

The power of politics

We have used the terms "politics" and "political" up to this point as if they were not theoretically problematic, which of course is not true. Each theoretical perspective on the state in Western capitalist democracies has its own conception of politics. "Politics" in the pluralist view means a disagreement over alternative possible decisions in particular situations, in which individuals use their resources to attempt to influence the outcome. Possible outcomes are open-ended, at least from the point of view of the participants, so that political actors calculate the consequences of voting, forming a party, or joining a protest movement. Power is manifest in who wins in specific situations with contingent outcomes. Participation leads to power, via liberal and conservative politics, seeking to influence the actions of a democratic state.

"Politics" in the managerial view means organized conflict between political "parties" – relatively stable coalitions that compete for the chance to rule either the state or an organization. Power leads to participation, via reform and reactionary politics, seeking to control the bureaucratic state.

"Politics" in the class world view is not theorized directly. Insofar as the concept is theorized, politics is the embodiment of class forces, the actions of agents of classes. Politics is significant mainly when the social relations of production are at stake, being either reinforced or potentially transformed. Class politics is class struggle, transforming both power and participation in capitalist states via socialist and fascist politics.

The common element these conceptions share is a recognition of differences of interest and of the possibility of organizing to realize those interests in, through, or against the state. But each theoretical perspective assumes that its home domain defines the categories of political analysis. In this chapter we develop a framework that recognizes the autonomy of institutions, strategic alliances of interests, and contingent actions in situations, in order to show how the traditional categories of politics can be reinterpreted within our theoretical framework. Politics,

in other words, mediates between institutional contradictions and human action.

Theoretical conceptions of politics

Politics, like class, war, or love, is a conflictual relationship. No politics exists if there is genuine consensus or unchallenged rule. Communal sharing and totalitarian repression are extreme cases of an absence of politics. Politics is conjoined with power and therefore entails competition for influence, strategies for domination, and struggles for hegemony under different historical circumstances.

Given differences of interest, a politics is a *strategic alliance*, which creates the possibilities of action to reinforce or change institutional arrangements. The stability of a strategic alliance depends on how widespread the common interests are, what resources are available to define those interests in politically relevant terms, and how stable are the institutional arrangements favoring a given politics. If neither historical nor organizational conditions are favorable, political actions will stop and beliefs will fade, with little change in the "objective" conditions. Politics does not exist outside of a historical and institutional context, regardless of the consciousness of the participants. Political consciousness must be explained by that context; the context cannot be explained by individual consciousness.

Changes in the state's relationship to society are the outcome of political conflicts that constitute the concrete manifestations of institutional contradictions (see Chapter 19). The actions that constitute the visible aspects of a politics are surface phenomena that do not reveal the subterranean connections of politics to history. Politics alone does not make history. Power struggles among individuals and organizations using various strategies to shape the state and the economy in their interests are one factor in historical change but not the only one. Historical changes – whatever their diverse origins – create constantly new situations, in which individuals and organizations must make new calculations and devise new strategies.

The distinction between the causes of a politics and its consequences is critical, because we can understand the causes of a politics in terms of factors at each level of power – situation, structure, system – yet be unable to predict the outcomes of political action, because of the interplay of the same sets of factors. The complex and contingent character of politics prevents prediction. Thus the outcomes of political action are not clues to the basic character of politics, because the intentions of the political actors may be confounded by historical and structural factors over which actors have neither understanding nor control.

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A type of politics cannot be understood simply in terms of a specific social base of support or a particular set of tactics. Political ideologies frequently identify a "natural" social base expected to support a particular politics. The success of political leaders, elites, or class agents in actually mobilizing that social base is highly contingent, both historically and nationally. In North American history, workers have variously supported conservatives, liberals, reformers, socialists, racist movements, populist movements – and, more recently, have withdrawn from the political arena. Depending on the historical circumstances, socialist parties have been as likely to get support from white-collar and middle-class groups, or even peasants, as conservative parties are to get support from the blue-collar working class.

We choose to identify a politics by its ideology and the issues it emphasizes, leaving open the question of situational choices of tactics and the resulting success in mobilizing support. A given type of politics cannot be defined in terms of its specific tactics or means of influence in particular political situations because each politics may sometimes use voting, legislative bargaining, personal influence, bureaucratic maneuvering, or street demonstrations, depending on the strategic situation. The association between political strategy and specific tactics must remain an empirically open issue. The tendency to regard particular forms of political tactics as a sufficient basis for classifying types of politics (protest, violence, voting, for example) has prevented systematic analysis of the interplay between types of politics and of the substantive interests and visions of social possibilities and dangers about which politics revolves.

