

E Pluribus Unum: Political Unification and Political Realism

Chapter Abstracts

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Chapter 2: What causes states to politically unify voluntarily? Drawing on Machiavelli and realist tradition, I argue that unification is an extreme alliance prompted by extreme circumstances. First, it is only possible when stringent background conditions are met: states must be balancing against an optimally intense, indefinite, symmetrically afflicting threat. Second, there must be a crisis trigger, a demonstrable indication of security deficiency. Third, pro-union elites must compete domestically, institutionalizing unification via three pathways: the media, the military, and political procedures. Success hinges on the ability to frighten partners into union without becoming more threatening than the balancing target.

Chapter 3: The United States is a striking instance of political unification. The Articles of Confederation take three times as long to draft and ratify as the Constitution, yet the Articles were drafted and ratified while the country was under occupation and the much more centralizing Constitution was written and ratified while the country was at peace. This chapter examines the force and fraud necessary to shift thirteen former colonies out of anarchy and into hierarchy. It argues that the former colonies faced optimally intense, indefinite, symmetrical threats, such that when a security crisis was triggered, elites had a favorable opportunity to effect political union through the media, the military, and procedural manipulations.

Chapter 4: Another famous example of political union supposedly without external threat is Switzerland. Karl Deutsch in particular finds it a paradigmatic instance of political integration along un-realist lines. However, this chapter argues that

if the Swiss instance falls under any paradigm it is Realism. Specifically, the Swiss unified because they faced a threat that was optimally intense, indefinite, and symmetrical. A security crisis triggered the unification effort, and elites use the media, the military, and political procedures to persuade their potential compatriots of the necessity of union.

Chapter 5: Yet another example offered for political union absent an external threat is Australia. Chad Rector contends that economic interests drove the six Australian colonies into a unified state. However, this chapter argues that Britain hierarchically imposed union on the Australian colonies, and unification came well before independence. In sum, security threats drove Britain to found Australian colonies, coerced Britain to unify these colonies, and, decades later, compelled Australia to become a sovereign state.

Chapter 6: Sweden and Norway's alliance from 1814 to 1905 was a union masquerading as an alliance. There was legal ambiguity, but in the main supremacy remained at the state level. To sum, my argument accounts for Norway-Sweden's lack of union, and running the argument in reverse explains the quasi-union's demise.

Chapter 7: Although the case resists clean categorization, between 1820 and 1830 several South American states left the Spanish empire, joined an entity very much resembling political union, then abandoned it. The evolution and devolution of Gran Colombia revolved around Simón Bolívar, and this chapter follows his fortunes. I argue that initially international structure was permissive of pro-unification leaders, but once the Spanish threat collapsed international structure swiftly discarded union and its advocates.