

The ‘Second Wave’ of Political Time Scholarship. And, Beyond!

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Abstract

This essay is structured around a review of the ‘second wave’ of scholarship extending Stephen Skowronek’s presidentially centered political time theory. It introduces this theory, which is arguably the most prominent account of American long cycles being studied by Political Scientists today. Then it highlights how acolytes are making progress applying political time theory in the Comparative Politics, Public Law, and Americanist / Presidency fields. Finally, the essay turns to bring original thought to questions of interest to all students of historical cycles. Namely, it considers the nature of political time and the drivers that cause the cycle to turn.

Keywords: Political Time; Presidency; Cycle; Comparative Politics; Judicial Politics.

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“Imitation,” as Oscar Wilde reminds, “is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay greatness.” In Political Science, I believe we prefer to call the practice (of imitation) extension and refinement of original premises. No matter. Whatever descriptor chosen, we can be certain that the imitation, extension, and refinement, of Stephen Skowronek’s cyclical “political time” theory has neither hurt careers like my own—nor Steve’s citation count!

Indeed, this essay is centered around a review of what is being called the ‘second wave’ of political time scholarship. To enable the review, political time theory is quickly laid out and summarized up front. Then, three unique literatures are studied in the middle. Herein, it is demonstrated that there are political time acolytes in the Comparative Politics, Public Law, and Americanist/Presidency fields. Finally, toward the end, the essay turns to bring further attention to two of the biggest issues remaining within political time theory. Herein, it first considers the nature of the political regime at the heart of the cycle (which periodically weakens and is replaced). And, second, it examines those presidential actions and other systemic drivers that cause the political time cycle to turn. Out of these examinations emerges a party system approach to the study of the political time cycle, which is more attentive to the recurrent problem of losing governing legitimacy.

This analysis is conducted for three reasons. First, to demonstrate just how influential Skowronek’s book, *The Politics that Presidents Make (PPM)*,¹ has become across three fields of study. In doing so, the essay highlights how scholars are making progress applying political time theory to very different spheres of interest. Second, to begin to answer the call of this special edition by investigating what has arguably become the most prominent account of an American ‘long cycle’ being studied by Political Scientists today. Third, to take everything learned—through the most detailed analysis of the political time literature conducted to date—and provide original thought to questions of interest to all students of historical cycles.

1 Political Time

As many already know, the concept of cyclically occurring “political time” guides Stephen Skowronek’s path-breaking study of presidential leadership in *PPM*. The main insight underpinning this work is that presidential agency is constrained and empowered by more than just the unique circumstances any chief executive faces at any time. More fundamentally, all presidents also face a “recurrent” leadership challenge deriving from their relationship to, what Skowronek calls, the political regime.

While the political regime remains a somewhat nebulous concept—requiring further attention in this essay—there is no doubt as to its importance. Presidents can find themselves either “affiliated” with or “opposed” (in partisan orientation) to the prevailing political regime. Furthermore, each president finds that the political regime’s distinctive set of institutional arrangements and approaches to policy questions are either efficacious, strong, and thus “resilient” to repudiation and displacement. Or, the political regime is enervated, weakened, and “vulnerable” to being reconstructed.²

Presidents can therefore be classified, studied, and compared across huge swaths of time by reference to where they fall within the four recurring contexts within political time. Each context challenges presidents differently, yet also requires similarly situated presidents to practice the same type of politics no matter the century they served in office. Skowronek calls the four types of politics practiced: reconstruction, articulation, preemption, and disjunction. Each leadership challenge aligns with a particular cell in his famous two by two typology (see Figure 1).

A president winning office while in opposition to a vulnerable regime inherits the most fortuitous leadership context in the political time cycle. At this juncture, presidents are provided the rare opportunity to lead an attempt to alter the status quo and reconstruct the political regime as best they can. Presidents who successfully reconstruct, like Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, F.D. Roosevelt, and Reagan, effectively begin a new era or political regime.

1. Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

2. *Ibid.*, 36.

	Resilient	Vulnerable
Opposed	<p><u>Preemptive</u> (ex: Cleveland, Wilson, Ike, Clinton)</p>	<p><u>Reconstructive</u> (ex: Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, FDR, Reagan)</p>
Affiliated	<p><u>Articulation</u> (ex: Madison, Polk, Harding, Truman)</p>	<p><u>Disjunction</u> (ex: Adams, JQ Adams, Pierce, Hoover, Carter)</p>

Figure 1. Skowronek’s Political Time Typology

Reconstructive presidents are historically followed, but not always in back-to-back sequence, by several articulating presidents. These being presidents affiliated with a resilient regime. This context challenges a president to not only complete unfinished business but to also innovate from within established orthodoxies when facing new circumstances. These things are difficult to accomplish, Skowronek explains to us, because they put the articulating president at cross-purposes. Simply put, like all presidents, articulators find it hard to synchronize the natural “order shattering” proclivities of presidential leadership with the need to affirm the pre-existing order they are affiliated with. As a result, articulating presidents never seem to live up to the expectations set by their regime establishing predecessors. The shoes are just too big (and hard) to fill.

Being pulled in two directions can also lead the articulating president into the trap of political apostasy. This happens when they stray too far from previously established commitments in seeking to problem solve, like happened most recently to George H.W. Bush when he famously recanted on his promise never to raise taxes. Despite these pitfalls, articulating presidents—like Monroe, Polk, and Truman—can still be very effective leaders, when they exploit their affiliation with the dominant majority and its program.

Also usually appearing during the resilient phase of the political time cycle are one or more preemptive presidents. These presidents are members of the era’s opposition party and often win office after an economic downturn or contentious war when the nation is fatigued with its leaders—but not yet ready for a new status quo. Preemptive presidents must therefore contend, within the American system of separated powers, against a political regime strong enough to protect itself from blunt attempts at displacement. As a result, preemptive context challenges an opposition president to push against, but work within, previously established boundaries.

