JULIAN E. ZELIZER

Morton Keller

When I was an undergraduate at Brandeis University in the late 1980s, one of the most influential courses that I took was Morton "Mickey" Keller's seminar on American political history. This upper-level seminar introduced me to a number of important arguments that have stuck with me throughout my career.[1]

The first was Keller's use of the term "polity" to describe the multiple institutions that dealt with the distribution and definition of power in any given moment in political history.[2] Keller's seminar revealed to me and my fellow students the wide range of institutional, organizational, and electoral forces that are always at work. Without using the term "the state," he offered undergraduates a more complex and nuanced understanding of what defined public power than could be found in traditional textbook accounts, which centered on elections and presidents.

For a student attending college in the era when social and cultural history dominated the classroom, Keller's use of the term "polity" provided an exciting way to conceptualize how one could approach political history in a manner that was more encompassing than the kinds of work that had been criticized in the 1970s. His interest was in institutions, not presidents, as that structured our discussions.

The second contribution from Keller's seminar was his passion for constantly challenging analytic models that historians imported from political science and political sociology. At the time I took the class, it was becoming evident that some of the best research in political history was being produced in the subfield of American Political Development. Indeed, the political scientist Sidney Milkis, whose work on the presidency was central to the field, taught in the same hall. During the semester, I wondered how historians could distinguish

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their craft. On the one hand, Keller taught us to respect interdisciplinary analysis by introducing us to their arguments and methodology. On the other hand, he forced us to probe their analytic framework with a skeptical eye, urging his students to remember that the historian's primary task was to ruthlessly test causal claims against the particularities and contingencies of history.

Finally, Keller was truly historical in how he approached politics. In his analysis, each period of American history was built on top of the one that preceded it. Before the term gained popularity as a result of historical institutionalism in political science, Keller essentially explained the process of "institutional layering," whereby one period was created on top of the institutions and policies that already existed. There never was a clean slate for politicians to work with, even after dramatic elections such as 1896 or 1932. When discussing the pivotal decades between the 1880s and 1920s–as Americans confronted the challenges posed by industrialization and urbanization–Keller cautioned us against relying on narratives that built around modernization theory (such as the organizational synthesis or corporate liberalism) by stressing how older political forces, such as patronage-based machine politics and ideas about localism, did not disappear with the rise of administrative government.

As I embarked on my own career as a historian, I learned that the lessons from the seminar grew directly out of Keller's rich and voluminous scholarship. Keller, it turned out, was one of the founding fathers of the subfield of policy history, though like many in the subfield he did not self-consciously identify himself as doing this kind of work. Instead he called himself a historian of public life. He challenged the presidential synthesis of the old political history as well as the social and cultural historians who were busy criticizing political history. He sought a synthetic approach that captured how public policy actually worked at all levels of government and society.

Keller's work made the analysis of public policy a central component of studying American politics. This approach to analyzing politics was developed by a small cohort of historians in the late 1970s who believed that historical writing on policy, as well as institutions, could be relevant to policymakers and that it could provide a new framework for studying politics that avoided the shortcomings that social and cultural historians had pointed to with regard to traditional scholarship from the 1950s. Policy history was structured around the chronology of the policymaking process rather than the presidency. Policy historians also incorporated a wide range of actors into their stories that revealed the connections between state and society, from policymakers and legislators who crafted programs to the citizens who were

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affected by and struggled over the benefits. The logic and process of policy-making itself had an impact on politics.[3]

Keller was a product of Cold War America. He came of professional age during the early Cold War in the 1950s, when the research universities were flourishing as a result of increased government support for higher education and the flood of World War II and Korean veterans into the college ranks.

Born in Brooklyn on March 1, 1929, Keller received his undergraduate degree from the University of Rochester in 1950, where he majored in history. Two years later, he earned a master's degree in history at Harvard University. He had arrived at graduate school with the intention of writing a biography about A. Mitchell Palmer, Woodrow Wilson's Attorney General, but decided to change his topic while at Harvard. The son of former Congressman James Beck, a conservative Republican who was in office in the same period as Palmer and shared some political beliefs, had sent his papers to the university. Keller expected to be drafted soon, so the topic, in addition to being interesting, was practical. He was able to complete most of his research before entering the Navy in 1953, then completed his dissertation on Beck, graduating from Harvard in 1956 while in the service.

