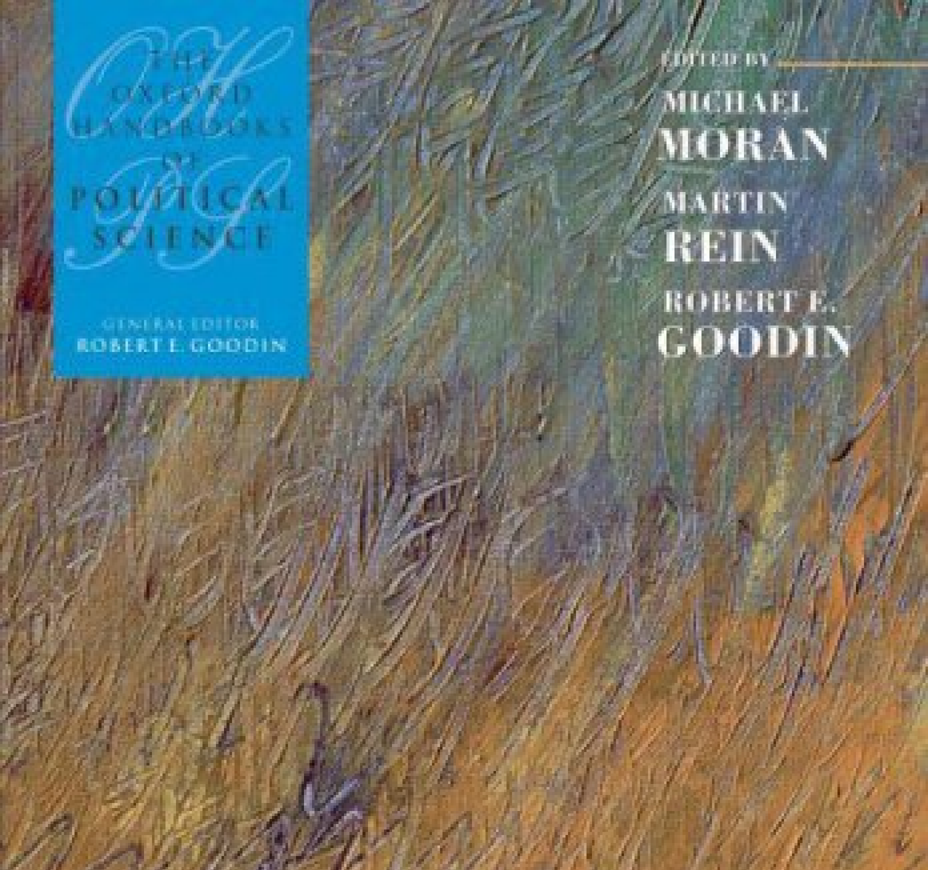

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But the retrenchers had broader sights from the start. The really big prizes were the huge Medicare and social security programs. In institutionalist terms, the programs are well defended because they are so popular with the broad public. The popularity of the programs is owed in no small measure simply to the fact that they help a lot of people and are not means tested, and thus involve none of the humiliating rituals of certifying need, investigation, and surveillance that characterize means-tested programs. Indeed, social security is widely believed to be a social insurance system, a misapprehension that was in fact carefully cultivated by the proponents of the program during its early years in the 1930s. And then there is the fact that both programs have huge constituencies of supporters among the tens of millions of seniors or soon-to-be seniors who receive benefits. These are exactly the features that, according to an institutionalist perspective, should lead to the continuation and expansion of the programs.

These features have indeed bred caution among opponents of the programs, but it is the persistence of their campaign, and their innovative strategies that I will pause to describe in somewhat greater detail. To be sure, no one proposes to do away with the programs. Rather the argument for change is always on the grounds that the programs are financially unsound and need to be restructured in order to be saved. And the main solution proffered is privatization. In other words, the conservative animus against these programs is forged not only from their general animosity toward social spending; they are also animated by the profits that privatization promises, for health care providers and insurance companies in the case of Medicare, and for Wall Street firms that will handle private pension accounts in the case of social security.

