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OPERATIONALIZING THE CONCEPT OF LEGITIMACY

Scholars and politicians have the tendency to adopt the dichotomy: legitimate versus illegitimate. Since the reality is much more varied, legitimacy must come in degrees. Ranking regimes on an imaginary axis from a minimum to a maximum degree of legitimacy is a promising way for the comparative analysis of political systems. Many scholars have felt the need of such scaling: 'Legitimacy runs the scale from complete acclaim to complete rejection...ranging all the way from support, consent, compliance through decline, erosion and loss. In case of conscious rejection we may speak of illegitimacy' (Hertz 1978:320).

As Juan Linz stresses, 'no political regime is legitimate for 100 per cent of the population, nor in all its commands, nor forever, and probably very few are totally illegitimate based only on coercion' (Linz 1988:66). Legitimacy never reaches unanimity, nor do groups and individuals ever recognize equally the authority of the political power. There are apathetic popular strata and rebellious subcultures, pacifist dissidents and armed terrorists, and between these extremes many who are only partially convinced by the pretensions of legitimacy claimed by the rulers. The support of the majority is generally considered as a test of legitimacy, but as David Easton observed, it is also necessary to consider the substance and intensity of the popular support (Easton 1965).

Easton argues that the 'ratio of deviance to conformity as measured by violation of laws, the prevalence of violence, the size of dissidence movements or the amount of money spent for security would provide indices of support' (Easton 1965:163). But it is difficult in empirical research to measure 'violations of laws' or 'dissident movements'.

Thus we should not assume that in a given country legitimacy exists simply because it is not contested. In the poorest countries the problem of illegitimacy is not present in the mind of the majority of the people. In these countries tyrants are often perceived as a fatality. Where violence is absent, legitimacy is not necessarily present. The concept of legitimacy is not adequate for, perhaps, one out of every five Third World countries.

Absence of revolt, however, does not imply adhesion to the regime. Revolt is possible only in certain historical circumstances, when a regime starts a process of liberalization. In a totalitarian regime attempts to revolt can be suicidal. The Chinese communist establishment, by repressing the demonstrations in the Tienanmen Square in June 1989, wanted to stop the incipient liberalization movement.

The number of *coups d'état* is the most visible measure of illegitimacy: look for instance at *coups* in Africa in the last three decades, and earlier in Latin America. This criterion has been adopted by a number of scholars.

Can the legitimacy of a political system be judged in terms of subjective adherence of the people? Obviously, confidence is a subjective phenomenon, even if it is analysed objectively. In countries that do not allow freedom of speech, for example, it is difficult to measure by survey the adherence to the regime.

The main problem with any study of legitimacy is the difficulty in measuring it accurately. Opinion polls attempting to measure a state's legitimacy often measure things related to legitimacy without measuring legitimacy directly. For example, support of leaders and policies, or feelings of patriotism or willingness to fight for the country's defence, are all easily measured by such polls and may be related to a state's legitimacy, but none are real measures of legitimacy itself. Support of a leader and his/her policies does not always include the granting of legitimacy to the larger systems of the state, and lack of support for a specific leader or policy does not always imply a lack of overall legitimacy.

In spite of all these difficulties it is possible to consider legitimacy as an evaluable trait of political systems, and to state if a particular country is more or less legitimate than another. Legitimacy is a concept that can be empirically tested. Only the empirical approach can avoid the tautological circle which too often traps the discussion of legitimacy.

Theoretically, the lower the degree of legitimacy, the higher should be the amount of coercion. Therefore, in order to operationalize the concept of legitimacy it is advisable to take into consideration some indicators of coercion, such as the absence of political rights and of civil liberties. These indicators are based on evaluation of freedom of expression, of association, of demonstration, the degree of military intervention in the political arena, fair elections, freedom of religious institutions, independent judiciary, free competition among parties, absence of government terror, and so on. Raymond Gastil in his *Freedom in the World* (Gastil 1980–9), has attempted, in collaboration with many experts, to rank countries according to these criteria. Such a ranking is an acceptable substitute for scaling legitimacy more directly.

A high level of corruption is one of the best symptoms of delegitimation. The fall of political regimes is often accompanied by a generalized corruption—the most notable historical examples being the fall of the Chinese imperial dynasty, of the reign of the Iranian Shah, and of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Numerous testimonies and dozens of books denounce institutionalized corruption, at all levels of public administration, in most African countries. The judiciary often represents a regime's last bastion against corruption. When they are also contaminated there is no more hope for the ordinary citizen. Then we can predict a crisis of legitimacy, brought about in reality by a *coup d'état*, revolt or revolution.

Paradoxically, scandals are not symptoms of delegitimation, because they can occur only where there is some freedom of speech. On the contrary, we may be certain that a regime where scandals occur is not totally illegitimate. In some

exceptional cases, the scandal may appear as an irrefutable test of the democratic functioning of the regime. The Dreyfus affair, the Watergate affair and the Irangate affair are superb monuments honouring the French and American democracies. Few countries in the world have a democracy sufficiently well-rooted as to be able to correct a political error against the will of the army or to oblige the president to resign—they probably number not more than thirty, with Italy being one of them: President Leone, involved in a corruption scandal, was obliged to resign in 1976.

LEGITIMACY AND TRUST

The distinction between legitimacy and trust appears in the possible replies to a very simple question: ‘Should a police officer be obeyed?’ The reply ‘The officer should be obeyed because his/her order is right,’ implies legitimacy *and* trust; ‘This particular police officer is wrong, and an appeal to a higher authority should be made, but for the moment he/she should be obeyed because he/she represents authority’ indicates legitimacy without trust. The police as an institution can be perceived as legitimate even if a particular police officer may not be trusted. If too many police officers are corrupt or unnecessarily brutal the legitimacy of the police, as an institution, is contested. The mistrust of police officers can be tested empirically, as can the loss of confidence in the police as an institution. If many other institutions are mistrusted (the army, the political parties, the civil service), the regime itself could become illegitimate.

While the concept of legitimacy refers to the whole political system and to its permanent nature, the concept of trust is limited to the rulers who occupy the power in a transitory way:

Political trust can be thought of as a basic evolutive or affective orientation toward the government.... The dimension of trust runs from high trust to high distrust or political cynicism. Cynicism thus refers to the degree of negative affect toward government and is a statement of the belief that the government is not functioning and producing outputs in accord with individual expectations.

(Miller 1974:952)

This distinction between the legitimacy of the regime and confidence in particular institutions or office-holders is appropriate for pluralist democracies. Obviously no political system, not even a democratic one, is perfect. No institution can escape criticism from some segment of society. Unanimity is a ridiculous pretension of totalitarian regimes.