After working at the University of North Carolina and the University of Pennsylvania, and spending one year as a visiting professor at Harvard, Keller accepted a position in the Department of History at Brandeis. There he attracted a talented group of graduate students who wanted to study legal history with him and Morton Horwitz, who was at the Harvard Law School but who worked with students at Brandeis and sat on dissertation committees. Others worked with the renowned business historian Alfred Chandler, who had a similar relationship as Horwitz with Brandeis. The Crown Fellowships offered attractive funding to recruits, thus making Brandeis one of the few institutions where Ph.D.s in history had the opportunity to study legal history before the 1990s. The major avenue to legal history until Brandeis had been the Charles Warren Fellowships at Harvard University, but that program had primarily supported J.D. and J.D./Ph.D.s.[4] During his career, Keller trained a large number of students who were interested in the relationship between law, politics, and society. They included Hendrik Hartog, Michael Grossberg, Wendy Gamber, David Oshinsky, William Novak, and Fredrick Hoxie.

A number of arguments were popular in the academy in the 1950s whose influence could be seen on Keller's scholarship from the very start of his career. When Keller was in graduate school, the mainstream of the historical profession had moved away from the progressive historians like Charles Beard, who had emphasized ongoing conflict between "the people" and "the

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interests" throughout American history. Instead, historians of this generation sought to understand, through presidents, elites, and ideas, the multiple forces that held the nation together even through discordant times.

The first component of this scholarship was the notion of American exceptionalism. Harvard political scientist Louis Hartz published *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955) in which he claimed that American political thought lacked the left-wing and right-wing elements that existed in most of Europe because the nation was founded without any feudal tradition. A number of the most prominent historians in the 1950s developed narratives that were influenced by Hartz's argument. These historians were later described as the "liberal consensus" school. In the accounts of scholars such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Richard Hofstadter, political conflict throughout American history remained within the tight boundaries of a liberal consensus over such issues as private property, individual rights, and representative government. The kind of government the nation designed as a result of this culture was not as centralized or nationalized as European counterparts.

Another influential component of 1950s historiography was the theory of pluralism. Popularized by the economist John Kenneth Galbraith and the political scientist Robert Dahl, theorists of pluralism depicted American politics as an ongoing clash of fractured societal interests (rather than class-based conflict). In this interpretation of politics, business competed for power against organized labor and the federal government. Galbraith argued that pure competition no longer existed in the twentieth century so that there emerged a need for other mechanisms to restrain corporate power. He wrote that "private economic power is held in check by the countervailing power of those who are subject to it. . . . The long trend toward concentration of industrial enterprise in the hands of a relatively few firms has brought into existence not only strong sellers, as economists have supposed, but also strong buyers as they have failed to see. The two develop together, not in precise step but in such manner that there can be no doubt that the one is in response to the other."[5] Galbraith mapped out a political world where no single interest could achieve hegemony, but, rather, ongoing competition produced some kind of equilibrium. A central role of the federal government, Galbraith said, was to support countervailing power by empowering marginalized groups (with the two biggest examples being workers and farmers). Most pluralists did not perceive American politics as being centered on an impulse for liberal reform competing against private interests but instead depicted a complex and messy political narrative. "The hallmark of American politics from this perspective," writes William Novak, in a collection of essays by

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Keller's students, "is the distinctive way in which power is distributed along an exceedingly complex array of persons, associations, and institutions that are not easily categorized private or public."[6]

Adolf Berle Jr. was an important contributor to these debates. Berle had been a member of President Franklin Roosevelt's Brains Trust and in 1954 published *The 20th Century Capitalist Revolution,* a foundational text for many scholars who studied the American corporation in the 1960s and 1970s. Like Galbraith, Berle rejected left-wing analysts, who argued that national corporations had become the dominant force in modern life, as well as right-wing proponents of free-market competition, who ignored the reality that only a handful of corporations controlled key segments of the marketplace. Much of the book emphasized different kinds of restraints—outside of market competition, which he acknowledged was a fiction in the new economy—that did exist on corporate power, such as government regulation, public opinion, and the political realism of corporate leaders when operating overseas.[7]

