

**Labor Law and the State:
The Crises of Unions in the 1980s**

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(ABSTRACT)

This study broadly assesses the role played by political and institutional factors in the widespread union crises that occurred in many Western capitalist democracies during the 1980s. Specifically examined are the effects of state labor law policies on union strike effectiveness in Great Britain and the United States. Three case studies of union strikes in Great Britain reveal that the Thatcher administration's legislative restructuring of industrial relations had a significant impact in exacerbating the crisis of British unions as the 1980s progressed. Three case studies of union strikes in the United States reveal that the Reagan administration's interpretive restructuring of an existing statutory framework played a less significant role in the crisis of American unions during the 1980s. Overall, because of political and institutional variations across the two countries, the organized labor movements in Great Britain and the United States could be characterized as undergoing qualitatively distinct crises during the 1980s. This finding has implications for broader theoretical arguments regarding an inevitable convergence of union decline across Western capitalist democracies.