And, while Skowronek spends almost no time within *PPM*’s case study sections examining preemptive presidents, we know from his theory section and other writings that he views this category of actors as the “wildcards” of history. If the preemptive president seizes the opportunity to occupy the middle ground of American politics, through triangulation and issue co-option, they can become enormously popular and highly successful. Just like Eisenhower was and, later, Bill Clinton—after he altered his course following a poor start in office. If, however, the preemptive president goes too far in challenging the central tenants of the political regime they risk being curbed by the establishment. Sometimes this occurs via impeachment. Such is the Janus-faced nature of the leadership challenge in this tricky context.

A bit later, through mechanisms that are poorly defined in *PPM* and thus meriting and receiving further exploration—we near the end of the political time cycle. This is when the political regime has

become enervated and open to repudiation, but an affiliate of the vulnerable regime still holds office. These are the disjunctive presidents of history—men like J. Adams, J.Q. Adams, Pierce, Hoover and Carter who inherit a seemingly no-win leadership situation.

The disjunctive president is tethered by affiliation to a vulnerable political regime that they must defend even though the regime has increasingly become seen as ineffective (and, perhaps, even illegitimate). Within this context a president cannot continue to practice orthodox innovation. The status quo has now become a large part of the problem. Yet, neither can the disjunctive president seek to recalibrate regime commitments, or they risk tearing apart their increasingly fractious coalition. Add to this context an emboldened opposition, long out of power and smelling blood in the water, and you have a near perfect storm for repudiation of the political regime.

The disjunctive presidency thus ends one turn of the political time cycle. Yet, in doing so, it also sets the stage for another to begin. As we know, this rebirth has historically come at the hand of the next reconstructive president. Spring follows winter, after all.

Yet, Skowronek does not end *PPM* with simple reassurances that all is well with the political time cycle. Indeed, he warns that the invent of the modern welfare state may make the practice of reconstructive leadership considerably more difficult going forward. Indeed, he notes that the “thickening” of the institutional milieu within which presidents act may cause the political time cycle to wane altogether.

2 Political Time Theory Applied and Extended Within Three Literatures

2.1 Comparative Politics

How many readers knew that the Indonesian Presidency has been examined via the political time lens Skowronek establishes in *PPM*?³ Were you aware that there are two peer reviewed applications of his theory to the Philippines case?⁴ Even if everyone has not discovered this scholarship yet, it really should no longer surprise that work like this is out there.

PPM is increasingly influential in the Comparative Politics field. Over the last decade, starting with scholars like Paul 't Hart, political time theory has been extended to analysis of multiple cases outside the United States.⁵ Indeed, in addition to the above references, we now have political time framed studies of Presidential and / or Prime Ministerial leadership in Australia,⁶ Brazil,⁷ Canada,⁸ Hungary,⁹ and the United Kingdom.¹⁰ This scholarship applies Skowronek's famous two by two typology to very

3. Dirk Tomsa, “Regime Resilience and Presidential Politics in Indonesia,” *Contemporary Politics*, 24(2018): 266–285.
4. Julio C. Teehankee, “Weak State, Strong Presidents: Situating the Duterte Presidency in Philippine Political Time,” *Journal of Developing Societies*, 32(2016): 293–321; Mark R. Thompson, “The Politics Philippine Presidents Make: Presidential-Style, Patronage Based, or Regime Relational?,” *Critical Asian Studies*, 46(2014): 433–460.
5. Paul 't Hart, “Reading the Signs of the Times: Regime Dynamics and Leadership Possibilities,” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 19(2011): 419–439.
6. Matthew Laing and Brandan McCaffrie, “The Politics Prime Ministers Make: Political Time and Executive Leadership in Westminster Systems,” in *Understanding Prime-Ministerial Performance: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Paul Strangio, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 79–101; Brandan McCaffrie, “A Contextual Framework for Accessing Reconstructive Prime Ministerial Success,” *Policy Studies*, 34(2013): 618–637.
7. Ted Goertzel, “Presidential Leadership and Regime Change in Brazil with Comparisons to the United States and Spanish America,” in *The Drama of Brazilian Politics: From Dom João to Marina Silva*, eds. Ted Goertzel and Paulo Roberto de Almeida (Kindle Book: 2014).
8. Stephen Azzi, “Political Time in a Westminster Democracy: The Canadian Case,” *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 47(2017): 19–34; Jorg Broschek, “Prime Ministerial Leadership in Political Time: Stephen Skowronek's Framework in Canadian Context,” *Canadian Political Science Review*, 12(2018): 1–23.
9. Gábor Illés, András Körösenyi and Rudolf Metz, “Broadening the Limits of Reconstructive Leadership: Constructivist Aspects of Viktor Orbán's Regime-Building Politics,” *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 20(2018): 790–808; András, Körösenyi, Gábor Illés, and Attila Gyulai, *The Orbán Regime: Plebiscitary Leader Democracy in the Making* (London: Routledge, 2020).
10. Brandan McCaffrie, “Understanding the Success of Presidents and Prime Ministers: The Role of Opposition Parties,” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 47(2012): 257–271; Wesely Widmaier, “The Power of Economic Ideas—Through, Over

new ground. As a result of the second wave of political time scholarship going global, *PPM* has a whole new set of eyes upon it these days!

One of the best examples of the application of political time theory within the Comparative Politics realm is Matthew Laing and Brendan McCaffrie's, "The Politics Prime Ministers Make: Political Time and Executive Leadership in Westminster Systems."¹¹ This innovative work utilizes Skowronek's theory to analyze the leadership of three consecutive Australian Prime Ministers—Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, and Paul Keating. In doing this, the authors not only confront the propriety of "transplanting" political time theory to cases outside the United States, but they also demonstrate some of the advantages and limitations of doing so.

Laing and McCaffrie smartly note that while Skowronek "relies on the United States constitution and the specific institution of the American presidency" to derive the political time cycle, his focus on the challenges that are created by the interaction of regime affiliation and regime strength may be widely applicable.¹² They therefore hypothesize that, outside America, Skowronek's theory is most likely to work in Westminster nations (like their native Australia) with histories of strong executive leadership and two major parties. According to these authors, countries with histories of multi-party coalition governments, consensus politics, and the propensity to combine progressive and conservative forces within a single executive are less likely to cycle through the phases of political time.