The final component of 1950s historiography that influenced Keller's work came from the social sciences, and that was the sociological theory of structural functionalism. Building on the research of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, with Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons as the primary proponent of this theory in the United States, structural functionalism stipulated that each component of a social system played a specific function in maintaining the equilibrium of the system. Different components adapted and adjusted when the system was placed under stress.[8]

Keller's graduate adviser, Oscar Handlin, employed this approach in his work about immigration. His account focused on peasant immigrants uprooted from their rural communities and confronted with immense challenges upon their arrival in the United States. Assimilation was difficult and exceedingly slow because immigrants, Handlin said, had become helpless and lost any rooting: "Emigration had stripped away the veneer that in more stable situations concealed the underlying nature of the social structure."[9] Handlin depicted immigrants as gradually, and haltingly, adjusting and redefining their expectations by assimilating into the new American culture.

Once he started his own scholarly career, Keller wrote books and articles that emphasized the themes of institutional continuity and flexibility, the obstacles toward state-building, and pluralism. Throughout his years at Brandeis, he remained interested in explaining the configuration of government that emerged in the United States. He took a pragmatic, comparative perspective toward the subject, trying to understand the similarities and differences between the institutions and policies of the United States and those in England,

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France, Germany, and other comparable countries. He was less concerned with whether the United States was exceptional than with understanding government on its own terms. He did feel that the government was more effective at handling challenges than many academics gave them credit for.

Keller's first monograph was a revised version of his dissertation. The book, entitled *In Defense of Yesterday* (1958), focused on the career of James Beck, who worked as assistant attorney general under President Theodore Roosevelt, solicitor general under Presidents Harding and Coolidge, and as a congressional representative from 1927 to 1933. Packaged as a political history of modern conservatism (which he defined as nationalism, individualism, constitutionalism, laissez-faire, property rights, and opposition to reform), Keller traced Beck's evolution from identifying as a Cleveland Democrat who was critical of business in the 1880s, as well as an opponent of imperialism, to a Republican under Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt who championed interventionism overseas and worked to regulate bad behavior in the corporate world with the intention of protecting corporate capitalism from radical forces. This biography attempted to show that until the early 1900s those conservative ideals were a powerful part of the polity.

But Beck, according to Keller, became disenchanted with the GOP as TR expanded his vision of economic reform. Keller explained, "The same pressures that moved Theodore Roosevelt to a greater identification with reform caused conservatives such as Beck to question their faith in a national authority beneficial to big capital. . . . Beck sketched the lineaments of a classic conservative position, one to which he would adhere in essentially unchanging form during the next thirty years. Legalism, concern for the Constitution, reverence for the American past, would become hallmarks of his political thinking."[10] By the first few years of the twentieth century, Beck departed government service to work as a corporate counsel who defended businesses against regulation. By the 1920s, Keller characterized Beck as an alienated conservative in an era when support for government had vastly expanded.

Keller's second book turned to the history of the life insurance industry between the 1880s and the 1910s. He had begun work on this project while on the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He stumbled upon the topic because James Beck had worked as a counsel for Mutual Life. Keller was intrigued that a conservative in the Progressive Era had supported the regulation of the industry—a story that seemed to contradict the historiography of progressive and liberal historians who posited that reformers and business were always at odds. At North Carolina, moreover, some sociologists

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exposed Keller to the work of C. Wright Mills, the renowned sociologist who wrote about structures of power and was interested in the relationship between military, political, and economic elites and how this community developed an alliance as a result of their mutual interests.

In *The Life Insurance Enterprise* (1963), readers learned that sweeping government regulations on the life insurance industry were thwarted in large part because internal corporate checks, combined with moderate reforms, were put into place as problems emerged. The industry adjusted when scandal created pressure for reform and the government introduced sufficient reforms to quell public discontent.

