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Research Statement

Within comparative politics, my research explores the intersection between inequality and political development, from a political economy perspective. My **job market paper** (*under review, Studies in Comparative International Development*) is entitled “[Income Taxation and State Capacities in Chile: Measuring Institutional Development Using Historical Earthquake Data](#).” The central argument of this paper is that higher levels of sectoral competition increased state-capacities over time. The paper explains how the emergence of industrial elites posed credible threats to the landowning elites, pushing both groups to reach political agreements. I identify one such agreement, the income tax law. Borrowing from the fiscal sociology paradigm, I explain how this institution was important for state-making. Exploiting the exogeneity of earthquake shocks, I leverage a novel hand-collected longitudinal dataset on Chilean earthquake death tolls and a Bayesian multilevel Poisson model to estimate levels of state capacities between 1900 and 2010. My identification strategy contends that the capacity for enforcing and monitoring building codes throughout the territory is a reflection of a state’s overall capacities. The results of these empirical analyses are twofold. Death-tolls decrease, that is, state capacities increase: (1) when levels of sectoral contestation increase, and (2) once the income tax law is implemented. To explore the causal mechanisms at work in more depth, I discuss the Chilean case.

The job market paper is embedded in a **larger research agenda and book manuscript** entitled “*Structural Transformations in Latin America: State Building and Elite Competition 1850-2010*.” The **main argument of the book** is that the economic structural transformation in Latin America—the secular decline of agriculture and substantial expansion of manufacturing—imposed tight constraints on the way politics was run by the incumbent landowning class. This was a major change due to the advantage the landed elites enjoyed since colonial times. Where the expansion of the industrial sector was weak, post-colonial norms persisted due to institutional inertia, perpetuating the advantaged position of the agricultural class. Leveraging economic sectoral outputs dating back to 1900 until 2010, for a sample of Latin American countries, I use panel data **methods** (particularly, Cox-proportional hazard models), time series analyses (VAR models, impulse response functions, and Granger-causality tests), and fine-grained qualitative data to support my argument. **Another major contribution of the book** is in measurement. One of the biggest gaps in the literature is the lack of a measurement of state capacities able to capture variations of *stateness* over time. Using a novel dataset, the book proposes measuring state capacities using earthquake data. The rationale is very intuitive: the capacity to enforce quake-sensitive building codes throughout the territory is a *reflection* of the overall (*in*)capacity of states of solving both logistic and political limitations at the subnational level. *Why does a 7.0 magnitude earthquake flatten Haiti, leaving at least 100,000 deaths, while a 8.8 earthquake in Chile in the same year leaves just 525 deaths?* By exploiting variations on earthquake death-tolls and local population to weight the number of deaths since 1900, I measure state capacities over time. Keeping magnitudes constant, casualty differentials should be attributed to the *lack of state capacities*.

In one of the **sections of the book**, I explain that the structural transformation required both sectors to grow in a *balanced* fashion, *leveling both elites in their relative political, economic, and military capacities*. Leveraging the dual sector model of economic growth, I sketch a theory of political and economic development

that stresses the structural economic dependence of both sectors. The agricultural sector supplied labor and cheap foodstuff—which the industrial sector demanded, promoting balanced economic development of both sectors. The political consequence of balanced economic growth was the mutual political dependence and the need of inter-elite compromises that fostered both economic and political development in the long-run. The paper version of the chapter (currently *under review*) can be downloaded [here](#). In another section of the book, I explain how the emergence of a strong industrial sector accelerated the implementation of fiscal institutions. From a fiscal sociology standpoint, I consider this to be an important critical juncture that set countries in a path of political development. The paper version of the chapter (currently *submitted*) can be downloaded [here](#).

In addition to the book manuscript, I am currently expanding the findings of a **series of papers** related to vote-buying and vote-selling, using both **observational** and an original **experimental** designs.

Vote-buying. Going forward, I have a **working paper** (*under review, Journal of Politics in Latin America*) on vote-buying in Brazil. The paper starts by recognizing that there is not a consensus on whether parties target groups or individuals. In fact, most scholars assume that group-targeting and individual-targeting are interchangeable. The paper argues that parties make use of simultaneous segmented targeting techniques. Groups are preferred by brokers when party machines need to secure higher levels of electoral support, relying on the economies of scale and spillover effects that these groups provide. However, individuals are better targets when they are more *identifiable*, that is when poor individuals are nested in non-poor contexts or vice-versa. The theory also explains why non-poor individuals are targeted. The paper uses observational data and matching methods and a short case study (Brazil) to confirm the assumptions made in the models.

Vote-Selling. With the support of a generous grant, I designed two **experiments** in the U.S. out of a series of experiments to be fielded in Latin America for further comparison. I look at the tipping points where U.S. citizens prefer a monetary incentive rather than keeping their right to choose whom to vote for. My identification strategy takes advantage of a *list experiment* to capture non-biased answers on socially-condemnable/illegal behaviors (like vote-buying). In a separate study, I designed a *conjoint experiment* to identify which of Dahl's democratic dimensions established in his *Polyarchy* should fail to predict individual propensities of vote-selling. Conjoint experiments allow researchers to directly isolate complex multi-dimensional concepts (such as *support for democracy*), and observe which dimension(s) is/are associated to the outcome of interest (vote-selling). Preliminary results show that when the *liberal* component, particularly the *right to associate* fails, individuals are more likely to sell. In this sense, this project is innovative, as it departs from the common strategy of correlating the standard support for democracy question with vote-buying. My identification strategy is comprehensive than regular approaches as it *decomposes* “support for democracy” into several dimensions which are theoretically and substantively relevant (i.e., Dahl's democracy dimensions).

Summary and Future Research In summation, my book manuscript, job market paper and working papers on vote-buying and experiments on vote-selling work toward exploring the effects of inequality on political development from a comparative perspective. I use a widely broad methodological perspective, historical comparisons, time series analyses, and experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies. My goal is to use this toolkit to keep asking “big” questions that are fundamental to our discipline. My future research will seek to study the connection between elite competition and democratic regimes, exploring the connection between state building and democratic institutions (and its relationship with vertical accountability), and the role of the middle class on bureaucratic development. Particularly, I am interested in whether dictatorships have different dynamics of state-building relative to democracies. Please check my [teaching portfolio](#) and see how my **research and teaching interests match**.

More information, [syllabi](#), my [research](#), [teaching](#) and [diversity](#) statements, as well as other [papers](#) are available on my website: www.HectorBahamonde.com. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you.