The political spectrum

Typologies tend, by their nature, to be static. The problems of transformation of one politics into another, or the overlapping and even seemingly incompatible associations of a given ideology or issue with a particular social or class base, are not dealt with by abstract types. Such seemingly irrational alliances are frequent in the real world of political conflict.

The normal political spectrum in the Western capitalist democracies ranges from socialist politics on the Left to fascist politics on the Right

¹ It should be noted that the concept of ideology also has a special meaning within each of the perspectives: as individual beliefs that influence action and may be either true or false; as the rationalizing symbols that unify an organized group and mobilize it for collective action; and as the historically embedded symbols that express the hegemony or resistance of a class. Here we use the term in the second sense. The logics of institutional contradictions are the theoretical counterpart of the political concept of ideology at the societal level.

Left ←-----Center-----→ Right

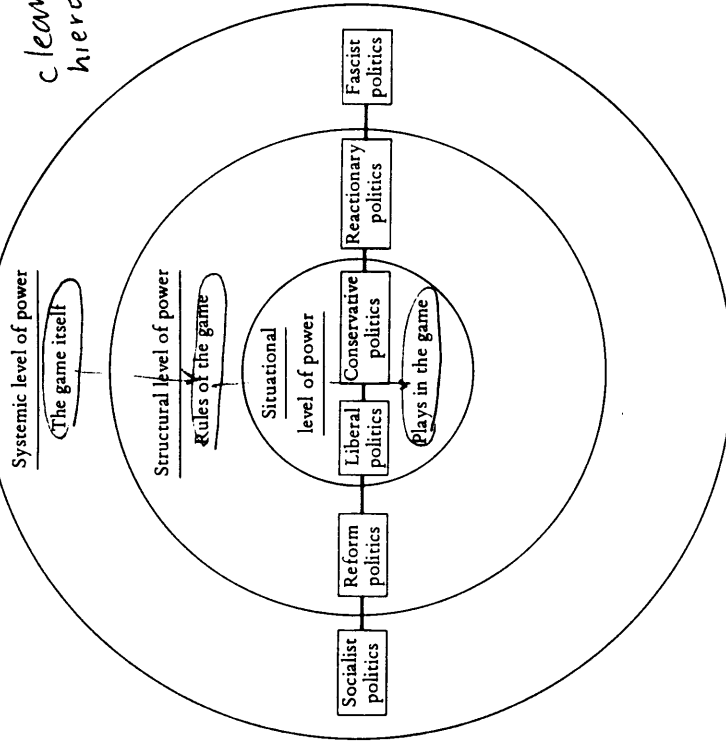


Figure 1. The political spectrum

(see Figure 1). Particular societies have only a certain range of politics within the whole spectrum at any given time.

The six types of politics differ in their typical strategies, the ideological principles they use to gain support, and the actors who rely upon those strategies in mobilizing support around certain kinds of issues. Each type of politics has its own distinctive qualities in particular historical situations and in a given society. We offer these types as the likely alternative ideological claims, as a basis for appeals for support, and as the structural components of significant strategic alliances in capitalist democracies. Our examples, similarly, are intended only to be illustrative.

Most political parties or social movements contending for power will

center their ideology and strategy around one of these poles. However, political forces are frequently forced to move between types of politics as historical conditions change the potential bases of support, elite strategies, and institutional contexts. Conservative politics may move in a reactionary direction or vice versa. Socialist politics may become reform politics. The types developed here are meant as cross-sectional snapshots of a central tendency abstracted from the multiple pulls and pushes experienced by any given alliance and its elites in particular situations.

We believe that the ideologies and issues of a particular politics can be characterized by the situational, structural, and systemic levels of power at which such a politics operates. What we call conservative and liberal politics operate in those limited situations defined by an individual or group's position in existing political and economic markets. What is at stake is the distribution of income in the market and influence over decisions of an existing government. Reactionary and reform politics operate in structures defined by the organization of state authority and the institutionalized access to it that different organizations are able to achieve. What is at stake is the dominance of particular organizations over control of the production of goods and state policies. Fascist and socialist politics operate at the systemic level where the stakes are the institutional relationship among capitalism, the state, and democracy.² What is at stake is the hegemony of all of the institutions associated with capitalist democracies, not only the commodity form of social relations but also the bureaucratic form of domination and the parochialism of an individualized political culture of citizenship.

Liberal, reform, and socialist politics are more *democratic* than their counterparts, in the sense that their ideologies stress popular participation in political and economic markets, public control over social resources, and abolition of the systemic power of capital, respectively. This is the essential distinction between Left and Right politics.