Keller combed the corporate archives of New York Life, Mutual Life of New York, the Equitable, Metropolitan, and Prudential. Building on the scholarship of the business historian Alfred Chandler, Keller argued that new managerial forms of internal governance took hold in the corporate world. But, unlike Chandler, who tried to replace the robber-baron narrative of zealous business elites with an organizational analysis of the functional rationale behind the rise of managerial hierarchies, Keller provided a history of how the new national corporations administered by layers of management attempted to expand their economic reach and political power. He combined traditional and new interpretations. These decisions of the life insurance industry were self-destructive and stimulated public anger. In the wake of a scandal in 1905 involving Senator William Armstrong, there was heightened pressure for regulation.

Life insurance companies responded by undertaking internal reforms that improved the economic health of the industries. "In harmony with the public ceremony of condemnation and exorcism," Keller wrote, "the firms themselves turned to the cleansing ritual of reorganization." Thus, Keller concludes, "to the traditional sum of external checks on power in a free society should be added the complex but significant factor of internal restraints: the problems and consequences inherent in the processes of institutional growth and maturity. Together, these internal and external limitations were sufficient to contain and transform even so puissant a group of American corporations as the large life insurance companies."[11]

Four years after the publication of the book on the life insurance industry, Oxford University Press published a book by Keller about the Gilded Age cartoonist Thomas Nast, entitled *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (1968). While the book seemed to move Keller into a new set of issues, the theme of his analysis of the cartoons revolved around the question that would frame the rest of his work. They came out of his research on the late nineteenth century

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as he read through *Harper's Weekly* to gain a sense of the period. Keller argued that, through Nast's cartoons, readers could see the "surge of belief that society can be quickly and thoroughly reformed, and then the angry, wasting disillusionment that comes when unrealistic hopes run afoul of stubborn social realities. . . . This drama of political expectation and disenchantment was played out with special poignancy in the years after the Civil War."[12]

For his next project, Keller produced a major synthesis about late nineteenth-century politics entitled *Affairs of State* (1977), which quickly became a landmark work for political historians. Keller had started to think about this project while he was at the University of Pennsylvania. The economic historian Thomas Cochran had helped Keller gain more knowledge about scholarship in the social sciences and convinced him to abandon the presidential synthesis. Cochran had written an influential article on this subject in 1948.[13]

The book introduced readers to his concept of a polity-centered approach to studying political history as he located multiple institutions that shaped public power in two key periods. This was a history about institutions. The first era covered in the book was the aftermath of the Civil War and the second era was the 1880s and 1890s, when industrialization generated social and economic pressures on American society.

In both periods, Keller showed that the crisis produced a surge of reform that was then followed by a period of retrenchment. Older institutions, initially shell-shocked by the crisis, rebounded by adjusting to new conditions and fending off the need for dramatic reform. Keller posited that in both periods there had been a clash between the pressure for centralization, an activist state, universal rights, and social democracy with competing traditions of individualism, localism, laissez-faire, and racially and ethnically hierarchical views of social relations. In his discussion of the post–Civil War years, Keller explained, "New paths in postwar foreign affairs and in federal, state, and local government turned out to be culs-de-sac, not the road to the future. From the war years there emerged not a Bismarckian state but rather what Leonard White has called 'the culmination of Jacksonian theory and practice': a system of government dominated by localism and laissez-faire."[14]

Affairs of State directly criticized proponents of the "organizational synthesis," such as Robert Wiebe, Louis Galambos, and Sam Hays, a school of postprogressive historiography that had characterized the years between the 1880s and 1920s as being marked by a decisive shift away from a nation of decentralized "island communities" to a country that was centralized, modern, and nationalized as a result of large-scale national, bureaucratic institutions (such as the administrative state). For example, Keller contended that

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the drive for regulation did not significantly enhance the bureaucracy in comparison to Germany or England.[15]

Besides his arguments about institutional continuity, antistatism, and pluralism—as well as the rich narrative about specific policies that had generally been unexplored by the historical community—Keller's book offered a new model for writing about political history. It presented political history as an analysis of institutional development and policy evolution. Keller's account is filled with colorful characters, episodes, and leaders, but they are only components in a much bigger story about how and why preexisting institutional pieces of the polity withstood some of the most intense challenges of the century.

