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**Taking back control: Comprador bankers and managerial developmentalism in Poland**

*Review of International Political Economy*

APPENDIX A.4.

Methodological approach: Process tracing

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# A.4.1. Introduction

In this paper, my main research objective is to understand why new development policies/institutions and a new development alliance between the state and business have emerged in Poland after the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008. Since it is actors who shape such policies and alliances between actors, I break my main research question down into two parts:

* *Who* – which specific type of actor – has initiated and carried through the process of building new developmental institutions/policies and alliance in Poland after the GFC?[[1]](#footnote-1) (Who has mobilized whom?)
* *Why* has this specific type of actor initiated institution- and coalition-building and been sufficiently influential to carry it through? In other words, what *causal mechanism* explains both the preference and influence of that specific type of actor?

To help me answer my research questions – and to help me discriminate between alternative causal hypotheses – I use the method of process tracing. Process tracing has been defined as “the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case” (Bennett and Checkel, 2015, p. 7). Instead of making causal inferences based on a cross-case analysis of observational or experimental data, process tracing relies on a very close “within-case” analysis of a single case and uses so-called “causal process observations” (CPOs) as pieces of evidence in favor or against alternative hypotheses (e.g. Mahoney, 2010).

Methodological literature on process-tracing has greatly clarified how researchers can gain confidence in specific theories based on the observation of specific pieces of evidence or, in other words, in how they can know that evidence points (or does not point) to a causal relationship between a condition *X* and an outcome *Y*. There is increasingly wide agreement that the inferential logic underpinning process tracing is Bayesian belief updating where social scientists have various initial degrees of belief (a *prior* probability) in various theories and update those prior beliefs into *posterior* beliefs (or a posterior probability) when they observe new evidence (Bennett, 2008). Empirical evidence can either increase or decrease one’s confidence in a hypothesis: When they assess new evidence, researchers estimate – more or less formally – the likelihood that this specific piece of evidence would be found if a hypothesis or an alternative one were true. Methodologists have been debating about whether Bayesian analysis should be used more formally – with numerical estimations of prior and posterior probabilities – or whether process tracing can continue relying on a more informal – “folk” – version of this type of reasoning (Beach and Pedersen, 2019: chapters 5-7; Bennett, 2008; Fairfield and Charman, 2017; 2019). In this paper, I stick to a folk version of Bayesian reasoning in process tracing. Although I leave it to the reader to estimate their own initial beliefs and updated beliefs based on the evidence I provide, I nonetheless briefly discuss my own priors – based on my reading of the literature and of the Polish context – in an informal way in the next section of this appendix.

One tool that methodologists of process tracing have developed in order to help researchers assess the evidentiary value of specific observations is so-called “process tracing tests”. Based on a discussion of the uniqueness[[2]](#footnote-2) and certainty[[3]](#footnote-3) of theoretical predictions (van Evera, 1997) or of the necessity[[4]](#footnote-4) and sufficiency[[5]](#footnote-5) of passing the test to establish causation (Collier, 2011; Mahoney, 2012), methodologists have developed four types of process tracing tests:

* *straw-in-the-wind test* (uniqueness/sufficiency: NO; certainty/necessity: NO): Passing it slightly strengthens confidence in a hypothesis in question, but does not confirm it; Failing it slightly weakens confidence in the hypothesis, but does not eliminate it.
* *Hoop test* (uniqueness/sufficiency: NO; certainty/necessity: YES): Passing the test, or “jumping” through the hoop, strengthens confidence in the hypothesis but does not confirm it. Failing the test *eliminates* the hypothesis.
* *smoking-gun test* (uniqueness/sufficiency: YES; certainty/necessity: NO): Passing the test confirms the hypothesis. Failing the test does not eliminate the hypothesis.
* *doubly-decisive test* (uniqueness/sufficiency: YES; certainty/necessity: YES): Passing the test confirms the hypothesis and eliminates rivals.