Survey research done in some twenty pluralist democracies during the last two decades has revealed a gap of confidence in major institutions. The ubiquity of this loss of confidence in almost all advanced democracies raises important questions concerning the theory of democracy. Is the decline of public

confidence in institutions a manifestation of a deeper loss of legitimacy or only a ritualistic cynicism? S.M.Lipset and W.Schneider, after having analysed a large amount of American survey data (Lipset and Schneider 1983), ask frankly: 'Is there a legitimacy crisis?' An identical question should be asked of all West European democracies (except Ireland) as well as of Japan, Canada and Australia. The diagnosis reached by Lipset and Schneider is that:

People lose faith in leaders much more easily than they lose confidence in the system. All the indicators that we have examined show that the public has been growing increasingly critical of the performance of major institutions. There has been no significant decline in the legitimacy ascribed to the underlying political and economic systems.

(Lipset and Schneider 1983:378-9)

Their conclusion is 'that the decline of confidence has both real and superficial aspects. It is real because the American public is intensely dissatisfied with the performance of their institutions. It is also to some extent superficial because Americans have not yet reached the point of rejecting those institutions' (ibid.: 384). Yet in the early 1970s Jack Citrin argued that we should not confuse a crisis of confidence with a crisis of legitimacy (Citrin 1974).

An examination of the results of surveys conducted in 1981 by the European Value Systems Study Group and repeated in twelve countries in 1990 leads us to similar conclusions. At the question 'How much confidence do you have in each of the following institutions?' the majority of Europeans replied that they had 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the police, the armed forces, the judiciary, the educational system and the church. The proportion is lower for the parliament (43 per cent), the civil service (39 per cent), the press (32 per cent), and labour unions (32 per cent). The astonishingly low confidence in the parliament is a serious strain on legitimacy, particularly in Italy, although even in Britain only 40 per cent of the respondents replied positively (Harding *et al.* 1986:78, 95).

A significant part of the population may manifest a low confidence in specific institutions, but only a small minority replied that 'on the whole [they] are unsatisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is functioning in [their] country', and only a fringe minority declared themselves in favour of 'radical or revolutionary change' of the system. The vast majority has faith in the democratic system.

LEGITIMACY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The relationship between legitimacy and the effectiveness of a political system is of crucial importance because the presence or absence of one can, in the long run, lead to the growth or loss of the other. Lipset was probably the first to analyse specifically the relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness,

arguing that the stability of a regime depends on the relationship between these two concepts. He defines effectiveness as the actual performance of the government or the 'extent to which the system satisfies the basic functions of government' (Lipset 1959:77). When faced with a crisis of effectiveness, such as an economic depression, the stability of the regime depends to a large extent on the degree of legitimacy that it enjoys.

This is illustrated in the Lipset matrix (Figure 1), showing the dynamics of legitimacy and effectiveness. If a regime finds itself in box A, with both a high degree of legitimacy and effectiveness, in a moment of crisis it should move to box B, showing a loss of effectiveness but the maintenance of legitimacy. Once the crisis has passed it should then move back to its original position in box A (Lipset 1959:81).

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------------|----------|
| | | Effectiveness | |
| | | + | - |
| Legitimacy | + | A | B |
| | - | C | D |

Figure 1 The Lipset matrix

This idea that legitimacy, once obtained, can be preserved is also argued by others. For example, Eckstein (1966) stresses that legitimacy produces a reservoir of support guaranteeing the co-operation of the citizens even in the case of quite unpleasant policies. Legitimacy creates a reservoir of goodwill on which the authorities can draw in difficult times and increases considerably the willingness of the people to tolerate shortcomings of effectiveness. By contrast, if a regime finds itself in box C, with a high degree of effectiveness but a relatively low degree of legitimacy, a crisis in effectiveness would move the regime from box C to box D. The regime would then be likely to break down.

The relationship between these two concepts can be further understood through an analysis of historical examples. During the Great Depression of the 1930s a major crisis in effectiveness seriously affected European as well as American economies. We can contrast the effects of the Depression on the United States and Britain, which had a high level of legitimacy, with the effects on Germany and Austria, where legitimacy was low. In the two first countries, the crisis of effectiveness did not encourage anti-democratic movements and did not bring the regime's legitimacy into question. The people required a change in leadership, not of the regime. In Germany and Austria, however, the crisis of

effectiveness led to the collapse of the democratic regime. As has been shown by Kaltefleiter, the unemployment rate and the vote for the National Socialist Party were intimately related (Kaltefleiter 1968).

Movement from box C to box A is also possible since long-term effectiveness can give a regime the chance to build its legitimacy. The rulers in Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have gained enough legitimacy by their economic success to enable them finally to organize free elections. But the most famous examples are Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany, where democracy was born, or implemented, during a military occupation in a climate of suspicion and scepticism. Their economic miracles raised these two regimes from total absence of legitimacy and from deep national humiliation to the forefront of the most legitimate pluralist democracies.

The same period has seen the collapse of a colossus, not because of a military defeat, but because of a complete failure in effectiveness. The Soviet Union not only had a revolutionary ideology for decades but also had the technological capacity to penetrate and control society in an enormous and relatively rich land. The speed of the breakdown of the communist system in the Soviet Union and in its Eastern European satellites since 1989 demonstrates how the economic ineffectiveness of a regime can ruin its legitimacy. This has culminated in the irony of the defeated ex-enemy, now enjoying a highly legitimate and effective regime, sending aid to a great military power devoid of legitimacy and effectiveness.

ACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF LEGITIMATION

The role of intellectuals in the legitimation process has attracted the attention of many authors. When the intellectual elites are confident in the regime, an optimistic future for the regime could be predicted. But when, on the contrary, the intellectuals are those that oppose the regime, that regime's legitimacy seems more fragile. In China, in the spring of 1989, it was the most educated segment of the society who protested. The students represented less than one per thousand of the Chinese society, but they succeeded in shedding light on the illegitimacy of the regime.

In a comparative analysis of the common factors in the revolutionary movements in Puritan England, in the United States at the time of Washington, in France in 1789 and in Russia in 1917, Crane Brinton (1965) stresses the importance of the intellectual ferment, which subsequently led to the spread of the new ideas to a large part of the population, engendering a crisis of legitimacy.

Other social strata have attracted attention, such as the working class in the Marxist analysis. The clergy have also played an important historic role, as in the Protestant countries in the past, and with the Liberation theology in some Latin

American countries more recently. In the last three decades, the army has been the most visible actor of delegitimation in dozens of developing countries. Today many of the world's authoritarian regimes, particularly in Africa and Asia, are led not by civilians but by military officers.

In summary, the strains on legitimacy and the loss of trust can be explained in part by the difficulty to govern, to steer society. There are two opposite kinds of ingovernability: either the government is overloaded with demands from a very complex society, is doing too much as in the advanced democracies called welfare states, or is not doing enough because the state is economically too weak and lacks the resources required to affect society (except for the 'oil-exporting' countries).

In advanced democracies the loss of confidence in institutions or rulers and the consequent political criticism come from the fact that the rulers have to take decisions under the direct and permanent scrutiny of the public. In a legitimate regime people have the right to criticize. In the authoritarian regimes of developing countries the rulers face different kinds of problems. Their weakness comes not from excessive demands, but from the meagre resources at their disposal.