Liberal and conservative politics

Liberal politics attempts to solve problems by transforming unmet social needs into marketable commodities (health services to be bought and sold, housing subsidies) and by assuring that all people will be able to participate equally in the labor market, whether through the elimination of racial and class barriers to occupational mobility or through special training or education. Liberal politics assumes that the market can be

² One of the lacunae of our approach has been to omit consideration of family, ethnicity, religion, and gender as central institutions. This task must be taken up in our future work.

made to work more democratically and hence more efficiently. Liberal ideology holds that there are barriers in poor education and discrimination to full participation as citizens in the political marketplace and as workers or consumers in the economic marketplace and that the state should do whatever is necessary to assure rights to enter the appropriate markets.

Liberal politics dominated the 1960s and the early 1970s in the United States. Large parts of the civil rights movement and the women's movement were liberal politics, even though they were sometimes associated with social movements using disruptive political tactics. These movements fought against the use of ascriptive criteria – race and gender – in the operation of the market. Social protests, which sometimes led to violent confrontations between police and counter-demonstrators, demanded that blacks and women be given equal pay for equal work, that housing and mortgage finance be allocated solely on the ability to pay, and that job advancement be determined by skills alone.

At a partisan level, liberal Democrats – like Kennedy and Johnson between 1960 and 1968 – pushed through various government programs to make the market work as it ideally should. A broad array of job training and special education programs was created to prepare people who had suffered generations of discrimination and poverty to compete effectively in the labor market. So, too, people were given special income supplements to purchase goods and services in the private market that they would otherwise be unable to afford. The code word that symbolically unified this politics was “equal opportunity” – opportunity for all individuals to compete equally and freely in the marketplace without regard to parentage, race, or gender. Equality would allow economic markets to operate more efficiently as well.

Conservative politics takes the operations of markets as self-regulating and attempts to limit the scope of state intervention in the belief that such interventions tend to undermine the efficiency of the market. Government efforts to support household incomes not only divert societal resources from more productive uses but encourage state dependency on the part of those who would otherwise work at lower wages. The result is a suboptimal level of economic growth and unemployment. Conservative ideology holds that people make their own choices to participate in political and economic markets. Individuals have the responsibility of deciding whether or not to acquire salable skills in the labor market that will give them higher-income jobs, and whether to save for a future day when they cannot find work or face extraordinary medical or educational expenses. State compensation reinforces habits and cultural values that erode both social integration and the boundary lines between state, economy, and family.

Recent examples of conservative politics are the tax revolts that oc-

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curred in many Western nations during the 1970s and 1980s. These movements, such as that which radically cut back state property and income tax revenues in California (Proposition 13 in 1978 and Proposition 9 in 1980), were nonpartisan, populist revolts against the growth of the state and its extraction of resources from private income, although the tax bite in the United States has been lower than in almost any other Western state. Although many interests were served by tax reduction, the prevailing ideology was that incomes earned in the private market should be protected from ever greater government demands.³

A more prosaic form of conservative politics is the effort to deregulate private industries (such as airlines and gasoline in the late 1970s under the presidency of Jimmy Carter). Conservative politicians, like President Eisenhower, are particularly wary of government-industry links. Thus it was Eisenhower, not a reformist or socialist politician, who first decried the "military-industrial complex" in the United States. Even though Eisenhower was a military commander, he feared the buildup of powerful bureaucratic empires that undercut representative democracy and the free market.

Although both conservative and liberal politics reflect the ideology that social values can be most efficiently and equitably produced and allocated through competitive markets, they differ in the extent to which

3. The conservative response in the 1970s and early 1980s to the reemergence of social movements — feminists, environmentalists, gays, the elderly, Chicanos — was both political and ideological. An example of an ideological response is one by political scientist Aaron Wildavsky (1982), who reinterprets the three theoretical perspectives, first into political responses, then into "cultures." Without dealing with the organizational and economic bases of these cultures, he distinguishes them in ways similar to our own usages. His equivalent to the managerial perspective is called "hierarchical collectivism," which "imposes order centrally through a division of labor.... From hierarchy comes order, including the rules for competition." Wildavsky's equivalent of the pluralist perspective is called "competitive individualism," which "imposes order by maintaining agreement on the basis of freedom of contract. Leaders are chosen like every other commodity, by bidding and bargaining. From individualism comes economic growth." Both of these cultures, in alliance, "constitute the modern social establishment," although there are "tensions" between the cultures (p. 47). Hierarchical collectivism and competitive individualism are "balanced [V. Almond and Verba] cultures; the strong group boundaries of strong prescription of behavioral norms in hierarchies reinforce one another, as do the weak boundaries and lack of prescriptions in individualistic markets" (p. 58). "Egalitarian sectarianism" is Wildavsky's *bête noire* because it believes in "equality of result." This culture is sectarian because it is not willing to compromise, does not believe in established authority, and is radical. Conservative groups cannot be sectarian by definition, because they believe in authority. The paradox of this argument is that Wildavsky believes that the egalitarian sectarian culture has enormous power to "coerce other interests" by successfully influencing government action to regulate and control them. The specific sectarian interests he mentions are those around which particular groups have mobilized: the young, women, the elderly, blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans. He does not mention corporations, except to note that they were among those coerced by regulation.