These tests have been rarely used in an explicit manner in published process tracing research (e.g. Fairfield, 2013) and there are discussions about how rigidly the necessity/certainty and sufficiency/uniqueness dimensions should be interpreted (Ibid., p. 55). However, the key take-away is that different pieces of evidence can more or less strongly strengthen or weaken (or increase or decrease our degree of belief in) a specific hypothesis. In practice: process tracers would extremely rarely – if ever – claim that a piece of evidence would pass a doubly decisive test; the straw-in-the-wind test is not considered particularly useful since it does not significantly increase/decrease confidence in alternative explanations; hence, the analytical focus is typically on hoop tests and smoking-gun tests since failing a hoop test can help eliminate a rival hypothesis while passing a smoking-gun test can help confirm – or, at least, significantly increase one’s confidence in – one’s specific hypothesis. Since the prior for my hypothesis on comprador bankers is reasonably speaking quite low whereas priors for most rival hypotheses – particularly for a top-down state co-option or coercion of business – are much higher (see next section), I have developed two very simple hoop tests to help sift out genuinely plausible explanations from implausible explanations. Based on two central concepts of criminal law in common law systems, I call them the “guilty mind” (*mens rea*) and “guilty act” (*actus reus*) hoop tests. I specify them in the third section of this appendix. Building on the crime analogy, I then discuss my approach to finding a potential “mastermind(s)” (a potential *who* that mobilizes other actors into action) in the fourth section.

# A.4.2. Specifying priors on alternative hypotheses

In this paper, I have not only developed and – through a constant search for additional CPOs – tested my own hypothesis about the role of comprador bankers in co-opting other actors into a new developmental alliance and policies. I have also tested a range of rival hypotheses about which actor might be the driving force behind developmental coalition- and institution-building. In the table below, I list each actor one by one and discuss, firstly, the “prior” for their being the driving force (regardless of whether they mobilize other actors by coopting or coercing them) based on my reading of the literature on the politics of “old” and “new” developmentalism. Secondly, I discuss how my own “prior” for each hypothesis would be updated based on – theoretical and empirical – knowledge of the Polish context. While I do not assign numerical values to those priors, I distinguish between high, medium-to high, medium, low-to-medium and low probabilities of an explanation being true.