Armed with these expanded thoughts on the institutional factors that help constitute a political regime (and drive political time), Laing and McCaffrie move forward. Their mission: to demonstrate that, while the four types of leadership may be purer in the American context, they will also be evinced, with some intra-case variation, in Australian politics.

Ultimately, their efforts are mostly successful. The Australian based authors quickly show that Fraser's leadership was largely disjunctive, Hawke's reconstructive, and Keating's articulative. Yet, their extension into new territory is only partially effective in further refining Skowronek's theory. This is because Laing and McCaffrie also attempt to show that a chief executive's contextual challenge can shift during a term in office (as Skowronek hints at in *PPM*). While I fully agree with the possibility, their analysis likely goes one case too far in trying to prove the point.

Laing and McCaffrie do succeed in showing that Fraser is best seen as starting off as an articulating Prime Minister before his narrow pursuits made his regime weaken and became vulnerable. This pushed his government into disjunction, something that may also happen in the American case. They also convincingly portray Hawke as drifting from reconstruction into articulation as he consolidated his gains after succeeding in establishing a new political regime. This might be true of all reconstructors. All is thus well so far.

However, Laing and McCaffrie fail to make their case when they suggest that Prime Minister Keating's leadership challenge shifted between articulation and pre-emption.¹³ This possibility finds no support in Skowronek's political time theory, as it is based in the requirement that a clear regime affiliate shifts to become a member of the opposition party. This did not happen in Keating's case and is also unlikely to occur within a Westminster system. It is more probable that Keating simply committed political apostasy—in abandoning Hawke's well-established cultural commitments—just as 'heir apparent' articulators (those affiliates who directly follow a reconstructive president) tend to do in the American case.

Despite this problem, Laing and McCaffrie's work demonstrates that application of political time theory to the comparative realm can be extremely fruitful. This kind of work is most likely to succeed when it confronts the transportability issue and is cautious in filling theoretical gaps through extension to new cases. Indeed, because Skowronek's theory is based in a somewhat under-specified conception

and In—Political Time: the Construction, Conversion and Crisis of the Neoliberal Order in the US and UK," *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(2016): 338–356; Chris Byrne, Nick Randall, and Kevin Theakston, "Evaluating British Prime Ministerial Performance: David Cameron's Premiership in Political Time," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19(2017): 202–220; Chris Byrne, Nick Randall, and Kevin Theakston, "Theresa May's Disjunctive Premiership: Choice and Constraint in Political Time," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 23(2021): 699–716.

11. Laing and McCaffrie, "The Politics Prime Ministers Make."

12. *Ibid.*, 83.

13. *Ibid.*, 95.

of the political regime, comparative scholars cannot simply assume the theory transports well. The more comparativists can do to help political time theory nail down the question of what the political regime is and demonstrate that cycle time indeed flows outside the United States, the better the entire literature will become.

2.2 Public Law

If the comparative turn in political time scholarship represents the most recent deployment of Skowronek's theory to new ground, then Public Law's application has been going on the longest. Without attempting to unravel any causative chains,¹⁴ I note that luminaries such as Mark Graber;¹⁵ Howard Gillman;¹⁶ Mark Tushnet,¹⁷ and Michael Klarman¹⁸ have focused—like Skowronek has—on the central importance of political affiliation within their studies of Courts. Indeed, these historically savvy scholars have sometimes chosen to refer to their movement as employing a “regime approach.”¹⁹ This very Skowronek-ian sounding appellation certainly suggests that political time theory has impacted the sub-field.

Indeed, some Public Law scholars have unambiguously utilized political time theory in their scholarship. This group is clearly part of the second wave of political time scholarship and includes works like: Kevin McMahon,²⁰ Keith Whittington;²¹ McMahon and Keck.²² These scholars have not only directly explored the links that exist between the political time cycle and judicial behavior, but they have also found that the Supreme Court very often acts as a reliable regime affiliate. Indeed, the Court is oft found interposing its “friendly hand” in support of the presidential wing of the political regime.²³

One of the most exciting ways in which the Public Law sub-field has expanded and quietly begun refining Skowronek's political time theory is found in the scholarship of Dave Bridge. His two articles, “The Supreme Court, Factions, and the Counter-Majoritarian Difficulty” and “Congressional Attacks on the Supreme Court: A Mechanism to Maintain, Build, and Consolidate” both explore the role that the Supreme Court played in (unintentionally) weakening the Democratic political regime during the

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14. This first group of scholars represents the tip of the proverbial “regime approach” iceberg in the Public Law literature. This approach predates Skowronek and locates its roots in Dahl's famous 1957 article. Not all (or even perhaps most) scholars working within the Public Law's regime approach concern themselves with political time's cycle of regime weakening. They do, however, all seem to share an interest in the importance of regime affiliation. There is, however, a second batch of regime approach scholarship that clearly does apply Skowronek's theory to issues within Public Law. This group is of main interest in this essay. See: Robert A. Dahl, “Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policy-Maker,” *Journal of Public Law*, 6(1957): 279.
 15. Mark Graber, “The Nonmajoritarian Difficulty: Legislative Deference to the Judiciary,” *Studies in American Political Development*, 7(1993): 35–73.
 16. Howard Gillman, “How Political Parties Can Use the Courts to Advance their Agendas: Federal Courts in the United States, 1875–1891,” *American Political Science Review*, 6(2002): 511–524.
 17. Mark Tushnet, *The New Constitutional Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
 18. Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Michael J. Klarman, *Brown v Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2007).
 19. Cornell W. Clayton and David May, “A Political Regimes Approach to the Analysis of Legal Decisions,” *Polity* 32(1999): 233–52.
 20. Kevin J. McMahon, “Constitutional Vision and Supreme Court Decisions: Reconsidering Roosevelt on Race,” *Studies in American Political Development*, 14(2000): 20–50; Kevin J. McMahon, “Presidents, Political Regimes, and Contentious Supreme Court Nominations: A Historical Institutional Model,” *Law & Social Inquiry*, 32(2007): 919–954.
 21. Keith E. Whittington, “Presidential Challenges to Judicial Supremacy and the Politics of Constitutional Meaning,” *Polity*, 33(2001): 365–395.
 22. [Thomas M. Keck and Kevin J. McMahon, “Why Roe Still Stands: Abortion Law, the Supreme Court, and the Republican Regime,” *Studies in Law, Politics and Society* 70(2016): 33–83.
 23. Keith E. Whittington, “‘Interpose Your Friendly Hand’: Political Supports for the Exercise of Judicial Review by the United States Supreme Court,” *American Political Science Review*, 99(2005): 583–596; Keith E. Whittington, *Political Foundations of Judicial Supremacy: The Presidency, the Supreme Court, and Constitutional Leadership in U.S. History* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007).

late New Deal era.²⁴ Bridge's scholarship shines further light on what drives the political time cycle and is worthy of greater consideration than it has been given.