Power, legitimacy, trust and effectiveness do not have identical meanings in London and Jakarta, or in Washington and Cairo. The ambition to encapsulate these concepts in definitions of universal validity may be a sin of Western cultural ethnocentrism.

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PART III

**CONTEMPORARY
IDEOLOGIES**

LIBERALISM

R. BRUCE DOUGLASS

Liberalism presents itself today as a coherent body of theory and practice with a well-defined place in the affairs of our time. Its proponents see themselves, typically, as an extension of a long-standing tradition of moral and political reflection that is the source of what has turned out to be the authoritative interpretation of the meaning and significance of the political experience of the West in the modern era. At a time when most of the plausibility has evaporated from the competitors with which it used to do battle, it is cast as a survivor that has stood the test of time and come away vindicated, in the main, by the course that events have taken.

This was not always so. In fact, for much of what is now commonly characterized, retrospectively, as the history of liberalism, the course of events would in no way have supported such a conclusion. Indeed, for much of the period in question, there scarcely was any such thing, at least not in the minds of those who lived through it. John Locke, for example, whose articulation of the political aspirations of the Whigs in their struggle with the Stuart monarchy in seventeenth-century England is now conventionally treated as a major contribution to the founding of the liberal tradition, hardly thought of himself as such. Nor is there much evidence to suggest that Kant, Locke's counterpart on the Continent a century later, was much different in this regard. Even though Kant can be appropriately looked upon as the source of some of the most influential ideas with which liberalism has come to be associated, he did not intend them as such. He, too, was a voice for a developing current of thought (and practice) well before it crystallized into anything like the full-blown partisan doctrine with pretensions of universal validity that it has subsequently become.

Nor, once such crystallization did in fact begin to take place, would it have been thinkable to construe the resulting body of ideas as anything other than one point of view among others. For by the time it made sense for those who found themselves thinking in such terms to begin identifying themselves as liberals, it

made just as good sense for others to define their politics in very different (and competing) terms. Even as, with the political coming of age of the rising 'middle' class, the process of emancipating individuals to live their lives as they chose, which was at the heart of what the liberal project was about, came into its own as a historical force, it was still manifestly very much in competition with other alternative visions that challenged root and branch most of what it entailed. Precisely because, in fact, it was so clearly identified with the sweeping change that accompanied the economic revolution that the entrepreneurial class pioneered, it met with active opposition from more than one quarter, and it could not help but be seen, in turn, as the reflection of a distinctly partisan response to the events in question.

Even its identification with change, moreover, had its limits. In the heyday of its ascendancy it was not uncommon for adherents to speak as though what it represented was synonymous with all that was progressive. The success that liberals enjoyed in putting their stamp on English society in the middle years of the Victorian era in particular inspired such confidence. But even then it was not difficult to see that there were events in the making that liberals were not at all likely to embrace and, indeed, that they would be predisposed actively to resist. It was no accident, for example, that once the case for the expansion of the franchise to include the middle class had been successfully made, the initiative in advocating further democratization tended to fall to others (most notably, representatives of the working class), and liberals were inclined to greet that prospect with ambivalence at best.

So, too, with the laying of the foundations of the welfare state. Even as the conditions that industrialization brought virtually required the assumption of some degree of collective responsibility for the provision of social welfare (public health and sanitation, for example), the liberal presumption was against it. In particular it was against the assumption of any sort of role by those exercising public power to determine social outcomes. Thus the lead in the creation of social insurance and modern social services was taken by others, and it made sense, especially at a time when working-class parties were coming into their own as a political force, to think of what was emerging in this respect, too, as the fruit of currents of thought and practice other than those that found expression in liberalism (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981).

Moreover, the more momentum the movement in this direction gained, the more uncertain the liberal prospect tended to become. Even as imaginative adaptations to the emerging new realities were undertaken by a whole series of 'new' liberals (Freedman 1978), they themselves had to wonder whether they were not holding on to a fossil that had essentially done its work and was on its way to being superseded. The precipitous decline in electoral fortunes that even the more resourceful liberal parties (most notably, the British Liberal Party) tended

to suffer when confronted with any sort of sustained competition from working-class parties could easily be read as a portent of things to come. The longer this went on, the harder it became to think that it represented anything other than an irreversible trend.

This was the case even more after the onset of war in 1914 and the several decades of ongoing social and political upheaval that it set in motion, particularly as the experiments in constitutional government that followed the war succumbed to crisis in one country after another and movements espousing militantly illiberal sentiments came to the fore. The impression that the world that was in the making was one in which liberal thinking simply no longer fitted was powerfully reinforced.

In fact, with the coming of the depression in the 1930s, it was not at all uncommon for liberals themselves to hold liberal ideas responsible for the vulnerabilities that were being exposed, and to wonder, in turn, whether effective protection could be found without turning sharply in another direction. The pull of events was almost inexorably in the direction of the 'end of *laissez-faire*', as Keynes aptly characterized what was taking place (Keynes 1926). As it became evident that the continuing influence of liberal thinking was in large measure responsible for the societies in question finding it difficult to make the necessary adaptations, questions were inevitably raised about the continuing viability of liberalism even as a guide to the making of economic policy.

Nor did the Allied victory in the Second World War altogether relieve the uncertainty. For, as the process of reconstruction got underway, liberals themselves could scarcely help but wonder whether the old problems would not reappear. The likely economic prospect was for a long, protracted period of rebuilding that was destined to be fraught with uncertainty, particularly in view of the devastation caused to the European heartland, and there was no guarantee that the course events had taken after the previous war would not be repeated. Nor was the political prospect much different. For all of the widespread desire to reconstitute democratic government on a more secure basis in the countries where it had failed to take root successfully, it could not be taken for granted that the old sources of instability would not reassert themselves. The success of the democratic recovery was anything but assured, especially in view of the popular following that the communists enjoyed in a number of countries.

At the same time, however, as the apprehensions that these conditions inspired were making themselves felt, the ground was being prepared for a very different mood to emerge in its stead. It soon became evident that the prolonged austerity that had been anticipated was not going to materialize. Indeed, within scarcely a decade it was clear that an economic 'miracle' was in the making. One fear after another dissolved as the effects of the resulting affluence began to be felt, and it did not take long before the appropriate conclusions began to be

drawn. Liberals in particular began to speak with an optimism and assurance that had not been heard in decades.

It was not just, of course, the mere fact of affluence *per se* that was responsible for the recovery of nerve that liberals experienced in the post-war era. The sheer magnitude of the growth experienced by much of western Europe in particular was impressive by any standard and could not help but catch the imagination of the people who were expecting much less. However, it was the fact that the growth was as sustained as it was that really made the difference in altering the tenor of liberal thinking. There was scarcely any historical precedent for the continuous, ongoing expansion of output, consumption, investment and employment that took place, and it could not escape attention that the governments of the societies in question had devoted themselves to the active management of economic life in ways that had shown themselves to be conducive to this result. A 'new' capitalism was in the making (Shonfeld 1965), born of a difficult learning experience that had taught invaluable lessons about the pursuit of stable prosperity, and the longer the growth persisted, the more of an inclination there was to assume that the economic problems of the past had been effectively solved.