they wish to use the state to guarantee equal access to political and economic markets for those without skill or motivation. The issue is whether the state should be used to extend the market principle to more and more aspects of human activity, including residual compensation for those individuals who suffer disadvantages in functioning in various types of markets. Political participation is regarded by both as an extension of the rights for voters and citizens that workers and consumers have already achieved in the economic sphere: the right to offer oneself to an employer to be hired and the right to buy if one has the money.

Reform and reactionary politics

Reform politics attempts to replace markets with state authority over corporate and labor elites. The welfare state represents the form taken by efforts to centralize and plan economic growth and extend its benefits to more of the population.

One of the most advanced forms of reform politics was advocated by the Social Democrats in Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s. The Swedish Social Democrats, backed by the national labor organization, which comprises some 90 percent of all workers, has used the state to direct ever more extensively the operation of the capitalist market. The Social Democratic Party has used workers' pension funds to produce housing and to direct the flow of public capital into those industries that are likely to be the basis for long-term economic growth. Certain segments of the Social Democratic Party have supported a plan for gradual transfer of stock ownership to the labor unions. These collective wage-earner funds would accumulate by setting aside a share of profits each year into funds owned by the unions, eventually perhaps producing union ownership of a majority of stock in the largest firms.

The ideological assumption of this reform politics is that the working class and the general public can use public authority to supplant democratically the operation of capitalist markets. Like reactionaries, reformists believe that the market does not work by itself and will not by itself serve working-class or popular interests. Rather, workers and citizens must use the state to force it to serve these interests.

Reactionary politics also attempts to supplant the market, sometimes via policies and agencies controlled by and serving the interests of corporate elites. If reform politics is oriented toward minimizing the social costs of private production, reactionary politics is oriented toward maximizing its private benefits.

Corporatism could be either reform or reactionary politics, depending on the constellation of interests represented in corporatist structures and the balance of power between them. Corporatist arrangements tend to

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exclude unorganized groups, which often include large numbers of workers, as well as interests that are not organized through production, whether territorial, communal, or consumer, for instance. Corporatist arrangements thus tend to be biased against working-class interests because of the systemic ("private") power of capital, a power untouched by all of the politically likely organizational arrangements usually described as corporatist. The political nature of working-class power means that working-class organizations have more control over their members than do capitalist organizations over any individual corporation (Offe 1984). As a result, corporatist politics tends to be reactionary.

France after World War II exhibited reactionary politics. With much of France's industrial plant in ruins from wartime destruction and much of its capitalist class discredited by collaboration with the Vichy regime, the Gaullists threw the state into the breach. The gradual elaboration of state planning was initiated by the state in collaboration with the elite of French industry. Through low-interest loans, tariff protections, tax credits, and cartel formation, the state reshaped the industrial structure of France. Basic sectors were modernized, capital was concentrated, and French industry regained its ability to finance investment from profits. Labor was largely excluded from the planning process, and its political marginality was evident in the lack of real emphasis of the plan on full employment, wage increases, and public services, including housing.

America is not immune to reactionary politics. During World War I, the United States experimented with corporatist arrangements (such as the War Industries Board), which allowed industrialists to set collaboratively their own prices, production levels, and production designs. Once again, labor unions were either excluded from the process or incorporated in a symbolic fashion.

The ideology and issues of the Reagan administration in the United States during the 1980s are a fusion of reactionary and conservative politics. The regime makes use of an ideology of a national security threat to expand the military budget, while silencing domestic opposition to draconian cuts in social programs. Military spending is in effect an industrial policy which benefits the profitability of America's largest corporations. Such use of state power to benefit corporate profitability is an example of reactionary politics. However, the regime is also involved in dismantling various forms of state support for household incomes and for corporate profitability. To the extent that the regime cuts back both on support for corporate farm prices and support for popular access to health care, it is an example of conservative politics.

For both reformist and reactionary politics, political issues in the society revolve around the failure to plan and regulate both market and political competition. The private market is irrational and chaotic and

must be controlled by responsible state agencies acting in conjunction with the most powerful private interest groups, mainly business and labor. Both stress the importance of public expenditures made possible by privately controlled economic growth. The economy has changed rapidly, becoming ever more interdependent and dominated by large-scale organizations. Without sustained state intervention, economic growth and full employment are not possible.