Dr. Bridge starts by wisely recommending that Public Law scholars apply "political party assumptions" to regime theory.²⁵ He lists these assumptions as:

- #1 Majority Coalitions are Factional;
- #2 Majority Coalitions have Lead and Secondary Factions; and
- #3 Majority Coalitions have Primary (uniting) goals/preferences and Secondary (divisive) goals/preferences.

He then hypothesizes that it is always possible for regime affiliates (like the Supreme Court) to act in ways that satisfy the lead faction but dissatisfy secondary factions. More specifically, Bridge predicts that when the Court acts like this (i.e. factionally), several things will happen—one of which is the Congress will "attack" them.

Bridge explores these attacks against the Court—which, in his study, are Congressional attempts to "curb" judicial behaviors via proposed constitutional amendments—in his second article.²⁶ Herein, he demonstrates that the Supreme Court accidentally destabilized the New Deal majority coalition, in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. They did this by ruling in ways that pleased the leading faction of the Democratic party while upsetting secondary coalitional members. Namely, the court made liberals happy by ruling on hot-button issues relating to race, communist rights, school prayer, (school) busing and, most famously, abortion—all the while alienating Catholics and white southerners through these decisions.

Minority party Republicans eventually realized that the Supreme Court was undermining Democratic coalitional cohesion. And soon, Richard Nixon's pre-emptive administration was busy appealing to disaffected groups within Democratic ranks.²⁷ His message was clear—defect from the New Deal coalition, join the so-called "silent majority," and work with your new friends to stop the liberal Court.

Bridge's work not only demonstrates that Skowronek's political time theory can be applied, even if sometimes indirectly, within the Public Law sub-field to great effect. His articles also show how a scholar focusing on Court behavior can extend a cyclical theory of American politics via application of insights drawn from the political parties' literature. In offering a partial synthesis, his writings have given political time scholars hints about the nature of the regime as well as important new insight into the mysterious dynamics that propel the political time cycle.

2.3 American Politics—Presidential Studies

Of all the sub-fields, it is easiest to see that Skowronek's political time theory has inspired those who study American politics. More specifically, his scholarship has generated a surging tide of research in presidency studies. As this essay will demonstrate, dozens of peer reviewed articles and books can be considered part of the second wave Americanist political time literature.

Initially, Skowronek's scholarship generated many reflective-type essays²⁸ and discussions centered upon general topics. These included: the agency issue/determinism question within the political

24. Dave Bridge, "The Supreme Court, Factions, and the Counter-Majoritarian Difficulty," *Polity*, 47(2015): 420–460; Dave Bridge and Curt Nichols, "Congressional Attacks on the Supreme Court: A Mechanism to Maintain, Build, and Consolidate," *Law & Social Inquiry*, 41(2016): 100–125.

25. Bridge, "The Supreme Court," 430.

26. Bridge and Nichols. "Congressional Attacks on the Supreme Court."

27. Dave Bridge, "How the Republican Party Used Supreme Court Attacks to Pursue Catholic Voters," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 34(2016): 79–106; Dave Bridge, "Supreme Court Attacks as a Mechanism for Coalition Building: How the Republican Party Used Court-Curbing Proposals to Pursue Southern Voters," *Journal of Political Science*, 44(2016): 59–86.

28. Sidney Milkis, "What Politics Do Presidents Make?," *Polity*, 37(1995): 485–496; Andrew J. Polsky, "The 1996 Elections and the Logic of Regime Politics," *Polity*, 30(1997): 153–166; Douglas J. Hoekstra, "The Politics of Politics: Skowronek and Presidential Research," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 29(1999): 657–671.

time cycle,²⁹ the effect of political time on presidential greatness,³⁰ presidential rhetoric in political time,³¹ and the importance of ideas within political regime formation.³²

This broadly focused work gradually gave way—with a few notable exceptions³³—to more specifically concentrated research. Indeed, most second wave political time scholarship can now be found working within one presidential leadership context or another. This sort of research might be best described as extended political time theory via filling gaps and more deeply probing original premises.

2.4 The Politics of Pre-emption

The largest gap that needed filling after the release of *PPM* was, of course, examination of pre-emptive presidents. This quadrant of the typology, filled by presidents opposed to a resilient regime, was not addressed via case study in Skowronek's seminal book. This left the arch-type begging for additional coverage. And, as nature does seem to genuinely abhor a vacuum, coverage is what the pre-emptive presidency soon got.