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| ***Which actor is the driving force?*** | **Prior based on literature** | **Context-adjusted**  **prior** |
| *State apparatus / pre-existing development institutions (development banks/agencies, etc.)* | High  Rationale: as shown in the literature review, this is the conventional wisdom in the literature on the “old” developmentalism | Medium-to-high  Rationale: recent literature has shown that, in a CEE context, Poland has had a relatively well developed pre-existing industrial policy capacity (Bruszt & Karas, 2020; Markiewicz, 2020; Medve-Bálint & Šćepanović 2020). However, in the CEE context, Poland has a comparatively high level of senior civil service politicization (Meyer-Sahling & Veen, 2012) and high turnover of staff in SOEs (Szarzec et al. 2020); hence, as can be assumed, also in development banks/agencies. Politicization should limit the power of mid-level bureaucrats with more stable careers and also means that the preferences of senior bureaucrats’/officials’ preferences are more likely to reflect the preferences of the party in power |
| *Conservative-nationalist parties with authoritarian tendencies* | High  Rationale: as shown in the literature review, this is the conventional wisdom in the literature on the “new” developmentalism in CEE countries and fits with much of the “old” developmentalism literature’s emphasis on authoritarian leaders | High  (No update based on Polish context) |
| *Liberal (pro-market) parties* | Low  Rationale: although the role of this type or parties is not often discussed in the literature on developmentalism, one would not expect parties with a pro-market agenda to promote state interventionism in the economy | Low  (No update based on Polish context) |
| *Indigenous bourgeoisie organized through trade/employers’ associations* | Low-to-medium  Rationale: As explained in the literature review, the main proponent of this thesis has been Chibber (2003) and his description of events in India and South Korea does not even point to a bottom-up cooption of the state by the bourgeoisie, but rather to a co-occurrence (or coincidence) of state and bourgeois support for developmentalism; Recent work by Scheiring (2020) suggests similar dynamics have happened in Hungary; Recent Marxist work on the Workers’ Party in Brazil also suggests the importance of the national bourgeoisie in supporting developmentalism in that country (Boito & Saad-Filho) | Low  Rationale: Although work by Schoenman (2014) suggests that, compared with Bulgarian and Romanian employers’ associations, Polish employers’ association have been broad associations with significant lobby power, comparative data show that Poland has one of the lowest employer densities and high fragmentation of organized business in the EU (See table in Appendix A.2.5; see also Ost, 2000). This means that Polish employers’ associations and business groups are characterized by a high degree of pluralism. Literature has shown that organized business in pluralist systems is much more likely to be pro-market than in corporatist systems (Martin & Swank, 2013) |
| *Comprador bankers (or, in general, expat and indigenous managers of the subsidiaries of foreign-owned MNCs)* | Low  Rationale: Traditional “dependency theory” or even Marxist theory do not expect compradors to build a “national development” project; same for recent literature on the politics of the “middle-income trap” (Doner & Schneider, 2016) | Low  (No update based on Polish context; this truly reflects my prior at the beginning of the project) |
| *“Popular” sectors, especially trade unions* | Medium  Rationale: Literature on “old” developmentalism has considered “popular sectors” as passive agents that might have to be persuaded to support developmentalism through “side payments” – e.g. increased redistribution (Doner et al., 2005). Work on social democracy in Sweden also showed unions’ ambiguous relationship with dirigisme and industrial policies (Pontusson, 1992). Recent work suggests unions may play a much more active role in industrial policies (Ornston 2012) and finance renationalization (Naqvi 2019) | Low  Rationale: Despite the strength of the “Solidarność” movement in the 1980s, Polish trade unions have been greatly weakened by economic transformation in the 1990s and 2000s and are not only politically fragmented (with Christian-conservative NSZZ Solidarność, post-communist OPZZ and more independent FZZ), but, most of all, have very low density (ICTWSS database) and low organizational resources (e.g. Ost, 2000; 2005). |
| *International organizations (European Commission) and international financial institutions (EBRD, EIB, IMF, World Bank)* | Low-to-medium  While most IPE literature since the 1980s has seen IOs and IFIs as the “liberalizers”, recent literature suggests that IFIs and IOs have increasingly acted as “enablers” of (which, in my interpretation, suggests a somewhat more passive role in supporting) financial nationalism in Hungary (Johnson & Barnes, 2015) and, in European developmental banking, as engaging in direct institution building, particularly in countries with weaker pre-existing development institutions (Mertens & Thiemann, 2019; 2020) | Low-to-medium  (No update based on Polish context) |

# A.4.3. Eliminating implausible suspects: The “guilty mind” and “guilty act” hoop tests

Despite having been well defined since the late 2000s (Bennett, 2008; Collier, 2011), process-tracing tests are rarely used explicitly in applied research. One reason for this may somewhat paradoxically have to do with the growing consensus among methodologists that process tracing is most useful for developing or testing hypotheses about *causal mechanisms*. The emphasis on causal mechanisms stems from the capacity of process tracing to provide evidence for the “intervening causal process” or the “interlocking parts” that transmit forces from a specific condition/cause – or set of causes - to an outcome of interest (Beach & Pedersen, 2019: chapter 2) and therefore from the capacity of process tracing to “open the black box of causality” (Trampusch & Palier, 2016). Yet process-tracers tend to theorize relatively complex causal mechanisms – one example being the mechanism theorized in this specific paper: Mechanisms can have a relatively large number of “interlocking parts” and those parts can be activated by, or themselves activate, a variety of causal – e.g. structural or ideational – forces. This complexity has led to a tendency to think about process-tracing tests in an *ad hoc* fashion where “separate[[6]](#footnote-6) process tracing tests are typically required for each individual explanation” (Mahoney, 2012, p. 573).