There are in fact financial problems looming for Medicare, which provides federal health insurance for 41 million of the aged, and some of the disabled, and is paid for by a combination of payroll taxes, general revenues, deductibles, and co-payments. The financial problems expected in the future are not simply the result of demography, of the aging of the baby boomer generation, and longer lifespans, but are more importantly the result of anticipated continuing increases in health care costs (CBO 2003). In other words, the Medicare program is affected by the crisis in health care costs that affects all Americans. The Bush tax cuts, by depleting future revenues, of course make this problem much more serious. The recently passed Medicare Prescription Drug Act takes steps toward a market solution to this at least partially manufactured crisis. Well, not really a market solution. Rather, the legislation moves us further toward the creation of an unregulated market in health care, but a market saturated with public funds. The legislation contains subsidies for just about everyone in the health care business, including doctors, hospitals, insurance companies, and for-profit health plans. Moreover, the legislation forbids Medicare from bargaining with the pharmaceutical companies to bring down the cost of prescription medicines.

More than that, the legislation contains what may be important pilot programs that move in the direction of privatization. Private health plans are offered $12 billion in subsidies to compete with traditional Medicare, and are also guaranteed that no

HMO will be paid less for a patient than the provider would receive in the traditional fee-for-service Medicare program. This is called an experiment, and it will be launched in six major cities in 2010 (Meyerson 2003). Tax-free Health Savings Accounts are also introduced, which actually means another tax cut for the better off. And a provision in the legislation requires that a crisis be declared if more than 45 per cent of Medicare funding is expected to be drawn from general revenues in a seven-year budget projection (Skocpol 2004). As for prescription drugs for seniors, the bill provides a decidedly patchy and limited solution. A senior will have to pay $3,600 out of the first $5,100 in annual costs of drugs before the government starts reimbursing costs.

It is noteworthy that the Bush administration and Republican leaders in the Congress were singularly determined to pass this legislation. As Elizabeth Drew reports:

> Republicans allowed no House Democrats and only two Senate Democrats, Max Baucus and John Breaux, both of whom supported the Medicare bill, to participate in the House Senate conference setting its final terms. It had been passed by the house by a five vote margin (220 215) just before 6:00 AM, after the Republican leaders made extraordinary efforts to persuade reluctant members a process that took three hours rather than the usual fifteen minutes for a roll call vote. Republican House leaders made offers of campaign funds to reluctant conservatives; they also threatened one Republican, who was planning to retire, with cutting off money for his son, who was running to replace him. This sort of rough stuff is without recent precedent. (Drew 2004)

There were reasons for the rough stuff. Not least, the legislation allowed the administration to trumpet the new subsidies for prescription drugs in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election, while taking large steps toward the privatization of Medicare.

Social Security is far and away the biggest prize among the social programs, and it will also be the hardest to grasp. The program was initiated during the crisis of the Great Depression, when massive unemployment and its politically destabilizing effects made public solutions imperative. As high levels of unemployment persisted, resistant even to the upturn of the economy in 1934, New Deal politicians became persuaded that it was important to remove the aged from the labor market. They were also helped to reach that conclusion by the huge numbers of the elderly who were mobilizing behind Francis Townsend in a movement that demanded pensions far more generous than social security would ever pay. Once the program was established and eligibility gradually expanded, while benefits rose especially during the tumultuous 1960s, the program became very popular indeed. It helped that the program was widely understood to be "insurance," and therefore not welfare, much as its early proponents intended. Then the tide turned, largely under the influence of the business mobilization that began in the 1970s, and especially of the think tanks that were created with business money. Several arguments against the program emerged. One was that the old were greedy, using funds that should be spent on the young. Another was that old age itself had changed; people lived longer and were healthier, and so they should work longer. And finally, there was the argument that over the long run, the program was not financially sound, an argument that tarnished the program for the simple reason that it spread doubt in the minds of future beneficiaries about whether their pensions were safe (CBO 2003).