Another major issue is created for both politics by demands from the citizenry, which are frequently irrational and disruptive, if not violent and narrowly self-interested. The proper kinds of channels for incorporated participation must be created, which leaves room for decisive action by political elites. These two issues are viewed as connected, in that an uncontrolled market generates excessive demands, both political and economic. The political strategy that follows is to reorganize the state and thereby plan the market and regulate participation. Both reform and reactionary politics argue that reorganizing the state will both prevent the excesses of a privately controlled economy from bringing disaster and prevent extreme forms of popular political demands from disrupting the orderly functioning of the state.

Reform and reactionary politics revolve around the principle of excluding state authority and differ in the extent to which they will allow class conflict to continue openly. Both reform and reactionary politics regard the state as the central institution of control, not the "unseen" hand of the market. The regulation of the economy increasingly requires state intervention, which means that mass actions by mobilized social groups must be controlled by bureaucratic and political elites if the state is to function rationally. Reactionary and reform politics share the ideology that social values can be rationally produced and allocated through state coordination. Corporatist forms of authoritative bargaining among corporate, labor, and state elites are a major area of conflict between reform and reactionary politics.

Socialist and fascist politics

Socialist and fascist politics aim to politicize relationships between all institutions, including the state and the economy, through the use of mass political mobilization, by either expanding or reducing democratic participation. These politics aim to reduce the autonomy of the institutions of the state and the economy through the political instrument of a mass party.

Socialist politics has not flourished in the United States, although parties and movements using that label have sometimes won office or taken to the streets. Socialist politics has a longer history in a nation like

Italy, where large segments of the labor movement draw upon socialist and anarchist traditions, and yet where the state is a pervasive, but nonautonomous institution. In Italy, the rank-and-file labor movement, various leftist political parties and movements, and community groups created a powerful socialist politics during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Through mass movements, workers and citizens in Italy attempted to create alternative institutions for the regulation of production and public services. Factory councils met to try to reshape the organization of production, and community groups, public workers, and clients tried to politicize public schools, hospitals, city planning, and public transportation. For a time at least, it seemed that the boundaries that had separated firm, government, and community were about to crumble. The ideological assumption of this socialist politics is that parliamentary representation alone cannot reshape either the state or capitalism in the interests of the working class or the people. Instead, mass movements must broaden the channels of political representation to create centers of popular power in the very operation of state bureaucracies and capitalist firms.

Fascist politics aims to politicize both the state and the economy through mass party control while minimizing democratic and, particularly, working-class influence. Fascist politics emerged in Italy and Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. The German National Socialists built up a mass party during the period of depression and hyperinflation, when class conflicts paralyzed the state and opposing political forces were taking increasingly to the streets. The Nazi movement was based on the symbolic unification of a national master race of Aryans. The party established a counterstate and used its police powers to crush political opposition and attempt the annihilation of Jews, homosexuals, Gypsies, and communists. Once in control of the government, the Nazis transformed the principles of law and bureaucratic rationality that did not conform to their political objectives of complete control over all aspects of social life.

Independent organizations, particularly the labor unions, were destroyed and rebuilt under control of the party state. Production and distribution were politically regulated, particularly for war. The power and profitability of capital were politically enforced by party and state. The ideological assumption of fascist politics was that parliamentary politics could not realize the national will or achieve national greatness. Rather, both the state and the economy needed direction by a nationalist mass party.

For both socialist and fascist politics, political issues in the society revolve around the symbiosis between capitalist production and the democratic state. They are not seen as separate institutions, changeable by incremental political demands. State planning cannot overcome the

crisis tendencies in capitalism or provide the charismatic leadership needed to unify a society torn by class struggle. The demands on the state to compensate for the failures of the capitalist economy prevent the state from meeting social needs, push it toward fiscal crisis, and deprive the citizenry of any effective control over their government. The political strategy that follows is to transform political participation, by no longer recognizing the boundary between the public and the private sectors or that between bureaucratic and political authority. Neither the anarchy of capitalist production and markets nor the political limits of the state can be changed without a transformation of both institutions.

Although both socialist and fascist politics revolve around the issue of expanding party control over the society, they are in fundamental conflict over whether or not the state will be used to guarantee capitalist production relations or to transform those relations democratically. Both socialist and fascist politics view the creation of a politically organized mass electorate as the central historical tendency of democracy. Both view its political mobilization as potentially threatening to the state's capacity to reproduce capitalist production relations. The ability to transform the scope of democracy by expanding the authority of the mass political party is thus a central ideological question.