The book wove together local, state, regional, and national history. Keller downplayed the importance of individual leaders and stressed the impersonal, and less dramatic, aspects about how politics worked. This was what motivated Keller in *Affairs of State* to write about issues like legal doctrine, public policy, and the political process. He was not as interested in what leaders said about policy as much as how policy actually worked—how it played out—in practice. His work simultaneously challenged historians who wrote about presidents by focusing on these forces as he did social and cultural historians by connecting policy and government to the everyday lives of Americans. The book was an effort at achieving methodological synthesis as he rejected the subdivisions that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s between social, intellectual, political, labor, gender, and other specialties.[16]

Keller's research drew on an extraordinary range of obscure institutional documents, including corporate reports, legal cases, municipal commissions, law reviews, and primary periodical literature, more than most historians ever examined. These documents, which covered all levels of government as well as nongovernmental institutions, allowed Keller to understand the actual implementation of such policies as antitrust legislation.

During the decade that followed the publication of Keller's book, the questions that interested him in *Affairs of State* started to attract significant attention among historians, sociologists, and political scientists. One of the reviewers for the book had been Stephen Skowronek, then a graduate student in political science at Cornell University, who wrote that Keller's book "merits a prominent place in what is emerging as a general reevaluation of late nineteenth-century America." Rather than a period that was a "dark age" in American politics that allowed industrialization to run amok before a more "modern" period of regulation and welfare provision, Keller, according to Skowronek, shows that there were efforts in public life to deal with the multiple challenges

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Americans faced. For a young Skowronek, the book looked at the "tension-ridden push and pull of political, social and economic forces" in the era.[17]

Within political science, Skowronek emerged as a leading figure for a cohort of scholars who designed the field of American Political Development in the 1980s and 1990s by studying how preexisting institutional structures constrained and shaped politics at any given moment.[18] Though more explicitly theoretical than Keller believed history should be, the arguments meshed nicely with the claims that he presented in *Affairs of State*. Social scientists like Skowronek and Theda Skocpol sought to understand why the United States had a laggard welfare state that was smaller and took longer to build than European counterparts. While Keller focused on pluralism and localism, APD emphasized the institutional structures of government—such as underdeveloped bureaucracies and the separation of power—that made it extraordinarily difficult to create the kind of welfare and regulatory systems that took hold in Western Europe.

Keller appreciated APD because it offered some of the most vibrant scholarship on political history at a time when most of his own colleagues were still focused on social and cultural history. His biggest complaint was that social scientists privileged a European model of the welfare state when they evaluated what the United States had accomplished. He was critical that they embraced an exceptionalist framework as the foundation for their arguments. In a review of Skowronek's 1982 book on the jerry-built structure of the administrative state in the United States that replaced the nineteenth-century "state of courts and parties," Keller claimed that the nineteenth-century political institutions had adapted effectively to the challenges of industrialization like Europeans had. Skowronek, he added, downplayed the ways in which organizational parties innovated to deal with problems like currency reform and tariff policy.[19]

During the 1980s and 1990s, Keller became increasingly interested in legal history as well as the connections between political history and political science. He organized a joint seminar with Shep Melnick (Brandeis and Boston College) in the 1990s that focused on public policy; one conference to emerge from the seminar resulted in the publication of *Taking Stock: American Government in the Twentieth Century* (1999).[20]

Keller's next book, *Regulating a New Economy,* turned entirely to economic policy during the first three decades of the twentieth century. This book was not as much of a breakthrough in terms of the argument, but Keller did continue to refine his themes about institutional continuity, antistatism, and pluralism. He provided one of the most comprehensive works on economic

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policy in the first half of the twentieth century and, in doing so, challenged New Left historians, who argued that big business was behind the expansion of most economic regulations, as well as proponents of the organizational synthesis, who suggested that modernization was so complete that it swept away the political values and institutions of the nineteenth century.