Some changes were introduced. The age at which people become eligible for social security is being gradually raised, from sixty-five to sixty-seven. Those currently receiving benefits who were prohibited from working in the original legislation are now encouraged to work by regulations that reduce the penalties on earnings. These changes reveal that the labor market preoccupations that animated efforts to reduce other social programs also affected social security.

But the Bush agenda for social security is far more ambitious. Social security was originally a pay-as-you-go system, where payroll taxes collected each year funded the pension benefits that were paid each year. That changed in 1983 when the large deficits created by the Reagan tax cuts and defense increases were eased by a big increase in payroll taxes for social security. The result is that at least on paper, social security reserves have become enormous, although in actuality, those reserves exist only as Treasury notes, debts of the federal government to the fund. Nevertheless, the existence even in principle of huge public pension funds is ideologically offensive to the right. More than that, were the funds converted to private pensions, a new frontier of millions of individual stock accounts and broker fees would open for Wall Street investment firms, an arrangement naturally favored by the financial firms that backed Bush, including Merrill Lynch & Co., Crédit Suisse First Boston, UBS Paine Webber, and the Goldman Sachs Group, who together with others formed a lobbying group called the Coalition for American Financial Security (Center for Public Integrity 2004). The strident and insistent talk of a long-term crisis in social security financing is the overture to proposals for privatizing the system. Almost as soon as he assumed the presidency, Bush appointed a commission to make recommendations regarding social security that concluded in December of 2001 that any reform of the program should "include a system of voluntary personal accounts" (Center for Public Integrity 2004).

George Bush has long advocated that younger workers be allowed to set aside part of their social security tax payments for private investment accounts. This would be a first step toward the big goal of privatizing the system. There are huge obstacles such a strategy has to overcome. One is simply that the much-hyped crisis in social security financing is at most a far-off and unpredictable event. Thanks to a steep increase in payroll taxes inaugurated in 1983, the system is sound for the next fifty years, and even after that the gap in financing is small relative to the economy, less than three-quarters of 1 per cent of national income (Krugman 2004*b*; Weisbrot 2004). If there is a fiscal crisis looming in the foreseeable future, it is a crisis of overall federal debt, and the prospect that raises that the Treasury notes now owed to the social security fund will not be honored. Another obstacle is that the step-by-step strategy of partial privatization while honoring existing pension promises means sharply higher costs, since the money redirected to private accounts would come out of the funds now used to pay current retirees. The largest obstacle is that the program continues to have staunch voter support, and the institutionalists may yet be proven at least partly right. Still, with deficits ballooning, no one can safely predict the future of the programs.

Clearly, an institutional perspective yields insights into retrenchment in the US welfare state. A decentralized and fragmented governmental structure was reflected in decentralized and fragmented parties, parties that were easily penetrated by interest group and sectional influences, parties that did not even sustain the mass franchise during the critical early period of industrialization. These political institutions in turn produced the politics that led to fragmented and truncated welfare state programs, helping to account for the exposure of the mean-tested programs when opposition to them was mobilized.

But why did these institutions produce welfare state programs at all? An institutionalist perspective goes far toward explaining the limits on the American welfare state, but it cannot explain the irregular and non-institutionalized political forces that finally made the inauguration of the programs an imperative if domestic stability was to be sustained. After all, employer opposition to social spending is long standing. It was overcome in the United States only during periods when popular economic discontent reached levels that threatened both civil order and the stability of reigning political regimes. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, joblessness and hardship led to demonstrations and riots across the country, and also led to the defeat of the then dominant Republican Party. Programs like emergency relief, and later social security and unemployment insurance, were initiated quickly by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to deal with the immediate threat of popular unrest, and to build longer-term support for his New Deal Democratic coalition. Once trouble subsided, however, most of the social programs atrophied, until a new surge of popular protest erupted in the 1960s, this time spearheaded by the civil rights and urban poverty movements. The New Deal programs were revived and expanded, and new programs were added, most importantly Medicaid and Medicare. It is worth noting that at these peak moments of crisis in the 1930s and 1960s, even leaders of big business supported new social spending.