David Crockett—the most prolific of all second wave political time scholars—was quickly on the case. Crockett has dedicated two books,³⁴ including the excellent *The Opposition Presidency: Leadership and the Constraints of History*, and multiple articles to filling in the blank pre-emptive spot on the political time map.³⁵

Others have assisted. Eisenhower's mastery of the pre-emptive leadership challenge was further explored by Harris and,³⁶ then, Polsky.³⁷ Meanwhile, cases of mixed success—ie: Nixon, Clinton, and/or Obama—have been variously probed by Beland and Waddan,³⁸ Crockett,³⁹ Stueudeman,⁴⁰ and Skowronek himself.⁴¹ Hickey and Bledsoe have additionally found that pre-emptive presidents

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29. Peri E. Arnold, "Determinism and Contingency in Skowronek's Political Time," *Polity*, 37(1995): 497–508; Robert C. Lieberman, "Political Time and Policy Coalitions: Structure and Agency in Presidential Power," in *Presidential Power: Forging the Presidency for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Robert Y. Shapiro et al. (New York: Columbia University Press: 2000), 276–310.
30. Marc K. Landy and Sidney M. Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000). See also: Curt Nichols, "The Presidential Rankings Game: Critical Review and Some New Discoveries," *Presidential Quarterly Studies*, 42(2012): 275–299; Brian Newman and Adrian Davis, "Polls and Elections: Character and Political Time as Sources of Presidential Greatness," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 46(2016): 411–433.
31. Mary E. Stuckey, "Presidential Rhetoric in Political Time," in *The Theory and Practice of Political Communication Research*, ed. Mary E. Stuckey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 122–141.
32. Andrew J. Polsky, "Why Regimes? Ideas, Incentives, and Policies in American Political Orders," *Polity*, 29(1997): 625–640.
33. Curt Nichols, "The Presidency and the Political Order: In Context," *Polity*, 43(2011): 513–531; Andrew J. Polsky, "Partisan Regimes in American Politics," *Polity*, 44(2012): 51–80; Jon Johansson, *U.S. Leadership in Political Time and Space: Pathfinders, Patriots, and Existential Heroes* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2014).
34. David A. Crockett, *The Opposition Presidency: Leadership and the Constraints of History* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); David A. Crockett, *Running Against the Grain: How Opposition Presidents Win the White House* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).
35. David A. Crockett, "The President as Opposition Leader," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 30(2000): 245–274; David A. Crockett, "In the Shadow of Henry Clay: How to Choose a Successful Opposition Presidential Candidate," *Congress and the Presidency*, 33(2006): 47–64; David A. Crockett, "Candidate Obama and the Dilemmas of Political Time," *The Forum*, 9(2011): 1–22.
36. Douglas B. Harris, "Dwight Eisenhower and the New Deal: The Politics of Preemption," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 27(1997): 333–342.
37. Andrew J. Polsky, "Shifting Currents: Dwight Eisenhower and the Dynamic of Presidential Opportunity Structure," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 45(2015): 91–109.
38. Daniel Beland and Alex Waddan, "The Social Policies Presidents Make: Pre-emptive Leadership Under Nixon and Clinton," *Political Studies*, 54(2006): 65–83.
39. Crockett, "Candidate Obama and the Dilemmas of Political Time."
40. Michael J. Stueudeman, "Entelechy and Irony in Political Time: The Preemptive Rhetoric of Nixon and Obama," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 16(2013): 59–96.
41. Stephen Skowronek, "Is Transformational Leadership Still Possible?: Barack Obama in a Historical Perspective," in *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*. 2nd ed. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 167–194.

are more likely to engage in small-scale, minor, international conflicts.⁴² And, finally, Laing has further considered the possibility that the waning of political time might portend a politics of, what Skowronek calls, “permanent pre-emption.”⁴³

2.5 The Politics of Reconstruction

The reconstructive presidency has also been the focus of a considerable body of work. Herein, scholars have examined presidential action within the great opportunity that opponents of an old and vulnerable political regime enjoy.⁴⁴ Every reconstructive president in the pantheon has attracted further attention. Thomas Jefferson’s reconstruction has been further examined by Alder and Keller;⁴⁵ Andrew Jackson’s by Magliocca;⁴⁶ Abraham Lincoln’s by Polsky;⁴⁷ Franklin Roosevelt’s by McMahon⁴⁸ and Orren and Skowronek;⁴⁹ and—finally—Ronald Reagan’s by Cook and Polsky,⁵⁰ Nichols,⁵¹ and Scully.⁵²

As leadership opportunities are maximal within the reconstructive critical juncture, this quadrant of the political time typology has also seen a fair share of research evaluating the possibility of admitting additional cases. Early in Barack Obama’s administration, Skowronek dedicated a chapter in his second book—*Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*—in consideration of whether the 44th president was likely to reconstruct.⁵³ Similarly, Thomas Keck recently explored whether Donald Trump was more likely to be a reconstructive or disjunctive president.⁵⁴ Finally, Curt Nichols and Adam Myers have uniquely suggested the possibility of there being a so-called “System of 1896” reconstruction.⁵⁵ This idea casts William McKinley and, possibly, Theodore Roosevelt as a unique—typology bending—sub-type of reconstructors. Namely, those who follow in the wake of a failed reconstruction (ie: Grover Cleveland’s abysmal second, non-consecutive, term in office).

Nichols and Myers’ article is also noteworthy—and certainly more famous—for suggesting that reconstructive presidents must complete three tasks to succeed. Indeed, their parsing of the recon-

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42. Patrick T. Hickey and Travis B. Bledsoe, “Discretionary Military Action in Political Time,” *Congress and the Presidency*, 47(2020): 277–300.
 43. Matthew Laing, “Toward a Pragmatic Presidency? Exploring the Waning of Political Time,” *Polity*, 44(2012): 234–259.
 44. Curt Nichols, “Modern Reconstructive Presidential Leadership: Reordering Institutions in a Constrained Environment,” *The Forum: A Journal of Applied Politics in Contemporary Society*, 12(2014): 281–304; Zachary Cook, “Measuring Partisan Regimes: Elites Tell us Who their Reconstructives Are,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 47(2017): 695–719.
 45. William D. Alder and Jonathan Keller, “A Federal Army, Not a Federalist One: Regime Building in the Jeffersonian Era,” *Journal of Policy History*, 26(2014): 167–187.
 46. Gerard N. Magliocca, *Andrew Jackson and the Constitution: The Rise and Fall of Generational Regimes* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007).
 47. Andrew J. Polsky, “Mr. Lincoln’s Army” Revisited: Partisanship, Institutional Position, and Union Army Command, 1861–1865,” *Studies in American Political Development*, 16(2002): 176–207.
 48. McMahon, “Constitutional Vision and Supreme Court Decisions.”
 49. Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, “Regimes and Regime Building in American Government: A Review of the Literature on the 1940s,” *Political Science Quarterly* 113(1998): 689–702.
 50. Daniel M. Cook and Andrew J. Polsky, “Political Time Reconsidered: Unbuilding and Rebuilding the State Under the Reagan Administration,” *American Politics Research*, 33(2005): 577–605.
 51. Curt Nichols, “Reagan Reorders the Political Regime: A Historical-Institutional Approach to Analysis of Change,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 45(2015): 703–726.
 52. Mark A. Scully, “Principled Rhetoric as Coalition Management: Speech in the Reconstructive Presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan,” *Polity*, 50(2018): 129–157.
 53. Skowronek, “Is Transformational Leadership Still Possible?”
 54. Thomas M. Keck, “Will President Trump Break Political Time? Or, Is President Trump More Like Viktor Orbán or Franklin Pierce?,” *Constitutional Studies*, 4(2019): 131–154.
 55. Curt Nichols and Adam S. Myers, “Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership: Presidential Responses to Enervated Political Regimes,” *American Politics Research*, 38(2010): 806–841. See also: David A. Crockett, “The Historical Presidency: The Road Not Taken: Warren G. Harding and the Dilemmas of Regime Restoration,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 29(2019): 417–431.