Every bit as impressive, too, was the fact that the prosperity that was being achieved was not being purchased at the price of deprivation for the majority of the population. Quite the contrary. The benefits of prosperity were spread widely. High levels of employment and steadily expanding consumer demand were treated as essential to economic progress. As Galbraith in particular emphasized (Galbraith 1958), what was distinctive about the threshold that was being crossed was that affluence for the many was coming to be an economic as well as a political necessity. If production was going to be maintained at the desired level, consumption had to be cultivated as a way of life.

Social policy underwent a comparable development, too, as the welfare state truly came into its own as a guarantor of entitlements. Under the impact of the common hardships (and resulting mobilizations) imposed by both the depression and the war, the prejudice against collective provision had faded, and in its place emerged a belief in ensuring each citizen freedom from 'want' as a matter of right. Nor was it just the avoidance of poverty that was intended. The state was to see to it that no one was denied access to basic goods and services, from 'cradle to grave', as a famous liberal apologist for the English version of this development was to characterize its purpose (Beveridge 1942). As tax revenues multiplied and the idea of equality of opportunity caught on, there was an increasing tendency to think in terms of guaranteeing a certain quality of life as well.

There was no mistaking, either, the contribution that liberals and their ideas, from Beveridge to Keynes, had made to these developments. They were hardly alone, and the collaboration of socialists in particular was no less important in

setting events on the course they were taking (Crosland 1956). But the active endorsement and even sponsorship of the emerging mix of public and private arrangements that the drift toward planning in post-war liberalism represented went a long way toward explaining the appeal it enjoyed. Much of the thinking that went into the policies in question reflected the prior development of liberal thought and practice over the previous half-century, and the fact that liberals were increasingly inclined to take credit for these policies, and assume their necessity, contributed greatly to the perception that they constituted the foundation of an emerging agreement about how to govern industrial democracies that was on its way to eclipsing any and all of its competitors.

Yet for all the support they received from other quarters, it is not difficult to see why these measures appealed to liberals. An ideological convergence of sorts was indeed in the making, but it was clearly on terms that liberals above all had reason to endorse. Economic planning, social services, social insurance and the rest of what went into the making of the emerging 'public household' to use Daniel Bell's apt term (Bell 1976), were undeniably steps in a collective direction, but by design they were almost always implemented in a way that fell well short of anything like a serious challenge to the liberal presumption in favour of private economic power. The resulting economies might reasonably be characterized as 'mixed', but there could be no question about their essentially capitalist character.

Nor could there be much doubt about the concessions made by the other parties involved. From the socialists' increasingly frank disavowal of nationalization to the Christian Democrats' renunciation of the confessional state, the pattern, in one country after another, was for the adherents of competing currents of thoughts that were at all serious contenders for power to abandon, in effect, much of what historically had put them at odds with liberalism. In the name of one or another kind of *aggornamento*, they gave up, for all practical purposes, a good part of what previously had given them their identity, and in the process they did away, too, in large measure, with the rationale for any sort of principled opposition to what liberalism represented. Indeed, the accommodation that they made tended to be such that what remained often had the appearance of being little more than a series of variations on liberal themes.

This was especially so with respect to the value placed on civil and political liberties. After the trauma of totalitarianism, their worth tended to be appreciated more widely—and deeply—than ever before, and the more evident it became that their realization could be reconciled with both political stability and economic progress, the harder it became to discover any sort of principled opposition to what they represented. Aside from the occasional cavil from one or another radical critic about 'repressive tolerance', the days were over when their proponents had to contend with suggestions that they were instruments of one or

another partisan purpose. In their place emerged a climate of opinion in which, if anything, they were taken for granted as the necessary point of departure for any politics that were to stand a chance of achieving legitimacy.

A premium on toleration was also part of the same climate. With the social and cultural conditions that gave rise to the old ideological combat fading, and the aspiration to the all-out victory they fostered discredited by events, toleration took on an appeal that it had not had since the religious wars occasioned by the Reformation. With groups from Catholics to Communists going out of their way to declare their allegiance to respecting diversity, pluralism came to acquire such significance that, in fact, it began to take on the status of one of the principal defining features of the societies in question. Their 'openness' in this sense became one of the major qualities on which they prided themselves, and the more experience they had with it, the more self-conscious its practice tended to become.

It could therefore only be a matter of time before the trend this represented found theoretical expression. For a brief period it was inhibited by the inclination of many liberals to go along with the suggestion that what was taking place was the transcendence of ideology (Bell 1960–1), and to refrain from giving any elaborate philosophical expression to the ideas that were really at stake. This was particularly the case when the very possibility of moral and political philosophy was called into question by the influence that positivism enjoyed. But once Rawls showed that it was possible—and necessary—to join anew the philosophical issues at stake (Rawls 1971), it quickly became evident that a different construction was needed on what was underway. For as the renaissance of liberal theory that followed showed, liberals themselves clearly were not about to concede that the tradition they represented was finished. Just the opposite. With Rawls leading the way, the view that permeated their writings was that after years of struggle against one competitor after another, liberalism was finally on its way to claiming its rightful place as *the* public philosophy of the West.

Nor, for all the effort that has been put into making the result out to be a common ground capable of accommodating the legitimate interests of other contenders (Rawls 1987), has there ever been much question about the partisan character of what was intended. In fact, the more fully the logic of the turn that liberal reasoning has taken in this latest mutation has come to be revealed, the more obvious its partisan edge has tended to be. For the interpretation that is put on the experience(s) in question is, for all of the talk about neutrality, in no sense a neutral one, and it is not in the least neutral in its practical implications either. As the recurring (albeit highly selective) invocation of Kantian premisses reveals, one rather specific way of understanding what has taken place is presupposed, and it is accompanied, predictably, by a preference for a particular way of conceiving of its promise as well.

What in particular is thrown anew into sharp relief in this relation is the distinctiveness of the priority—and meaning—that liberals are inclined to attach to liberty. For it is by no means just as one good among others that it figures in what they have to say. Building on the special significance that personal autonomy has come to acquire as a result of the events of the last century, they would have it understood to be the fundamental good, the realization of which is above all what the recent experience of the West has been about. More than anything else, they insist, the opportunity for individuals to be self-determining—to function, as Rawls puts it, as moral agents, choosing one's own conception of the good and living life accordingly—is what the societies in question have learned is important in the conduct of public affairs, and their achievement, in turn, has been to show how this can be successfully pursued as a way of life.