Similarly, an institutionalist perspective explains the vulnerability of the means-tested programs. Most Americans didn't like the programs they called "welfare." But for the most part, neither were they mobilized to do much about it. That required the emergence of a business-backed campaign that created the new think tanks and policy institutes, paid for the coalitions of organizations of the populist right, funded the campaigns of right-wing candidates, and launched the propaganda campaign that targeted these programs. This too was a kind of social movement, albeit a movement employing the strategies available to well-funded elites.

And the campaign by organized business interests and the right-wing populist groups with whom they have become allied also targeted the more universal programs. The long-term and persistent campaign has scored some considerable successes, and it shows no signs of abating. Moreover, the opponents have succeeded in altering the conditions which will influence the viability of social security over the longer term. Their propaganda has shattered public confidence in the program; they have used tax policy to encourage private pension investment accounts; and they have implemented massive tax cuts to produce the huge deficits that threaten to deplete social security funds.

Many of the arguments developed in the assault against welfare state programs in the United States have spread to Europe, especially to the United Kingdom. Sloganeering about "workfare not welfare" is also widespread on the Continent, and so is the introduction of new "workfare" programs. The similarities to the USA are not accidental. The right-wing think tanks and public intellectuals who played a large role in the campaign to roll back welfare state programs in the USA worked hard to carry their arguments overseas.[3] But while the language of welfare cutbacks, and even some of the model workfare programs, spread relatively easily, overall the cutbacks have remained modest.[4] In some countries, and particular in the social democratic Nordic states, welfare programs have actually continued to expand.[5] Norway's Cash Benefit Scheme is a good example. As Nina Berven has shown, the debates over the new program, which provides cash benefits for stay-at-home mothers, employed language very similar to the language used in the debates over US welfare reform, emphasizing work, family, and responsibility. In Norway, however, this language was used to justify a rather different set of policies. To be sure, the number of years a single mother could receive welfare benefits was reduced. At the same time, however, a new cash allowance program was inaugurated that allows all mothers, whether in single or two-parent households, to either stay at home or pay the costs of child care for children aged one to three (Berven 2004).

Institutional explanations are clearly relevant. The United States exemplifies the "liberal" welfare regimes which Esping-Andersen characterized as highly stratified, with an emphasis on individual self-responsibility and stigmatizing relief for people at the bottom (Esping-Andersen 1990, 65). These characteristics permitted but by no means predicted the contraction and reorganization of recent decades. The European welfare regimes not only generated higher levels of popular support which, at least until now ensured considerable continuity, but they have not experienced the full-scale mobilization against welfare state programs by business and its right-wing populist allies that occurred in the United States.

Institutional perspectives have obviously contributed to our understanding of welfare state developments. Still, theories of the welfare state need to confront more squarely the deep social conflicts that periodically erupt and overflow the channels of institutional politics, driving both the expansion and the contraction of the welfare state. In the United States, ongoing transformations reflect not the

[3] Janiewski (2003) discusses this process in some detail.

[4] The German government is, however, currently proposing cutbacks in unemployment benefits, which are now far more generous than unemployment benefits in the USA. The proposals would end unemployment benefits after twelve months, after which the unemployed would receive only basic welfare. The proposals have precipitated modest protests in a number of German cities. See Landler (2004). See also Gangl (2004) for a study that shows that the more generous German unemployment benefits reduce the "scar" of unemployment in comparison with the US system.