structive challenge into more easily studied tasks has influenced much of the second wave scholarship already discussed. Political time scholarship is often now framed (implicitly and explicitly) in terms of task completion. For example, reconstructive presidents are tasked to complete the following:⁵⁶

- #1 Shift the main axis of partisan cleavage via creation of a new governing philosophy,
- #2 Assemble a new majority partisan coalition;
- #3 Institutionalize a new political regime.

2.6 The Politics of Disjunction

Moving on in the literature, we come to the sparse scholarship extending thought on the disjunctive presidency. Before Donald Trump's administration was analyzed for fit within this arch-type,⁵⁷ only one article had ever been published further exploring this most difficult leadership context. In this slightly earlier piece, Laing and McCaffrie demonstrate their sympathy towards disjunctive presidents by trying to find a silver lining for those unfortunate (affiliated) souls who find themselves tethered to a weakened political regime.⁵⁸

2.7 The Politics of Articulation

Last, but not least, is the scholarship providing further insight into the politics of articulation. Given the sheer number of presidents who are affiliated to a resilient regime (ie: the modal category in history), one is surprised by the relative lack of attention this leadership context has been given in the second wave of the literature. This dearth of coverage is even more perplexing given the varied degree of success that presidents have had in navigating the challenge. For every highly successful articulator, like Polk or Truman, there is a perceived failure—like Harding.

There are also quite a few mediocrities found within the articulative quadrant. And, somewhat naturally, this is where most scholarly attention has been focused. Specifically, there have been several reflective pieces plumbing the depths of George W. Bush's poorly received attempts at "orthodox innovation."⁵⁹ Further attention has also been given to the middling group of "heir apparent" presidents.⁶⁰ This sub-category of articulators contains favorite son-type presidents—men like Madison, Van Buren, and H.G. Bush—who are the hand-picked (not-so-successful) successors of reconstructive presidents.

While not much more has been written about presidents in this quadrant, I ultimately concur with David Crockett who believes "there is more to be gained in studying the nuances of the 'politics of articulation' than previously understood." And, so, let us finish this section by briefly turning to Crockett's most recent extension of Skowronek. Indeed, let us highlight his article, "The Road Not Taken: Warren G. Harding and the Dilemmas of Regime Restoration."⁶¹

56. Curt Nichols and Adam S. Myers. "Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership," 815–817.

57. Jordan T. Cash and Dave Bridge, "Donald Trump and Institutional Change Strategies," *Laws*, 7(2018); Thomas M. Keck, "George W. Bush in Political Time: The Janus Presidency," *Law & Social Inquiry*, 34(2009): 473–493; Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*. 3rd (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2020), 195–220.

58. Matthew Laing and Brandan McCaffrie, "The Impossible Leadership Situation? Analyzing Success for Disjunctive Presidents," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 47(2017): 255–276.

59. Stephen Skowronek. *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*. 1st ed. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008). Gerard M. Magliocca, "George W. Bush in Political Time: The Janus Presidency," *Law & Social Inquiry*, 34(2009): 473–493; Robert F. Durant, Edmund C. Stazyk and William G. Resh, "Faithful Infidelity: 'Political Time,' George W. Bush, and the Paradox of 'Big Government Conservatism,'" *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 30(2010): 379–403.

60. Donald A. Zinman, "Passing the Torch Through Political Time: Heir Apparent Presidents and the Governing Party," *White House Studies*, 9(2009): 51–66; Donald A. Zinman, "The Heir Apparent Presidency of James Madison," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 41(2011): 712–26; Donald A. Zinman, *The Heir Apparent Presidency* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

61. David A. Crockett, "The Historical Presidency: The Road Not Taken," 417.

This short piece provides another example of the best kind of second wave political time scholarship. Namely, it is a work that enriches theoretically by touching—even if tangentially—upon the dynamics that drive the political time cycle.

Crockett's central awareness is simple, but insightful. Not all articulative context is the same. Some presidential articulators come to power directly after another affiliate. Other articulators follow immediately after an opposition-party president. This makes them a special sub-type—the “restoration presidents”—who are challenged to restore a political regime's interrupted agenda.⁶² This task is complex because they must wrestle with the question of what exactly is to be restored—after an interregnum wherein the partisan regime has experienced the practice of pre-emptive politics.

As Crockett demonstrates, through a case study of Warren Harding, restoration presidents have multiple options. They could seek to restore by building off the accomplishments of the most recent articulator—like President William Howard Taft, in Harding's case. Alternately, they could seek to restore in the image of the political regime's founder—aka: William McKinley. Harding also had the third option of seeking to restore by emulating the flashy presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, who Crockett convincingly shows moved from classic articulator to anti-regime insurgent across time.

Ultimately, Harding's chose 'door number two' and sought to affect a 'stand-pat' McKinley-esque restoration. While we may wish that Taft's reform minded but constitutionally grounded vision of governance was, instead, pursued—Harding's choice really does not surprise. After all, restoration presidents still practice the politics of articulation, which seeks to advance the vision of the regime's patron saint/founding reconstructive president. And, in doing so, Harding's restoration ended up lampooning McKinley's leadership.