Regulating a New Economy (1990) explored the obstacles that policymakers confronted even after 1900, when Keller acknowledged that support for centralized government had increased dramatically.[21] Older institutions were persistent and adaptive; ideas about localism and decentralization retained their hold on political culture. With regard to the regulation of technology, for instance, Keller argued that the result of government policies was to foster private market development rather than to create public control of technology. He wrote that government sought "to provide enough of a regulatory presence to ease public concern over the dangers of big business, but not to challenge the efficiencies of scale that bigness brought." In the end, the book suggests that the United States found a middle path: "Ours remains a polity deeply skeptical toward government management of economic affairs, yet full of strong and growing demands upon the state; fearful of corporate size and power, yet hungry for its material fruits."[22] His deeply textured account of policy history still reflected the core arguments of the liberal consensus school that had been made during his days in graduate school at Harvard.

Keller also argued that pluralism was the best way to explain what interests shaped policymaking after 1900. He still rejected the notion that any single interest was most important in public life. Politics was not that simple. Economic regulation, he said, was a result of "expanding, roiling aggregate of interests, issues, institutions, ideas: in sum, an increasingly pluralist American polity."[23] In each domain, he described how there were very different supporters, and opponents, influencing the evolution of different policies.

Finally, Keller still insisted—as he did in the classroom at Brandeis—that he rejected mono-causal arguments and theory. "The trouble with all social theories, William James once observed, is that they leak at every joint. And the trouble with historians," Keller added, "who bind themselves to theory is that they run the risk of forgetting the novelist L. P. Hartley's reminder: 'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.'"[24]

But Keller's last claim was becoming increasingly problematic after several decades of scholarship. In fact, Keller had now published several books that advanced a very clear analytic perspective about policy history, namely, that institutional continuity, antistatism, and pluralism shaped each political era.

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Keller's insistence on describing his research as nontheoretical bothered some critics. In one of the tougher reviews of his book, the business historian K. Austin Kerr argued that Keller had buried a conservative interpretation of American politics with a narrative that claimed to avoid theory. Kerr wrote that Keller put forth a "conservative" interpretation about history that "emphasizes continuity over change, consensus over conflict. He is knowledgeable of much of the scholarship from those of us who disagree with him fundamentally, yet, in offering his corrective to our thinking, Keller has chosen not to challenge directly but instead to offer what amount of assertions, pronouncements that he does not support in a direct fashion and that do not result in a thesis that unfolds with evidence presented through the book."[25] Yet Kerr's review stood out in that most of the reviews were positive.

Keller next turned to social policy in what he saw as the second of a three-part sequel to *Affairs of State,* focusing on the years between the Progressive Era and the New Deal.[26] In *Regulating a New Society* (1994), he extended his analysis to social issues such as education, temperance, and welfare. Tackling these issues, which had been at the center of the new social history, Keller interpreted them as part of a broader conflict between nineteenth-century traditions and institutions with pluralism and industrialization. Making use of comparative analysis, Keller again showed how institutions were resistant to change. The volume, which Martin Shefter said "may well be the most important book on early twentieth-century United States government since Richard Hofstadter's *The Age of Reform,*" continued to mine the same kinds of sources that had been in his previous work, tightly drawing the connections between law and the polity.[27] One year after the publication of *Regulating a New Society,* Simon and Schuster published *The Encyclopedia of the United States Congress*, a seminal analytic reference source about the nation's legislature, which Keller had co-edited with Roger Davison and Donald Bacon.

Keller shifted his gaze toward Harvard University, where his wife, Phyllis Daytz Keller, worked as an associate dean. The book, *Making Harvard Modern* (2001), reflected his interests since it was an institutional history of Harvard, focusing on the process of institutional change.[28] He retired in 2001 and started to work more closely with political scientists, not just scholars of APD but also rational choice scholars. Keller made several visits to the Institute of Governmental Studies at UC Berkeley, then headed by the late Nelson Polsby, and at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University with John Ferejohn and Barry Weingast, among others.

The influence of the social sciences was evident in Keller's most recent book, which brought all of his scholarship together into a sweeping synthesis

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about American history and added a more pointed analytical framework to his findings. In *America's Three Regimes* (2007), Keller argued that three major "regimes" defined different stages of the nation's political development. He characterized the polity as including all the institutions that had an impact on public power: politics, government, bureaucracies, law, the media, nonprofits, and interest groups. But the polity only included institutional structures.