[5] See Navarro, Schmitt, and Astudillo 2004. Navarro et. al. cite data from the OECD, *OECD Historical Statistics 1960 1994* (Paris, 1996), and OECD, *OECD Historical Statistics 1970 1999* (Paris, 2000).

relatively comfortable politics of institutional gradualism, but the bold politics of a business class primed for class war.

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CHAPTER 43

REFLECTIONS ON HOW POLITICAL SCIENTISTS (AND OTHERS) MIGHT THINK ABOUT ENERGY AND POLICY

MATTHEW HOLDEN, JR.

1. A Perspective of Thirty Years: Personal History as Method

In this chapter, I wish to stipulate three important factors that limited space will not allow me to analyze. (1) Energy policy in the next decade or two will be profoundly influenced by China, India, and Russia. China and India are the two biggest energy consumers in the world, and their consumption is growing. This affects both international energy economics and international politics. (2) Unless there are notable economic and technological changes, energy patterns will work hardship upon the poorest countries of the world. (3) Energy policy everywhere will be influenced by climatic events, and policies based upon the proposition that global warming is occurring and that climate change is occurring as a result of activity that human beings can make a decision to control. These three factors must be read "between the lines," though overtly most of this chapter is about the policy of the United States.

By good fortune rather than training or planning, I was led from the 1970s until now, into a series of official and private engagements to do with energy. The first step was purely intellectual. Edwin Young, the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, sponsored a small faculty seminar on "a method for natural resource decision-making" over the same period that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) placed its 1973 embargo on oil sales to the United States and other Western countries.

The year 1973 was a crucial one. Another was 1979, the time of the Iranian revolution. United States policy making and public opinion has been dominated by fears and fantasies of those years and others that might hypothetically be similar to them. Those fears and fantasies have also governed the study of energy policy. It turns out that, after an initial spurt promoted by the 1973 and 1979 crises, students of politics have been little concerned with energy. Apparently, this is not true of political science alone. Judge Richard D. Cudahy (US Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit) spoke of this to an energy lawyers group: "Energy law, although it is gradually finding a place in the thinking of students of law, is still a rather exotic offering, landing somewhere between regulated industries, environmental, and natural resources law" (Cudahy 2004). When the realistic fears, and the fantasies declined, the subject became less topical. In turning to consider the newest political science on energy, I have been surprised to find less new work focused centrally on energy than expected. There is in my opinion, a serious need for new work. My hoped-for audience is in political science, but also amongst others concerned with energy who need to understand its politics.

2. How Political Scientists Have Looked At Energy

Political scientists may understand the energy problem somewhat better if we put it in the simplest human terms, and move thus to the technical. No one can fail to perceive the imperative of physical self-protection. Energy is requisite in some form, lest one die from excessive cold of the Arctic regions or excessive heat of the Australian "Outback" or the arid regions of Arizona and Nevada.

The "new politics of energy" was a function of, or at least brought forcefully to view by the 1973 crisis. This overrode the traditional politics which had mainly to do with limited government regulation of coal, strip mining, government regulation of domestic production in order to maintain oil prices, civilian nuclear power, government regulation of natural gas, and a variety of attempts at deregulation. David H. Davis (1992) ranks "five political arenas of energy—coal, oil, natural gas, electricity, and nuclear energy... in an order based on the degree to which government intervenes." The new energy politics also involves new participants and new issues. The biggest new issue is the attempt at protecting the domestic energy supply from disruptive actions by foreign governments.

The assumption that demand would outrun supply within a quarter-century made the concept of conservation seem imperative. This assumption ran through the National Energy Act, which was a five-part combination of legislation dealing with deregulation of natural gas, conversion from natural gas to coal, windfall profits taxation, legislation to encourage utilities (under state regulation) to allow higher (or more "efficient") pricing.