Yet, although one of my questions is about the causal mechanism explaining *why* a specific set of actors (in my case, comprador bankers) initiated change and has been sufficiently influential to carry it through, my other – perhaps more central – question is: *Who* has been the driving force (through cooption, coercion or, in the weakest sense, co-occurrence of efforts with another set of actors) behind developmental institution- and coalition-building in Poland since the GFC?

Given this focus on the *who* question, I suggest that it is possible to develop simple *universal* hoop tests – i.e. applicable to *all* individual explanations – whose failure can help remove some hypotheses from further consideration. In order to develop such hoop tests, I rely on criminal law theory in English-speaking common law systems. The reason why I have delved into this kind of theory is that process-tracing methodologists typically invoke the metaphor of a criminal detective – especially that of fictional detective Sherlock Holmes – to illustrate the inferential logic of process tracing and process tracing tests – hence, for example, the metaphor of a “smoking gun” test that significantly increases confidence that a “suspect” committed a “crime” (e.g. Collier, 2011). Since political scientists’ – particularly process-tracers’ – theories focus on causal mechanisms, it is perhaps not surprising that the typical metaphor is that of Sherlock Holmes whom we often admire for his virtuosity in developing theories about potential explanations of the process leading to a crime being committed. However, the task of most real-life detectives, criminal prosecutors and criminal judges is to catch *whomever[[7]](#footnote-7)* committed a crime regardless of the virtuosity of their conjectures and regardless of the mechanism that led to the crime being committed.

How can criminal liability be attributed? On what legal basis can a suspect be prosecuted or convicted for a criminal offence? In Common Law countries (in fact, in most legal systems – see Chiao, 2014; Chiesa, 2014; Weigend, 2014), there are two “essential” – or, in other words, *necessary* – ingredients of every offence unless otherwise specified (e.g. Horder, 2019: chapters 5 and 6). Firstly, there must be a criminal act – or the “objective” element of a crime – expressed in Latin as the *actus reus* (the “guilty act”). Secondly, there must be a criminal intention – or the “mental” element of a crime – expressed in Latin as the *mens rea* (the “guilty mind”). In order to attribute criminal liability to a suspect and to be able to convict them, a criminal court needs to prove these two elements “beyond reasonable doubt”.

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These principles of criminal jurisprudence can be easily translated to create hoop tests that are relevant for the analysis of politics. If we want to know whether an actor (a “suspect”) has actually been involved in coalition- or institution-building (the “criminal offence”), we need to know whether they have *actively* *participated* in this type of activity (the “guilty act”) and whether they have *wanted* to engage in it (the “guilty mind”). In politics, a guilty mind can simply be measured by the expression of a preference in favor of some institutional change when or before that change takes place. A guilty act can be measured by *any* type of political activity (voting, lobbying, publicly advocating, etc.) in favor of some institutional change when or before that change takes place. Although all of this may seem obvious, having these kinds of hoop tests is useful in this paper given that one of my main goals is to know *who* has mobilized *whom* to “commit the crime” of reviving developmentalism: If there is no evidence that some actor *wanted* to revive developmentalism or that, one way or another, they *tried to promote* that revival, that actor should be eliminated as a “suspect” for initiating coalition- and institution-building. As mentioned earlier, an advantage of the “guilty mind” and the “guilty act” hoop tests is that they are *universal* tests that are applicable in a uniform way to all suspects (in this case, actors – not causal mechanisms). The explicit definition of such hoop tests makes it possible to directly compare one’s degree of suspicion that different actors are involved in the “crime”. In appendices A.6.-A.8., I explicitly state how various CPOs (documents and interview material) presented in those appendices add up in terms of a specific type of actor passing or failing the “guilty mind” and “guilty act” hoop tests.