Nothing has contributed more to this result, moreover, in the account that tends to be favoured by the current generation of liberal theorists, than the growing awareness of the limits of the human capacity to prescribe how life ought to be lived. In marked contrast to the days when liberal arguments were distinguished by the boldness with which they affirmed the power of reason, they now tend to be predicated on an equally dedicated epistemological modesty (Spragens 1981), and it is to the increasingly widespread acceptance of the sense of restraint this entails that they are inclined to attribute the success that the 'liberal' democracies have come to enjoy. There is no way, virtually every liberal thinker of consequence now asserts matter-of-factly, that we can know with any sort of objective certainty what 'God's will' or the 'laws of history' dictate, and it is because this 'fact' is increasingly taken for granted by the peoples in question that they have come to be able to live as they do. Through long (and sometimes bitter) experience they have learned the futility of assigning a public role to what are essentially private visions, and in the process they have come to appreciate, too, the impropriety of doing so as well. Indeed, more: the experience they have had with toleration has taught them, increasingly, to look upon it as the only appropriate response to the challenge posed by the heterogeneity of the good that human beings are prepared to seek.

What they have also learned, it is said, is the value of the resulting diversity. It is not just that they have become accustomed to accommodating beliefs and values different from their own, but that they have also come to appreciate the promise such a practice holds. For the more consistently and deliberately it is pursued, the more evident it becomes that the effect, almost inescapably, is to enlarge steadily the opportunities for individuality to flourish. Instead of their lives conforming to one or another pre-existent pattern, people are virtually invited to experiment and innovate in keeping with their own distinctive tastes and inclinations, with the result that life takes on an increasingly varied and fluid character. So the richness of the variety of which human beings are capable is

experienced as never before, and the way is open for it to be explored as an end in itself.

To make the case for embracing this possibility as a matter of principle is, in turn, above all what liberalism has come to stand for (Ackerman 1980; Dworkin 1977–8), and it is clear from virtually everything about the way this is done that it is assumed that the fact that such an opportunity now presents itself to the societies in question represents an historical accomplishment of the first magnitude. For even as they speak in increasingly historicist terms and make a point of avoiding any sort of explicit metaphysical commitments (Rawls 1985), there is no mistaking the presumption that pervades the arguments advanced by Rawls and those who have followed his lead that the way of life to which they seek to give expression amounts to more—much more—than just one more chapter in history’s ongoing succession of different ways of ordering human relations. Indeed, just the opposite. If anything, the tendency now, as the Cold War fades and ideas championed by liberals are embraced as symbols of liberation in one popular insurgency after another, is to revive with a vengeance the old liberal conceit that what the liberal vision represents is the definitive conclusion of the quest for the good society, beyond which further progress is neither necessary nor possible (Fukuyama 1989).

Precisely, however, because of the increasingly historicist character of so much of the reasoning to which liberals are now given, this is a claim that is much more easily made than defended. Indeed, philosophically its defence becomes positively anomalous. All along, to be sure, there has been something of an anomaly about the doctrinaire universalism of a creed so firmly committed to making a virtue of toleration. But in the days when liberals were capable of backing up the claims that they made in this regard with bold generalizations about human nature whose merits they were prepared to argue, what they said at least had the appearance of epistemological consistency. Now, however, as any sort of owning up to metaphysical commitments (much less arguing their merits) is dismissed as obsolete (Rorty 1989) and liberal theorists are reduced to appealing to nothing more than (their version of) the considered experience of the West, even that appearance of consistency is gone, and all that remains is a presumption in favour of treating the experience in question as authoritative.

That such a presumption can be taken for granted so matter-of-factly in serious theoretical arguments is a tribute, of course, to the confidence liberals now have that history can be counted on to vindicate what they espouse. But it is also, no less, a reflection of the silences to which they have been reduced. For even as they feed on the good fortune that ideas deriving from their tradition now enjoy, it can scarcely be ignored that they do so as much out of necessity as choice. At a time when they have all but abandoned any pretence of an objective warrant for the practices they favour (Rorty 1989), they are hardly in a position to enter seriously

into arguments about their merits in principle. Aside from stipulating what they themselves (as self-conscious Westerners) prize, 'history' is all they have to go on.

As long as the returns that it brings continue to be congenial, this may, of course, as a practical matter suffice. There is nothing, after all, like the confirmation of events to make critical questions seem beside the point. But equally there is nothing like a reversal of fortune to give them fresh relevance, and to expose, in turn, the vacuity of answers that are grounded in nothing but convention. For what is 'self-evident' when things are going smoothly can all too easily turn out to be anything but when they are not.

If the confidence that liberals now tend to have that a corner has been turned and what is in the making is a world in which, for all practical purposes, the triumph of their way of thinking can be treated as an accomplished fact, then this is an eventuality which, presumably, will never need to be confronted. History will indeed settle the issue, and in a manner that makes further argument permanently irrelevant. But if the talk that we are now hearing about the 'end of history' itself turns out to be just one more ideological illusion, just the opposite could occur. This is especially likely if the economic stability and vitality that support the way of life that liberals now take for granted proves to be something less than permanent. In particular, in the event that growth stalls (and/or is seriously challenged), questions that are now being swept under the rug can almost certainly be expected to come surging back into the forefront of public life, and in a form that liberals could well find themselves less prepared than ever to confront. Precisely because they have become so accustomed to taking for granted things that do not deserve at all to be taken for granted, they could well be hard put, in fact, even to make sense of what they are up against. This is the shadow lurking in the background as the reigning public philosophy of the West celebrates the moment of its greatest triumph.

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CONSERVATISM

KENNETH R.HOOVER

The revival of conservatism as a powerful political force has been the distinguishing feature of contemporary politics. As a philosophical orientation, as an ideology, and as a political movement, conservatism has come to set the terms for policy debates in the major nations of the West.

An understanding of the separate strands within conservatism requires a broad analysis of historical definitions as well as a sense of contemporary political forces. What began in the eighteenth century as an orientation against change and the advent of egalitarianism has become, in the latter part of the twentieth century, an ideologically based movement to rationalize a reordering of society, politics and the economy. The movement contains divergent tendencies. As an approach to understanding this phenomenon, we shall begin by characterizing contemporary conservatism and shall then turn to its historical roots to discover the origins of the differences that threaten the viability of conservatism today.

CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATISM

The common theme of political conservatism is an acceptance of inequality. What characterizes conservatives of all kinds is a sense that the differences between people are more important than the similarities. It is in these differences that conservatives locate the keys to the problems of social order, on the one hand, and productivity, on the other. Whereas classical liberals thought that people should be regarded as equals for all civic purposes, conservatives have been more impressed with the need to treat individuals differently depending on a variety of moral and economic criteria (Joseph and Sumption 1979).

Having accepted the fact of human inequality, however, conservatives are not at all agreed on what to do about it. There are two major divisions in conservative thought that may be labelled 'traditionalist' and 'individualist' (Dolbeare and Dolbeare 1976; Nash 1979). Individualist conservatives argue

that, since there is such a manifest difference in individual abilities and talents, society will best be served by the maximum of individual freedom. If people are left free to pursue their own talents and interests without governmental interference, they will learn to be responsible for their own behaviour, and they will be encouraged, especially in a free-market society, to develop abilities that involve the production for goods and services that are in demand by the society. By contrast, traditionalist conservatives generally argue that, given the limitations of human nature and the inequality that results from those limitations, the key problem is how to organize the institutions that will constrain individual behaviour and guide it so that a measure of order and social cohesion can be achieved.