Both fascist and socialist politics are oriented to and supported by a wide variety of social movements. Socialist and fascist politics are associated with the social conditions that class theory takes as normal, that is, where class struggle and economic crisis are endemic, challenging the institutional boundaries that separate the state from the capitalist economy and from democratic participation. These politics both operate at the systemic level of power. However, because the class perspective has never successfully developed a theory of the structural and situational levels of power through which concrete politics operates, there has been a historic disjuncture between the internal languages and public ideologies of these politics. One important issue in assessing the powers of theory is the documentation of the extent to which their political strategies have been crippled because of this disjuncture.

Institutional tendencies and political types

Each pair of politics has a double relation with key historical processes, being shaped by them and in turn reinforcing them. Each type of politics finds particular institutional tendencies to be problematic because its ideologies, and the theories upon which they rest, cannot easily account for them and its political actors cannot easily adapt their strategies to deal with them. The historical tendencies that a given type of politics finds most worrisome provide the basis for the rhetoric concerning the

pathologies of contemporary life from which the politics offers deliverance.

Liberal and conservative politics emerge within the context of political and economic markets, capable of converting political issues into incremental bargains around which individual preferences are compromised. Once in existence, liberal and conservative politics create political issues that can best be settled within political and economic markets in which marginal exchanges can be continuously transacted. When politics is focused around the kinds of issues that can be acted upon by incremental gains and losses, other kinds of issues tend to be defined as either illegitimate, unrealistic, or utopian.

For liberal and conservative politics, the growth of the public sector and the emergence of noninstitutionalized social movements are problematic historical developments. The accelerating growth of the public sector is seen as undercutting the private market, increasing inefficiencies, and reducing freedom of choice. The tendency for the state to absorb ever greater proportions of the total societal wealth and regulate market exchanges is defined ideologically as threatening to overwhelm and distort the operation of healthy economic and political competition.

Liberal and conservative politics also find the periodic eruption of social protest to be problematic. Such protests, particularly if they are class-based, suggest that political and economic markets do not work properly. On the one hand, protest implies that opportunities for individual advancement are structurally blocked and cannot be improved substantially by special programs of education or market support. On the other hand, the emergence of such protests implies that party competition has been unable to aggregate individual and group interests into policies the citizenry will accept. Such protests tend to thrust un-negotiable group interests into the political arena, reducing chances for incremental bargaining and resolution of conflicts through compromise.

Both liberal and conservative politics attempt to transform the working class into competing individuals and groups, in order to affirm and reinforce the market as the instrument by which individual, group, and societal goals can be achieved.

Reform and reactionary politics emerge within the context of a powerful and centralized bureaucratic state. Political actors and issues are oriented toward expanding or contracting the role of the state, and conflict revolves around the role of the peak associations of corporations, unions, and the state itself. Once in existence, as a result of the expansion of the bureaucratic state, reform and reactionary politics tend to convert the rationalization of the state into a central issue.

For reform and reactionary politics, the fragmentation of the state and political class struggle are problematic historical tendencies. The frag-

mentation of the state into multiple agencies and programs, each symbolically dependent upon an external constituency of narrow interest groups, re-creates the anarchy of the market within the state. Such fragmentation makes it impossible to rationalize state activity and for the state to play a coherent and directive role in coordinating economic and social life.

Reform and reactionary politics also find political class struggle difficult to handle. Intense ideological conflict between classes prevents the state from rationalizing economic life and makes it enormously difficult for corporate and labor elites to coordinate their claims on the social product.

Both reform and reactionary politics try to convert class demands into party organizations and trade unions that control their members and become the instruments for negotiation between political and economic elites. Reform and reactionary politics also convert individual needs and preferences into visible organizational demands by controlling and screening them via interest groups and political parties. The leaders of social groups are coopted into becoming defenders of a negotiated order after political bargains are struck.

Socialist and fascist politics emerge when the institutional contradictions among capitalism, the state, and democracy become visible. Socialist and fascist politics convert institutional boundaries into central political questions and manifest themselves in class struggles and nationalist social movements that challenge the fundamental character of these social relations.

For socialist and fascist politics, the adaptability of the capitalist state to political and economic crises and the privatization and individualization of social life are problematic historical tendencies. The ability of the capitalist state to manage incipient mass movements with repression, cooptation, and symbolic reform and its capacity to manage economic crises through state planning tend to convert potential revolutionary movements into opportunities for either reform or reaction.

Socialist and fascist politics attempt to discover the "true" underlying interests of the population by creating a vision of a socialist community or a homogeneous nationalist state constructing a new basis for the organic unity of the population. The political relevance of social and cultural diversity is denied, and the boundaries between the legitimate jurisdictions of organizations are broken down to create a mass base for revolutionary parties.