Added to the polity, Keller explained, were regimes that consisted of "a manner, method, or system of rule or government" or "the set of institutions through which a nation makes its fundamental decisions over a sustained period, and the principles that guide those decisions."[29] Keller outlined three regimes: the deferential-republican regime (colonial era through the end of the early Republic); the party-democratic regime (from the Jacksonian Era through the New Deal); and the populist-bureaucratic regime (which has lasted to the present). Each regime, Keller explained, grappled with a common set of issues that included the meaning of freedom, power, and rights.

The book extended the claims that Keller had made about the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century by stating that each polity-regime was extremely durable and he found just "how much historical pressure it takes for a regime to change."[30] Once that pressure emerged, new regimes encountered multiple forces that resisted change and imposed constraints. The old regimes did not disappear easily, and in most cases they lasted as components of what followed. This book was his most explicitly theoretical work, with an effort to make big arguments about large pieces of time.

In the end, Keller has made a number of contributions to our understanding of policy history—beyond his role as an organizational entrepreneur and graduate mentor. Foremost, he has provided the most comprehensive evidence about institutional persistence by showing how government structures are able to change when crisis and challenges emerge, remaining part of the political landscape that replaces them. Second, he has shown that there have been a number of countervailing forces to state-building in the post–Civil War period, including opposition to political centralization and a cultural skepticism about achieving social equality through government. And finally, Keller's work challenges scholarship that has focused on a single driving force behind policy development—whether that be race, gender, business, class, or others—and instead has provided evidence that multiple forces compete for power and shape policy without any achieving total victory.

As I think back to the class at Brandeis, I cannot help but be impressed with how much this founder of the field was able to convey—methodologically, substantively, and analytically—in the course of one semester. Looking

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at the entirety of Keller's career beyond the classroom, it is clear that his contributions to the field make him one of the most important founders and his work continues to influence the new generation of political history. When scholars tackle the perennial question about why state-building is so difficult in United States, the bookshelves filled with Keller's work should be the first place to which they turn.

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NOTES

1. E-mail interview with Morton Keller, by Julian Zelizer, 4 May 2009. I would like to thank Keller for giving me this interview, which was extraordinarily helpful in putting together parts of this essay. I would also like to thank Dirk Hartog and Bill Novak for their helpful comments.

2. This is based on notes from my seminar with Keller.

3. Julian E. Zelizer, "Clio's Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978," *Journal of Policy History* 12 (2000): 369–94.

4. G. Edward White, "The Origins of Modern American Legal History," *University of Virginia Law School*, Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper Series, Paper 118, 2009.

5. John Kenneth Galbraith, *American Capitalism: The Concept of Counterveiling Power* (Boston, 1952), 111.

6. William J. Novak, "The Pluralist State: The Convergence of Public and Private Power in America," in *American Public Life and the Historical Imagination*, ed. Wendy Gamber, Michael Grossberg, and Hendrik Hartog (Notre Dame, Ind., 2003), 32.

7. Adolf A. Berle Jr., *The 20th Century Capitalist Revolution* (New York, 1954).

8. Louis Galambos, "Parsonian Sociology and Post-Progressive History," *Social Science Quarterly* 50 (1969): 25–45.

9. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston, 1951), 5–6.

10. Morton Keller, *In Defense of Yesterday: James M. Beck and the Politics of Conservatism, 1861–1936* (New York, 1958), 80–82.

11. Morton Keller, *The Life Insurance Enterprise: A Study in the Limits of Corporate Power* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 265, 292.

12. Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York, 1968), vii–ix.

13. Thomas Cochran, "The Presidential Synthesis in American History," *American Historical Review* 53 (1948): 748–59.

14. Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 121.

15. Ibid., 313.

16. For an analysis of this fragmentation in U.S. history, see John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America* (Baltimore, 1989).

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17. Stephen Skowronek, "*Affairs of State*," *American Political Science Review* 73 (March 1979): 246–48.

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