The political science literature on energy appears notably disenchanted. Robert E. Keohane supposes that the impact of the 1973 crisis could not have been avoided. The problem he saw as inherent in American society. "Fragmentation of public authority, pervasive business influence, and the willingness of public officials to follow the path of least resistance in the short run [were] fatal flaws [that made] it difficult to imagine that the United States could have averted the oil crisis of the 1970s" (Keohane 1982, 183). Others asked, how well was the 1973 crisis managed? Badly, supposes Peter deLeon (1988, 72):

> To help unravel the complicated relationships between energy resources and uses, public and private sponsors generated an immense set of research studies, most of them quantitative in nature, which were used as the basis for recommending and formulating energy policy.... Perhaps as many as two thirds of the models failed to achieve their avowed purposes of direct application to policy problems.

deLeon offered the judgement (which fortunately for the real world has not been tested by experience) that "it is highly likely that the United States will experience another seriously debilitating energy shortfall; the only outstanding questions are of magnitude and timing."

Franklin Tugwell, with about ten years' experience in the State Department, Office of Technology Assessment, and the Congressional Information Service, said he had first thought we had done well. But:

> It became evident [upon closer retrospective study] that, though we did avoid some costly mistakes, our policies on balance accomplished little of value. Worse, when they did not cancel one another out, they often increased our economic losses and our strategic vulnerability, and failed to protect the disadvantaged from bearing a disproportionate burden of the costs involved .... The arrangement left after ten years of struggle "free markets" in energy likely to work well or endure. (Tugwell 1988, vii)

Wildavsky, Tenenbaum et al. (1981, 14) make a case more generally, that "U.S. behavior has always been irrational (except in wartime), if by that one means inconsistent policies were followed." One may adapt here the use of the political science word "regime" (Greenstein and Polsby 1975). Tugwell uses the same terminology, with credit to Robert E. Keohane, with perhaps more stringency than the present author uses it here.

Policy analysts within political science have had hardly a good word to say for United States energy policy, and it is doubtful whether the overall assessment of any other policy would be better. Maybe that is correct. But at this stage, recall Baker's

(19**) admonition: "scholars often neglect the hard realities that impinge on ideal solutions and the day-to-day requirements that constrain the statesman's options."

3. "Politics," "Institutions," "Interests," and "Energy"

Whatever policy or innovation one may have in mind does depend upon a fourfold connection of technology, economics and finance, law, and politics. If the proposal violates scientific knowledge and the related technology, it will not work. But it will not make any difference either, unless the innovation can be financed by someone, somehow. Finance depends upon defining parties' rights and duties (such as the terms on which the financier can sue if payment is not made). But in the end, there is some point at which those who would do something must resort to politics, trading amongst incommensurable values.

"Politics" is the defining framework of "policy" organizations. "Politics" can mean the use and control of an energy resource in order to achieve some result that has nothing to do with energy per se. It can also mean as the emergent term "the geopolitics of energy" suggests, the ability to interdict because of physical location. So it was in 1973. But the main interest in this chapter is in the making of decisions in order to achieve some result about energy both for now and for the future.

Those who would pay attention to energy would find it useful to know the institutions of energy policy making. Institutions may not be adequate causes to explain results. But the ways they come into existence, gain a presence, and assume functions indicate that decision makers, acting from interests deem them important.

In most countries, an energy decision seems to be a function mainly of the executive—whether this is the political part of the executive or the career/technical bureaucracy—with fairly limited effects from any collective representative body. Equally important is what interests or influence gives the agency its tone and function, and how the agency asserts its self-perceived mission. Perhaps the intense passion that people felt about the discomforts of the 1973 crisis explains why the United States was the only country with a separate Department of Energy, compared with nine IEA countries in 1983 and three in 1976.

As of 2005 the Secretary of Energy, under whose domain some of the major energy industries lie, is head of a department that had been established for a supply objective with responsibility also for collecting data from a national survey of greenhouse gas emissions. It is also the department for weapons development.

The idea of combining functions into one unified department is very influential in American (and possibly other countries') thinking about the organization of government. There is a special set of institutions in the regulatory agencies. These