The power of politics

Situational power, we remind the reader, exists where open and informed competition between relatively equal participants – individuals

and groups – gains support from issue-oriented constituencies and exercises influence over responsive political leaders. Structural power is created in the course of elite conflict to create stable structures of domination – in the form of complex organizations with legal authority – that will be able to control the agenda of future political situations. Systemic power is made visible when the existing relations among capitalism, the state, and democracy are threatened and reproduced, or transformed. At stake are the institutional logics governing situational and structural power. Systemic power maintains or transforms the relationships among the capitalist economy, the bureaucratic state, and a democratic political culture.

These levels of power are not separable in the real world, in which conflict occurs precisely to *define* the kind of politics that will rule: the issues within the consensus or the social possibilities that are ruled out, so to speak, because of capitalist hegemony, elite domination, or group competition. The dominance of given types of politics may cause one or another structural element to function as if it were another type. That is, an organization (government agency, political party, corporation, labor union) may function in liberal and conservative politics as if it were a voluntary association of individuals and may be constrained to operate within certain parameters to which it would not be limited in reform or reactionary politics. Conversely, a similar organization may be forced to function in socialist or fascist politics as an agent of class stability or transformation.

We therefore cannot use ordinary descriptive language to explain the role of individuals and organizations functioning in different types of politics. The actions of Mayor Richard Lee of New Haven (Dahl 1961), Robert Moses of New York (Caro 1974), or Joseph Stalin of Tiflis (Deutscher 1949) in a given situation may represent their own personal careers and fortunes; serve the interests of Yale University, the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; or be implicated in the transformation of the role of the state in capital accumulation. An individual may be an agent of personal influence, organizational domination, or institutional hegemony. Conversely, a person ideologically defined as an agent of an organization or class may only be acting on his or her own behalf or in behalf of the power and privileges of the organization – party, union, corporation – that gives him or her a position of authority. Concrete historical evidence as well as theoretical criteria must be used to make those difficult judgments.

The struggle to define the rhetorical character of a politics is an important aspect of the determination of the “cultural consensus” – the content of ideological hegemony – in a given historical period. Successful

isolation of individual political actors as “voters” or “participants” from their organizational and class bases renders the pluralist perspective more plausible as an adequate theory of politics and power. But one can recognize situational influence and liberal or conservative politics as having real consequences without severing the links of that politics to theories that do not ignore elite conflict or class struggle.

Politics and institutions

The domination of particular institutions in a society will tend to strengthen the analogous types of politics. In the United States, where capitalist production and commodity markets, both political and economic, are ideologically and institutionally dominant, liberal and conservative politics, circling around the Center and seeking to maintain and extend the market principle of capitalism to the state and to democracy, have been historically most influential. The hegemony of capitalist social relations of production and the capacity of the state to repress political alternatives, coupled with its institutional weakness, have combined to constrain other politics from emerging. Other types of politics have been marginal.

Where the state has become the center of political and class conflict, as in post-World War II France and Sweden, reform and reactionary politics, seeking to extend the principle of the authority of the state to capitalism and democracy, have been strongest. Where the contradictions in capitalism and democracy have broken down the institutional boundaries that protect each from the other, as in early twentieth-century Italy, Spain, and Germany, socialist and fascist politics have emerged, seeking to transform the state and democracy in the interests of, or against, capitalist rule.

The stronger and more centralized states in European societies, coupled with much larger socialist and communist parties and movements, have combined to move the political spectrum farther both to the right and to the left and thus to a deeper critique of the role of the state in society. Issues of nationalization of industry, socialized medicine, state planning, democratic conditions of work have become important in many European countries, whereas they remain peripheral debates in the United States. Such issues spark abstract discussions of vague possibilities in the United States; they have been the immediate focus of mass political demands in Europe. Similarly, right-wing parties and fascist movements have been stronger in Europe than in the United States.

Obviously, social reality cannot be captured as neatly as these formulas suggest, but these are the theoretical connections between history and politics. Each politics, counting for help on the historical tendencies

identified by an associated theory, extrapolates to the future, counting on history to help them win their debates and their battles.

The domination of particular types of politics may, under some conditions, transform the agents and issues of other politics. This is the "external" power of the politics. The dominance of liberal and conservative politics converts classes into competing individuals and groups, thereby affirming and reinforcing the market as the instrument that achieves individual, group, and societal goals and converts part of the state into a competitive, representative arena. The domination of reform and reactionary politics converts class demands into working-class parties and trade unions that control their members and become instruments of negotiation between political and economic elites. Political parties and pressure groups aggregate individual preferences into visible or ganizational demands. Leaders are coopted into defense of a hierarchical social order. When the hegemony stabilizing the institutional arrangements of a given society becomes visible or breaks down, socialist or fascist politics may break through and convert individualized and fragmented interests into political solidarity and class or nationalist movements.