For individualist conservatives, the question of initiative and enterprise is paramount in establishing differences between people; for traditionalists, it is a matter of character and innate ability. Both provide somewhat similar rationales for inequality, but there are important differences that have profound political consequences. Initiative and enterprise are qualities that individualist conservatives imagine to be a matter of volition, and within reach of all people. Character and innate ability, on the other hand, are shaped by heredity, breeding and the civilizing power of institutions—and they are bound to be tested in a world that is made disorderly by the weaknesses of human nature. The political consequence is that individualist conservatism leads to the market-place as the premier institutional form, whereas traditional conservatism points toward entities such as the family, the church and the corporation.

Freedom as a political value is perceived quite differently by individualists and traditionalists. The former adopt the classical liberal position on the centrality of individual liberty, while rejecting most of the community-regarding limits liberals have placed upon it (Friedman 1962). Individualist conservatives would reject what Locke said about restraints on accumulation, Mill on qualitative judgements of utility, or Green on rationality as a guide to true freedom. Libertarianism is the version of freedom congenial to the individualist conservative position, and the logic of material self-interest is its calculus (Buchanan and Tullock 1962; Downs 1965).

Traditional conservatives have a more complicated view of freedom. Their argument is that real freedom is only possible within the proper structure. Without limits, licence is the result, not liberty. Institutional limits create spaces within which choice may be prudently exercised, and such freedom as is beneficial to humans may be exercised responsibly.

The market is the chosen social device of individualist conservatives because it rewards effort, rational choice (in terms of perceived material self-interest) and entrepreneurial skill. Traditionalists have always been chary of the market *per se*, although they have justified the institution of private property as a vital adjunct

of other institutional bases for the society: the family, the bourgeois state, the church, and the corporation (Wills 1979). It is the propensity of the market-place to disrupt settled patterns of institutional life that worries traditional conservatives.

These two tendencies have opposed each other on issues such as the desirability of minimum social provision for the disadvantaged. Traditional conservatives believe that levels of society should be dealt with responsibly. Individualist conservatives regard redistributive activities as coercion. Such governmental programmes are regarded simply as interferences with the process of free volition and individual choice that should be allowed to determine the 'true' distribution of rewards according to effort.

Education, abortion and the environment are other issues that divide the two tendencies. Traditional conservatives see the provision of support for education as a critical means of transmitting the moral code and cultural patrimony of Western civilization. Education helps to establish the hierarchies of ability even while it reproduces the values of civilization itself. For individualists, the educational system should resemble a market-place where people can pay for what they would like. Vouchers for educational services provide a means of using this principle while retaining public taxation as a financial basis for the system. The diversification of schooling systems, coupled with a decentralization of control in the hands of parents, places policy making where individualist conservatives think it should be.

Abortion poses a direct opposition between the use of government power to enforce a moral code and the assertion that individuals should be able to choose their own approach to reproduction. Environmental issues create similar difficulties within conservatism. Traditionalists favour conservation through public control where necessary; individualists are likely to support freedom of action or market incentives that reward preservation.

The movement containing these contradictory tendencies may be called conservative capitalism (Hoover and Plant 1989). It is a movement that contains a considerable internal tension between an institutionalist approach and a regard for the sanctity of individual free choice. The latter is a product of capitalist doctrine as it has come to be conceptualized in the West; the former reflects historic commitments to customary practices.

Conservative capitalism thus marks a period of politics that is distinct from the liberal capitalism characterized by the pre-Thatcherite social democratic consensus in Britain, and the general agreement on reform liberal principles that characterized American politics from the New Deal until the fall of the Carter presidency in 1980. In the concluding section of this essay, the future of this coalition will be explored, but first a brief historical survey will provide necessary background.

THE EUROPEAN ROOTS OF CONSERVATISM

In the classical scholarship on conservatism, the defining theme is the orientation toward change. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, conservatism first appears as a political term in 1835 in Matthew Arnold's letters, and its meaning has to do with preserving traditional social and political forms. Shortly thereafter, in Disraeli's *Comingsby* (Disraeli 1844), conservatism is described as a sceptical attitude towards secular doctrines of salvation.

Resistance to change had, besides its obvious advantages as a ploy for the preservation of the position of the elite, a philosophical basis in two rather different traditions: the doctrines of natural law, on the one hand, and epistemological scepticism on the other. The former proposed a constancy to human affairs that could be used to deny the possibility of innovation, while the latter undermined the basis upon which proposals for change could be grounded.

The belief in a natural order is as old as philosophy, and the political form given to this belief in the Middle Ages embraces a version of hierarchy that is congenial to those who accept divisions of society on the basis of class or of religious commitment. Just as an acorn grows into an oak tree, there is a natural order in society that, when brought to full maturity through the appropriate institutions, will lead to as much order and justice as human beings are capable of.

While scepticism can be used to undermine custom and tradition, it also has its conservative uses. David Hume (1711–76) opened the way to a devastating critique of the institutional inventions of classical liberalism by alternately exposing the evident rudeness of political arrangements, and deriding the pretensions of theorists who would dignify power with formulas based on consent. Deprived of rationalist certainty, liberalism remains only a speculative system from which a few observations on justice may be derived for the benefit of evolving institutions of law and order (Hayek 1960; Oakeshott 1962).

Natural law is the philosophical well-spring of traditional conservatism, while scepticism remains the touchstone of individualist conservatism. There is no necessary opposition between them, as sceptics of human inventions can blend with pessimists who place justice outside the bounds of human achievement. Yet there is a version of scepticism that erodes the basis of traditional society, as well as the pretensions of the new liberal order. This is the spirit in which Adam Smith approaches political economy (Hirschman 1977), and through his analysis the basis was laid for new variations of liberalism as well as conservatism.

Smith presented classical liberalism with the market-place as the economic analogue of democracy. Here was the opening to mass participation in economic affairs on the basis of labour, if not capital itself. The enemy of the market was

misguided government policy—a government of the privileged—that found through its mercantilist policies a doctrine that justified a powerful state and the enrichment of political allies simultaneously. In the spirit of 1776, Smith was the ally of the masses.

Yet there was a conservative moral strain to Smith's thought as well. He was preoccupied with the problem of moral behaviour. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith 1759) he seeks to explain how fair and impartial government could play a critical role in limiting the kind of self-serving attitude regarding the appropriation of property that is all too natural, and all too destructive of personal discipline and productive behaviour.

The extension of this institutional analysis in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Smith 1776) demonstrates that the market, by harnessing the power of vanity through the price system, will yield a measure of self-discipline in the interest of obtaining the best possible return on investment whether of labour or capital. For Smith, the main problem was the conversion of destructive behaviour into socially useful energy (Hirschman 1977). At that, he held out no hope of perfection or even of significant improvement, only the avoidance of harm—and the increase of economic productivity.

