1968, 1977) "consociational democracy" framework. But the fit is loose at best because Colombia and Venezuela cannot be considered plural societies (Lijphart 1977, p. 33), and their democracies cannot be considered consociational (Linz 1978, p. 8), though Colombia did evince consociational forms during the sixteen-year period of National Front government. Lijphart's framework is presumably attractive to these scholars because it shows the link between elite cooperation and stable democracy. With Di Palma (1973), however, we contend that the same mode of elite behavior is found in majoritarian democracies. A more systematic approach would postulate that (1) underlying both consociational and majoritarian democratic regimes is the same type of elite structure, which we think of as "consensually unified"; (2) the consensually unified elite structure constitutes one of several distinct variants of elite structure in the modern world; (3) consensually unified elites originate in only a few specifiable ways, of which the elite settlement is today probably the most likely; and (4) consensual elite unity constitutes a necessary precondition for stable representative regimes which tend to evolve along democratic lines. These postulations extend the elite paradigm, and in doing so they

promise a more systematic theory of political change.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have had two main goals in this article, one fairly modest, the other more ambitious. Our first goal has been to show that the elite settlement is a distinct form of major political change which merits serious attention. There simply is no literature that examines elite settlements as a discrete phenomenon. At present, what we know about them must be gleaned from historical narratives on particular countries, from social science case studies, which are loosely theoretical at best, and from works that embed and thus obscure the settlement in some other supposedly more central phenomenon such as "democratic transitions" or "bourgeois revolutions." So there is a need for extensive research and theorizing that focuses directly on elite settlements. Indeed, we think elite settlements merit a level of attention approximating that given to social revolutions.

Our more ambitious goal has been to advance a particular theoretical view of elite settlements. We have approached the phenomenon from the conceptual framework and basic assumptions of the elite paradigm, contending that (1) elite settlements are the result of relatively autonomous elite choices and thus cannot be predicted or explained in terms of "more basic" social, economic, or cultural forces;

(2) the consensually unified elite structure created by a settlement constitutes the primary basis for subsequent political stability; which (3) is a necessary condition for the emergence and sustained practice of representative democratic politics. As we have stated, this approach does not deny that elite settlements, political stability, and democracy may be facilitated or hampered by various societal conditions. In concluding, it will be useful to clarify the relationship between our position and a more societally based approach. A convenient way of doing this is to consider our argument alongside Jack Goldstone's (1986) important work on "state breakdown" in mid-seventeenth-century England.

Population is the driving force in Goldstone's model of state breakdown and revolution. Drawing on an impressive array of evidence, Goldstone contends that sustained growth of the English population during the period 1500-1650 stimulated price inflation and a fiscal crisis of the state, increased the volume of upward and downward mobility, causing heightened elite competition for scarce positions, and raised the country's mass mobilization potential by causing a drop in real wages, rapid urban growth, and expansion of younger age cohorts. The result was state breakdown in the 1640s. In contrast, he argues, the "relatively peaceful change of rulers" in 1688 was "at least partly due to the greater social peace that then prevailed:

in 1688 England had behind it a generation of sharply reduced social mobility, stable prices, rising real wages, and slower urban growth" (1986, pp. 305-6).

By combining this well-grounded model with a persuasive critique of neo-Marxian theories, Goldstone has presented a formidable "social" explanation of political conflict and transformation, which appears at least to fit seventeenth-century England, and may fit other countries too. Is it compatible with our more narrowly "political" explanation? We think so, if the elite conflict variable in his model is seen as a function of much more than population and the other variables he employs. Specifically, the severity of elite conflict must be seen as primarily a function of the (pre)existing elite structure, of whether elites are unified or disunified. Elite structure is not a variable that responds mechanistically to various societal conditions. Disunified elites tend to remain disunified, even when social conditions would seem to favor unity. Unified elites tend to remain unified even when social conditions would seem to favor disunity.

English elites, like all the other elites of early modern Europe (except the Dutch, who achieved unity in winning independence from Spain), were disunified at the time England emerged as a nation-state. Though some periods were, of course, more peaceful than others--which may well be partially explained by the variables in Goldstone's

model--deadly interelite warfare was the prevailing fact of political life throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Elites not only fought over scarce positions and personal grievances, they also fought over issues of economic policy, religion, local autonomy, the line of monarchical succession, and, indeed, the use of monarchical power itself to further their individual interests. Thus English elites confronted the especially divisive conditions of the mid-seventeenth century without widely accepted rules of the game for peacefully managing their conflicts and those of the larger society. Neither the Civil War nor the Restoration of 1660 altered their basic disunity. As Jones (1972, p. x) argues in his authoritative history of the period:

It is my thesis that the events of the 1640s and 1650s had not been decisive or conclusive, that the major constitutional and political issues were still open and undecided in James's time, and that the victory of parliament, representative government and the common law was by no means predetermined or inevitable.

In our view, it is quite plausible that the apparently more benign societal conditions that Goldstone says prevailed in the late 1680s helped facilitate the English elite settlement. On the other hand, it would be

implausible to argue that knowledge of such conditions could enable one to predict the English or any other elite settlement with even a modest degree of accuracy. Indeed, in the favorable conditions that Goldstone suggests prevailed throughout Europe during the period 1650-1750, England was the only country to experience an elite settlement; all other disunified national elites remained disunified. Moreover, during the period 1750-1850, which Goldstone says brought a return to the disruptive demographic, economic, and mobility conditions that characterized Europe in the period 1500-1650 and resulted in widespread state breakdowns, English elites remained unified and political institutions remained stable and representative in nature (as did Dutch elites and institutions before and after the French occupation of 1795-1813). It is also noteworthy that during the same period Swedish elites achieved their settlement, seemingly in the face of many of the conditions that were associated with state breakdowns in most European countries.

In short, the variable of elite structure should be included in Goldstone's model. The model might turn out to be a good predictor of certain kinds of state breakdown when elites are disunified. But we should expect that where unified elites exist, whether of the consensual or ideological kind, they will manage the disruptive societal conditions on which Goldstone focuses in ways that avoid

state breakdowns or other irregular seizures of power.

To conclude, there are strong reasons to believe that a robust conceptualization of basic variations in elite structure must be given a central place in explanations of political conflict and change. Although our threefold distinction between disunified elites and two types of unified elites is widely used, albeit with different labels, it has not been seen as part of a general theory of political change. By focusing on the elite settlement as a fundamental transformation of elite structure from the condition of disunity to that of consensual unity, we hope not only to have directed attention toward a neglected, yet extremely important, political phenomenon, but also to have gone some way toward demonstrating the explanatory potential of the elite paradigm when it is extended in this manner.

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FOOTNOTES

1. [→]To conserve space, we will provide citations for interpretive statements only. Our principal sources for factual statements are: for England, Goldstone (1986), Hill (1972), Horowitz (1977), Jones (1972), Plumb (1967), Schwoerer (1981), Trevelyan (1938); for Sweden, Brown (1895), Elstob (1979), Scott (1977); for Colombia, Dix (1980), Hartlyn (1984), Wilde (1978); for Venezuela, Blank (1973), Burggraaff (1972), Karl (1981), Levine (1978), Martz (1966).

2. Personal communication from Richard Gunther.