Whereas McKinley was an effective party leader and manager of Congress—being neither afraid to take a hands-on (if behind the scenes) approach to attain policy goals nor afraid to be flexible in adjusting governance to a changing society—Harding was decidedly pre-progressive in perspective and action. His restoration politics effectively turned the clock back on even McKinley's own tariff reform efforts and reversed the political regime founder's prior support for increased regulation of business excess. In sum, in the opinion of this author, Harding offered something akin to reactionary innovation.

According to Crockett, the key to understanding why Harding chose this path is largely found in an extension of political time theory. As a restoration president, Harding had to innovate within terms altered by the actions of the insurgents (T. Roosevelt) and preemptors (Woodrow Wilson) that came right before him. Harding could not elect to be a reform conservative, like Taft, because Warren's restoration task seemed (to him) to require repudiation of all reformist alternatives.

When all is said and done, Crockett's article accomplishes what the best political time scholarship often does in showing us one more way in which the political time cycle is self-driving. Namely, we witness how the practice of preemptive politics can alter and narrow the alternatives available to the restoration president. This can tempt a restoration articulator, like Harding, to turn down a blind alley—which ultimately weakens the political regime.

Perhaps we shall soon know much more about how the practice of restoration politics impacts the political time cycle. Crockett aims to have a book on the subject completed within a year.

3 Two Theoretical Issues Further Considered

With the review of the second wave of political time literature complete, let's segue and further consider two important issues. Namely, let me close this essay by reflecting and offering some original thought on the nature of the political regime and the associated question of what drives the political time cycle. *PPM* is less than clear on these matters and scholars have just begun to take them head on.

62. David A. Crockett, “The Historical Presidency the Perils of Restoration Politics: Nineteenth-Century Antecedents,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 42(2012): 881–902.

3.1 What is the Nature of the Political Regime?

There has long been some dissatisfaction with the indeterminacy of Skowronek's idea that the regime consists of "previously established commitments of ideology and interest." While it is an exaggeration to suggest that this is all *PPM* has to say on the subject, greater conceptual clarity is certainly needed. As we know, scholars of Comparative Politics are now arguing that not only do political regimes exist in Westminster-type systems but these regimes may survive opposition control of government in the context of there being no separation of powers. So, what are these things, these political regimes?

Two lines of thought have been proffered. The first, championed by Andrew Polsky and some Europe-based comparativists, suggests that the "partisan regime"—as Polsky renames it—is fundamentally discursive in nature. That is, something built in narrative and through manipulation of discourse.

This interpretation may help describe the practice of executive politics in some places and at some times. It certainly promises greater agency to Presidents and Prime Ministers, who would then seem to have more ability to construct the nature of their reality. The discursive approach may, therefore, provide insight at the micro level.

However, this quasi-constructivist reinterpretation seems even less capable than original theory at the regime dynamics-level. Indeed, Polsky's lens would appear to make it more difficult to account for the persistence of political regimes in America, to say nothing of the regularity of their decay. If the political regime is constructed out of narrative it is not clear why there would be as much continuity as there is, nor why change would occur on something close to a schedule. In short, while a discursive approach may help us understand agency within the political regime, it is likely not a tool for helping us comprehend the stability or periodic phase changes of political time.

The discursive reading of the political regime is thus challenged by another, which—for lack of a better term—may be said to take a party system approach. Under this view, championed by the Australian contingent of political time scholars as well as a bevy of Americanists, the political regime is quite like the party system that historians and realignment scholars oft used to refer to. Indeed, as Nichols and Myers have suggested, each political regime features a governing philosophy that cleaves the electorate—both dividing it and necessitating the uniting of various factional groups into policy seeking coalitions that attempt to institutionalize their preferences and partisan advantage.

As was partially discussed before, the party system approach seems to naturally lend itself to the specification of unique tasks necessary for the successful practice of leadership in different quadrants of Skowronek's typology. More specifically, Laing employed this quasi-functionalist method to better understanding pre-emptive politics, Crockett to articulation, Laing and McCaffrie to disjunction, and Nichols and Myers to the reconstructive presidency.

The specification of tasks necessary for success has also suggested the intriguing possibility of (what I will call) the "sub-optimal response." That is: a president's incomplete, partial, or even failure to achieve those things required by the context of political time.

As we know, this idea has already been explicitly used by Nichols and Myers (in its strongest form) to suggest Grover Cleveland failed to exploit an opportunity to reconstruct after being elected in 1892. This sub-optimal response seems to have given William McKinley—a clear affiliate of the Third Party System—a historically unique chance to reconstruct. The key to this strange opportunity would, it seems to this author, rest on the fact that McKinley was also a president undeniably opposed to failed (Grover Cleveland) and dangerous (William Jennings Bryan) Democratic reconstructive alternatives!

3.2 What Drives the Political Time Cycle?

Questions pertaining to the nature of the political regime, invariably lead to the issue of who and / or what drives the political time cycle? And this, unfortunately, is where almost all cyclical theories founder. Very rarely, are the causes of a political cycle explored with the same rigor as its effects. The lack of attention to mainsprings is arguably found in Schlesinger's mood cycle,⁶³ Huntington's cycle

63. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Cycles of American History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1986).

of creedal passions,⁶⁴ as well as Burnham's critical election-centric version of the realignment cycle.⁶⁵

So, before we advance to consider three possible explanations for political time—let's digress a bit. We need to consider whether Skowronek even intends to offer political time as a cyclical theory of American politics.

While the issue is not as clear in the Comparative or Public Law fields, most of the Americanist second wave scholarship seems to proceed—like this essay does—under the assumption that term 'political time' refers to a cycle. How can it not? Simply put, in the American case, political time describes a simple two-phase cycle pertaining to regime strength. Either the political regime is strong and resilient, or it is not.

Skowronek does not really argue with this. Although, he certainly can—and does—(originally) suggest that his intent is less to offer a cyclical interpretation of politics than explore how presidents serve as agents of change. This is well and good. However, it does not provide answer to the question of what makes the political time cycle turn.