# A.4.4. Finding the “mastermind” behind the “crime”

In murder cases, he who encourages the commission of a murder or assists with the commission is to be dealt with as a murderer (Crown Prosecution Service, 2020b) – albeit no more than a murderer. Moreover, duress is not a defense to a charge of murder (Ibid.). Fortunately, in democratic politics, most institutional changes do not constitute “crimes”. In democratic politics, commentators also often apply an implicit hierarchy of guilt that differs from that applied in criminal law. If some actor were proven to have coerced – or even coopted – another actor into introducing some reform, they would likely be considered “guiltier” of the reform than the actor who got mobilized into introducing it. When some reform is being introduced, the question that commentators often implicitly or explicitly ask is: Who is behind it? Is there a “mastermind[[8]](#footnote-8)”? Who is it? Or, if there are several masterminds, who are they?

How can one gain confidence in the hypothesis that one specific actor – not another one – is the “mastermind” behind a reform? There are no clear rules here. The approach I have used in the paper can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, when finding the best possible evidence on an actor’s “guilty mind” and “guilty act” I pay attention to the *relative timing* of the revelation of their preferences and engagement in political activities: the earlier an actor expresses support for (or, clearly acts in favor of) a change in comparison with other actors, or, in other words, the greater the gap between the time when Actor A express their support for the change vs. the time when Actor B express their support for some change, the greater the likelihood that Actor A mobilizes Actor B into supporting the change.

Secondly, when analyzing published documents and interviews, I look for any signs of an actor “confessing” to having tried to mobilize other actors into action or of an actor “implicating” another actor in their being mobilized into action.

In a criminal court, a confession by an accused person would very likely lead to conviction provided that the confession is admissible in evidence and was, for instance, not obtained by oppression. In political science and process tracing, such confessions obviously have to be taken with a grain of salt since actors may be trying to “claim credit” if an institutional change has been quite popular (though if that institutional change was not popular, a confession should be considered more credible).

In a criminal court, if a witness or another accused person implicated a suspect in a crime, their testimony would certainly be closely scrutinized to establish their credibility. By contrast, in the study of political processes, if a “suspect” who is normally thought to be the “mastermind” implicates another suspect and, even more so, if that suspect expresses pride in the policy agenda that has been pursued (regardless of whether they can claim credit for it or not), their implicating another actor in their being mobilized into action should be considered more credible. Therefore, if - in an interview or document – a senior member of government (or of a pre-existing development institution) at the time of some important institutional change claimed that some institutional change was initiated by – or was the doing of – a representative of the comprador banker group, I would consider this as passing a smoking gun test on the hypothesis that comprador bankers coopted state actors into the revival of developmentalism.

Finally, given my own – and I would assume my readers’ – low prior on my theorized causal mechanism regarding comprador bankers’ mobilization, I have also prepared Appendix A.9 where I list much additional evidence on the factors triggering their preference change after the GFC.

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1. Using the language of the different stages of the “policy cycle”, the question could be reformulated as who has led the policy cycle process from the agenda-setting stage, through the formulation stage up to the adoption – and even potentially the implementation – stage? [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Is a specific observation predicted to be highly *unique* to a specific hypothesis? [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Is a specific observation predicted to be highly *certain* to occur if a specific hypothesis is valid? [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Is the presence of an observation *necessary* for the hypothesis in question to be valid? [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Is the presence of an observation *sufficient* for that hypothesis to be valid? [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Let us, for example, assume that my main research question in the paper would be to explain why comprador bankers have developed a preference for developmentalism and banking renationalization/domestication after the crisis – not necessarily to explain their influence. And let us assume that, instead of hypothesizing that they have developed this kind of preference because of their managerial frustration, I hypothesized that they have done because of the rise of “heterodox” economic ideas. If I wanted to develop some hoop tests (empirical evidence that is necessary for the theory to be valid) for both explanations, I would naturally have to develop *different* hoop tests for each explanation. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. With the proviso that there is sufficient evidence against the defendant and that there it is in the public interest for prosecutors to bring the case to court (Crown Prosecution Service, 2020a). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This term does not seem to be used at all in criminal law. To follow the [Cambridge Dictionary](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mastermind), I simply mean somebody who plans an activity in detail and makes it happen successfully (potentially by involving other people in the activity). The mastermind does not have to have “invented” the idea, but he or she acts on a specific idea and do their utmost to make things happen. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)