The specifically political intent of conservatism has to do with a resistance to the use of government to further, most significantly, equality. The resistance is predicated, in the writings of Edmund Burke (1729–97), the premier articulator of traditional conservatism as a philosophical orientation, upon a distrust of rationalist abstractions, a positive valuation of custom and tradition, and a fundamental acceptance of human differences as the basis of civil order (Burke 1976). This conservative orientation did not uniformly require a disavowal of change, for Burke could accept the American colonial revolt as an assertion of traditional English rights by disenfranchised citizens. At the same time, he rejected the French revolution as a murderous exercise in the imposition of the abstractions, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Burkean conservatism amounted to a faith in a plurality of authoritative institutions that operate to produce an 'organic society' characterized by moderation, discipline and a recourse to spiritual solace in the face of the vicissitudes of life (Burke 1976; Kirk 1962; Nisbet 1986).

Simultaneously, in late eighteenth-century Germany, conservatism acquired a range of meanings clustering around the defence of the status quo, reform and reaction (Epstein 1966:4–16). The defining criterion for the orientation to change had to do with how best to maintain differentiations of status, authority and rank that fit with conservative conceptions of human nature. For some the best course involved simple resistance to innovation, for others a careful moderation of the forces of change, and for the least practical, the revival of the past.

For both English and German conservatives, nationalism provided a palpable political form for these philosophical yearnings. While the state was viewed with some suspicion, the nation offered, at least in the abstract, the hierarchies of meaning and authority that accommodate a conservative political analysis. The state, as distinct from the nation, may be the vehicle of progressives, liberal reformers or radicals. The nation, while founded in a revolt against medieval imperialism, by the late eighteenth century came to represent the qualitative and spiritual principle that could be opposed to the quantitative and rationalist axioms of classical liberalism and its radical offspring. The fateful alliance of conservatism and nationalism was born of this union of doctrine and politics.

French conservatives such as Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) mingled nationalism with Christianity to produce a reactionary form of conservatism that took aim at all of the inventions of classical liberalism and radicalism: the social contract was a fiction, the possibility of improving on ‘the state of nature’ a dangerous illusion, and democracy itself a reproach to divine law. While this sort of recourse to the *ancien régime* limited the appeal of conservatism, the link made between nationalism and Christianity gave a populist opening to conservatism which reappears in contemporary conservative movements.

If an ideology may be defined as a world view that contains a programme of political action, then conservatism became an ideology when it took the form of a partisan credo during the political contests of the nineteenth century. The traditional conservative world view has roots in stoicism and medieval Christian pessimism about human nature. It centres on the need for hierarchy, the consequences of human limitations, and the inescapable role of spiritual faith. What gave conservatism a modern political presence was the evolution of the Tory party in the hands of Disraeli, Alexander Hamilton’s creation of a Federalist party in the United States, and the ferment of rightist partisanship on the Continent. In each arena, conservatism became an active ideological force.

While there is resistance to characterizing conservatism as anything more than a set of orientations to change (Rossiter 1982; Huntington 1957), the development of a political programme can be clearly identified. Disraeli countered the utilitarianism of his age with prescriptions for the maintenance of distinctions and the celebration of customary arrangements that went well beyond caution to resolute affirmation. The struggles over the Reform Bills and the alliance with Victorianism defined a distinctively Tory political programme.

The alliance of conservatism, nationalism and imperialism brought Britain to the apogee of its power and influence in world affairs by the turn of the century. The foundations of this power within the conservative class system and the economic relations that flowed from imperialism were shaken to the core by the social and physical devastation of the First and Second World Wars. Churchill’s evocation of Britain’s ‘finest hour’, testimony as it was to the power of nationalist

symbolism, also marked the beginning of the end of traditional conservatism in British society. The Conservatives lost power decisively for the first time at the end of the Second World War, and the initiative shifted to the left with the installation of a Labour government in 1945.

While the socialists commanded the rhetorical heights in the ensuing four decades, no small part of the institutional innovations of the social democratic consensus involved a regard for conservative institutional preferences. The distribution of services may have been democratized, but the institutions of the British welfare state retained a substantial measure of hierarchy within and autonomy without. This made more palatable the accommodation that the Conservative Party was led to make through the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s up until the advent of the first Thatcher government.

The result was an entitlement-driven bureaucracy that found itself by the 1970s increasingly isolated and declining in public esteem (Niskanen 1973; Brittan 1983). In an economic environment characterized by rising expectations, shrinking resources and the increasing power of the means of collective action through union control of the Labour Party, the British welfare state came to its great crisis. That the Conservatives could not capitalize on this crisis sooner was partly due to their complicity in it, and to the discredited traditionalism that underpinned their doctrinal approach. It was the development of Margaret Thatcher's distinctive combination of social traditionalism and individualist conservative economic policy that supplied a resolute conservative capitalist programme with which to confront a divided left. It was the unpopularity of such doctrinally driven measures as the poll tax that dismantled this combination and led to the downfall of Thatcher as prime minister.

NORTH AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

The story of the demise of traditional conservative orthodoxy is different in the American context, though the result was remarkably similar. In the newly independent colonies, Alexander Hamilton brought together a formidable group of notables intent on creating a strong national political and commercial system that could confront the rising power of democrats and debtors. His conceptual framework relied on the notion of an elite so composed as to balance contending forces: between those who, in the pursuit of fame, must cultivate public regard, and those who seek dominion and are led to exploit the forces of production (Dolbeare 1984). He envisioned an elite characterized by *noblesse oblige* who would command the apparatus of a powerful federal union in extending the benefits of the new society across the continent.

Hamilton's project foundered in the battle with the democratizing forces led by Thomas Jefferson, and suffered a major institutional blow when Andrew

Jackson vetoed the rechartering of the Bank of the United States in 1832. It is ironic that Jackson undid this conservative institution in the name of *laissez faire* which was to become, 150 years later, the doctrinal basis for a renovated conservatism.

Conservatism as a political credo in the United States suffered its second major blow in the defeat of the South in the Civil War. While many conservative citizens were for the Union, the intellectual basis of the confederate cause comprised a full programme of conservative principles from the reverence for traditional institutions through to the stratification of the population on the grounds of race, gender and class. The victory of the Union abetted the spread of democratic radicalism, and its extension to movements for full civil rights for minorities and women.

While conservative institutionalism was the declining cause of nineteenth-century American politics, conservatism as a firm defence of the limited basis of the constitutional contract remained in place until the New Deal. Though considerably weakened by the democratization of the political process arising from populist, progressive and socialist initiatives, the policy constraints of constitutional conservatism were not truly broken until the Supreme Court acquiesced in the policy innovations of the Roosevelt administration in the late 1930s.