Luckily, we already know half the answer. A vulnerable political regime has historically returned to resilience through the successful practice of reconstructive politics (whether reconstructive politics always MUST produce this effect remains an open question.) However, it seems, that reconstructive presidents are the leading authors of regime renewal. Their actions and the accomplishments of their administrations appear to cause the political time cycle to move from its vulnerable phase back to its resilient one.

Good enough. But, what is on the other side of the coin? What actions, processes, or dynamics recurrently drive the political regime into weakness and vulnerability? This is—and always has been—the unanswered question in political time scholarship.

The first possible answer is provided by Skowronek and favored in *PPM*. Indeed, there is abundant evidence here that Skowronek's causal theory holds—just as the title of his book suggests—that political time is made by presidents! More specifically, Skowronek suggests that it is the clash of presidential order affirming and order disrupting leadership warrants that make the cycle turn. It is, after all, 'the politics presidents make' and not vice versa.

Unfortunately, while Skowronek's observations are astute, and presidents do seem caught in a never-ending struggle to align their leadership warrants, this factor alone cannot account for phase shift from resilient to vulnerable in political time. It is not as if the political regime is driven into vulnerability by the actions of any one president. Disjunctive presidents seem to inherit most of their context, not construct it entirely by themselves. Thus, like Polsky's view of the discursive nature of the political regime, Skowronek's focus on discordant agency in *PPM* cannot explain the dynamics of regime weakening. It is as if a constant were being asked to explain a recurrent pattern of change.

Skowronek realizes this problem, however, and sometimes can also be found providing a second account for the weakening of the political regime.⁶⁶ This second way of thinking borrows insights from the party system perspective but is basically progressive in outline and thrust. Herein, in a single jam-packed paragraph of his second political time book *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*,⁶⁷ Skowronek rapidly walks us through the history of the rise and fall of political regimes.

In this view, the political regime's existence can be traced back to the United States' Constitution. Its separation of powers and checks and balances scheme not only makes dislodging of arrangements difficult and rare but also eventually leads to governing ineffectiveness. So far, so good, Professor Woodrow Wilson would likely nod in agreement!⁶⁸

According to Skowronek, the path to ineffectiveness is paved by the very political coalitions who construct the regime. It happens like this. First, conflicts among factional interests within the dom-

64. Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: the Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1981).

65. Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1970).

66. Stephen Skowronek, "Presidential Leadership in Political Time," in *The Presidency and the Political System*, 3rd edition, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1990), 118.

67. Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time* (2008), 28.

68. Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908).

inant coalition cause dissatisfaction and weaken regime support. Second, as regime support wanes, the nation also changes in ways that the dominant coalition finds difficult to address, causing further dissatisfaction.⁶⁹ Third, as dissatisfaction grows the regime becomes increasingly reliant upon “sec-tarian interests,” with short-sighted visions, for energy. All of this encumbers and undermines regime capacity. So, in the end, the political regime becomes vulnerable because the political coalition at its heart loses its ability to address governing problems of the day.⁷⁰

This view, which suggests that coalitional dysfunction is at the heart of regime vulnerability, has much merit. However, considering everything the second wave literature has taught, lack of gov-erning effectiveness still seems incomplete as a theory accounting for regime vulnerability. Namely, Skowronek’s progressive account underestimates how two-party political competition routinely un-dermines governing legitimacy—as well as efficiency.

Therefore, let us explore a third account of political time that shares roots in a party system per-spective, but is more ‘republican’ (i.e. focusing on the need to restrain an illegitimate/tyrannical gov-ernment) in essence. This reading is clearly found, if left unannounced, in Bridge’s work. And, the same inferences are lurking in the shadows of Laing and McCafferie’s, as well as Crockett’s, scholar-ship.

Herein, delegitimized governance has been shown to have many sources. It can find its root in a primary faction using the Supreme Court to pursue fractious preferences. Alternately, it can be wit-nessed in a Prime Minister shifting to pursue secondary interests. Finally, we have seen that delegiti-mization of the political regime can be caused by a restoration President choosing such a narrow path that it parodies prior leadership stances. All these actions have less to do with undermining regime capacity to problem solve and more to do with delegitimizing the dominant coalition in government.

Therefore, it seems possible—even probable, given America’s unique revolutionary heritage—that illegitimate governance is seen as more problematic (and certainly more dangerous) than incompe-tence when it comes to generating the feeling of regime vulnerability. If so, the emphasis within second wave scholarship should switch away from the progressive narrative to embrace the republi-can. Herein, the coalitional dynamics that routinely delegitimize and weaken the political regime are really the ones that ignite the disjunctive crisis and, later, provide the opening for the reconstructive opportunity.

In this more republican reading of political time, government tardiness/ineffectiveness in han-dling things like women’s rights could certainly inspire actions, like the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v Wade*, that delegitimize the political regime in some eyes. Similarly, governing incompe-tence, like found in Harding’s mismanagement of trust busting, could also be used as fuel by those Democrats trying to light the fire warning that the political regime has become illegitimate. However, lack of problem-solving prowess in government is not—in and of itself—likely to trip political time into its vulnerable end phase. It may or may not be necessary, but it is never sufficient.

Ultimately, according to this new third view, the coalitional dynamics that lead to loss of regime le-gitimacy are what appear to drive the political time cycle into its vulnerable phase. Obviously, though, much more needs to be written about this possibility.

Luckily, there is no shortage of scholars working within the second wave of political time scholar-ship to take on tasks like this. Indeed, if the sheer amount of ‘imitation’ is any indication of underlying health, Stephen Skowronek should be happy. Not only are Americanist scholars extending the the-ory to fill gaps and refine thinking, but Comparative and Public Law scholars have gotten in on the act. With so many scholars working productively within the paradigm, political time theory’s future seems bright.

69. This is essentially Dean Burnham’s argument in *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*. He suggests that the “mainsprings” of the realignment phenomenon are found in a stasis prone constitution that recurrently gets out of synch with the demands of a dynamic capitalistic society. Again, the ghost of Woodrow Wilson, is always close by within progressive accounts of cycles.

70. Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time* (2008), 29.