Conclusions

In summary, liberal and conservative politics derive from the historical emergence of political and economic markets in which limited individual preferences can be freely exchanged. The pluralist perspective developed simultaneously as an ideology defending the politics of democracy and as a theory that tries to explain the role of political and economic markets. Reform and reactionary politics derive from the emergence of relatively autonomous economic and political bureaucratic organizations that attempt to rationalize societal wealth production and distribution. The vocabulary and hypotheses of the managerial perspective can be used to analyze the structure of bureaucracies that form the political base of reform and reactionary politics. Socialist and fascist politics derive from institutional breakdowns, which have the potential to transform both the economy and the state. The class perspective until now has provided the primary analytic tools with which to analyze the history of those class struggles that make the economy political and the polity economic.

Certain historical processes therefore correspond both to certain kinds of political theories and to certain kinds of politics. The success of these politics provides the corresponding theories with empirical data and historical evidence. The theories produced during those periods provide the corresponding politics with the ideological symbols and vocabulary

that are most appropriate to their strategy of achieving political power. When historical processes are not compatible with a particular range of politics, the theoretical tools each politics has used historically are inadequate to inform the tactical and strategic decisions the politics confronts under these adverse circumstances. Thus the pluralist perspective is particularly ill suited to guide interest groups under conditions of polarized class struggle or massive state interventionism. Similarly, the managerial perspective is equally ill suited to inform elite strategies under conditions of class attempts to politicize public bureaucracies or where diverse social groups resist unitary political aggregation. Finally, the class perspective is at a loss to inform popular movements under conditions of particularistic interest politics or elite coalitions with other politically hostile parties. At such times, political practice tends to be ad hoc, opportunistic, violent, and often debilitating.

If such historical conditions are problematic for politics, they provide social scientists with a rich research opportunity. For it is precisely the conditions of *conversion* that are not apparent and require analysis. Thus the pluralist perspective alone cannot explain the conversion of classes or organizational interests into individualized political actors. The managerial perspective alone cannot explain the conversion of classes or individuals into organizational forces. Finally, the class perspective alone cannot explain the conversion of individuals and organizational elites into political classes. This reflects the partial nature of social theory, the autonomy of capitalism, the state, and democracy as institutional developments, and the periodic coherence of different kinds of politics. In the discrepancies and inconsistencies among historical processes, political actions, and abstract theories, one will find some of the most exciting problems for contemporary political analysis.

The ideological aspects of politics represent the appropriation or reshaping of theory for political ends. The political aspects of theory represent the conceptual identification of historical tendencies that provide the material basis for particular kinds of political strategies. Conversely, theories generated from historical tendencies that do not support that particular form of politics provide the concepts to explain the failure. Theories provide politics with a rational basis, whereas politics provides theory with an empirical basis. Pluralism can be seen, for example, as the political ideology of capitalist democracy but the political theory of communism.

The implication of the assertion that particular forms of politics must rely on the analytic tools of particular theories is that theories do *not* directly contain an implicit politics. Rather each politics contains an implicit theory. Theories of politics are partially validated by the relative

success of different kinds of politics. Theory is political only to the extent that it is dependent upon the success of particular kinds of politics in changing history. To the extent that theory informs a given politics, thereby increasing its chances for success, and to the extent that theories can inform only a delimited set of politics, theory is political.

The power of contradictions

We can now summarize our argument, utilizing concepts drawn from all three perspectives. An adequate framework for an explanation of state actions, state structures, and the state's function in society cannot be derived from any one of the three classic theoretical perspectives.

Historical relations of capitalism, the state, and democracy

The institutional separation of capitalism, the state, and democracy furthered the development of each. Capitalist development was facilitated by a nation-state that guaranteed property rights. The requirements of capitalist accumulation were more likely to be assured by institutional separation than if the state were captured by specific industrial or class interests. Also, the inequalities created by the capitalist economy were concealed by the formal rights of all citizens to buy and sell all factors of production, including land and labor. The population was symbolically integrated by the emerging rights of citizenship, which established a form of universal equality – the adult franchise – as a substitute for the economic equality denied by capitalism.

Similarly, the expansion of the bureaucratic state was made possible by its institutional separation from the capitalist economy. Mass political participation could be limited to attempts to influence state actions; if the state had a considerable degree of autonomy, thereby propelling its expansion. And state autonomy allowed capitalists to use their political power to compensate for their growing inability to reproduce the commodity form through the market alone. State expansion was an alternative to politicization of the capitalist system itself. Autonomy allowed interest groups to capture particular pieces of public authority and others to compete with them. Both state and capital were therefore insulated from the full impact of mass democratic participation.

The state developed its own array of legal powers and was not constitutionally responsible for the operations of the economy, nor could it