From that point forward, traditional conservatism went slowly into the political night, kept alive only by its opposition to communism during the Cold War. It took the admixture of a new individualist interpretation, and a complex crisis within liberal capitalism, to revive the label and bring conservatism to the forefront of public attention in presidential campaigns, beginning with Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful candidacy in 1964 and culminating in Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980 (Piven and Cloward 1982). Reagan's triumph was even more clearly a case of coalition building between traditionalists and individualists, though contests over policies and priorities were usually decided in favour of the latter. His victory was abetted by the revisionist sociology of intellectuals who renounced the left in favour of a new conservatism that promised a stronger defence of individual freedom than the reformist left had delivered (Steinfels 1979; Kristol 1983).

The Canadian pattern diverges from the British and American in that the 'Red Tory' tradition was an assertive force in shaping institutions of political economy (Taylor 1982). The idea that governmentally based national and provincial economic institutions in banking, transportation, communications and mineral extraction should lead the way in forming a distinctive identity for Canadian culture was the work of traditionalist conservatives with a penchant for institutional innovation. The objective of these efforts was not at variance with the desires of populists and even liberals for much of Canada's history,

though there was plenty of room for partisanship in the allocation of influence and control within this institutional framework.

The introduction of *laissez faire* terminology into the Canadian conservative lexicon was inhibited by the persistence of classical liberalism in the opposing party and the delicacy of devolutionist politics in a fragile federation. It was once more the economic burden of the welfare state in the readjustments following the oil embargo and the divisions on the left between establishment liberals and Western populists that created an opening for a new kind of conservatism.

The Mulroney government represented a departure for Canadian conservatism. Free trade and a minimalist role for the state were its hallmarks. The Free Trade Agreement tests the cultural and economic solidarity of Canada in a manner that will directly confront the residual traditionalism and nationalism of conservatives. The programme runs the risk of jeopardizing the future of Canada as a sovereign entity, though, by the axioms of modern economics, there is little choice but to do so if there are to be gains in the gross national product comparable to other industrialized nations. Whether such gains will materialize given the disparities of economic power between Canada and its principle trading partner may well determine the future of conservative political fortunes. Whether conservatism can survive a loss of cultural cohesion and national identity in the name of economic ambition is being tested by the Canadian experience.

CONTINENTAL-EUROPEAN CONSERVATISM

In continental-European politics, the strengths of traditionalist conservatism were also the sources of its weaknesses, though an amelioration of the extremes through the development of Christian democratic parties preserved conservatism as a powerful rival to the left in much of Europe. The appeals of nationalism and of its combination with Christian religious identifications led to a complicity, dating from the late nineteenth century, between chauvinist attitudes and aristocratic forms. Charles Maurras (1868–1952) brought to fruition the anti-semitic pro-fascist potential of this alliance in France during the Second World War and was condemned for it by a court of law when the Vichy regime fell. Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) provided a link between British, German and Austrian Aryan nationalism of the kind that nurtured Adolf Hitler. Hitler rapidly outstripped any real link between Nazism and a recognizable conservatism. Anti-semitism became a genocidal fixation that no Christian could justify, plebiscitary rule a substitute for traditional authority, and Hitler's fantasies of Aryan supremacy an excuse for the wholesale destruction of human life. While fascism itself can be intellectually separated from conservatism, the early complicity of some conservative intellectuals, literati and

politicians in its rise to power contributed to the decline in the credibility of conservative parties.

Only in Franco's Spain, however, did the union of religion, nationalism and social conservatism reach its institutional peak and survive for an extended period of time. While there is an intellectual basis for a moderate version of Spanish conservatism in the writings of José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), the Franco regime went far beyond Ortega's admonitions concerning the masses to institutionalize a repressive hierarchy. The reactionary nature of the combination was fully revealed in the systematic violation of human rights, and in the refusal to consider elementary programmes of social justice of the kind that helped to modernize the rest of Europe in the post-war period. Franco, *El Caudillo*, became an icon of modern conservative politics, and his likeness could be seen all too often in the regimes of Latin America.

The use of police state tactics by governments claiming to be conservative gave the increasingly educated masses a reason to reject the right and, for those with a commitment to solving the world's injustices, grounds to embrace the left. The links between the conservative peasant parties of eastern and central Europe and proto-fascist attitudes of anti-Semitism provided a pretext for the Russian annexation of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia at the outset of the Second World War, and the subjugation of eastern Europe in the post-war period. While there were many powerful factors at work in these situations, it is apparent that conservative excesses contributed to the extremes of political confrontation that set the stage for both the Second World War and the Cold War.

In the post-war period, however, a more benign face of conservatism appeared and reclaimed a legitimate place in the politics of the Western democracies. Konrad Adenauer in the Federal Republic of Germany and Charles de Gaulle in France provided models of conservative rule that, especially in the former case, made good the claim that conservatism and democracy can co-exist. In their stout resistance to communism, Continental conservatives, and to a lesser extent American conservatives, were able to raise the credibility of the right whenever it ebbed away from an accommodationist left (Diggins 1975). By emphasizing the themes of cultural solidarity, traditional social values and Christian moral commitment, Adenauer and de Gaulle restored a measure of confidence to the European right.

While Continental conservatives could not respond effectively to the distributive demands of an increasingly potent labour movement, or the social innovations of an affluent middle class, they did succeed in holding together the core of a national identity in an increasingly secular and materialistic culture. If distributive equity remains the lesser theme of contemporary European politics, and the fruits of anti-communism are gathered by the right, the basis for an enduring conservative presence may have been laid. However, there are new

sources of tension affecting all of the conservative movements of the West, and these may well determine its survival.

CONSERVATIVE CAPITALISM: LINES OF CLEAVAGE

The contest between the individualist and communitarian elements in conservative capitalism has been made evident in the struggles over income security, education, the devolution of central political authority, and many other issues. What has become increasingly apparent is that there are cross-cutting splits that divide each tendency along lines of class attitude, if not of class itself.

Within traditionalist conservatism, there is a split between establishment conservatives based in the customary institutions of Western society, and moralist conservatives who base their politics in evangelical churches, single-cause organizations and patriotic associations. Both favour the use of governmental authority to shape individual behaviour by limiting certain freedoms. There is, however, a considerable difference of degree and of moral purpose separating these points of view.

While establishment conservatives are supporters of a moderate accommodation with the welfare state as a matter of sustaining social stability, moralist conservatives are more inclined to think of government provision as a means of fostering dependency and personal laxity. Where establishment conservatives find government programmes of population control acceptable, moralists wish to use government policy to restrict abortion, constrain sexual freedom and censor pornography. Establishment conservatives are inclined to restrain licence in individual behaviour, while moralists tend toward the imposition of discipline as a means of moral improvement.

Moralist politics in the United States were a prominent factor in securing Republican control of the US Senate from 1980–6, and in the presidential candidacy of evangelist Pat Robertson in 1988. The selection of Senator Dan Quayle as Vice-President was predicated in part on developing a coalition between the establishment politics of George Bush and the moralist appeal of the Senator from Indiana.

On the individualist side of conservative capitalism, there is a similar division between populist conservatives and corporate conservatives. Populism has a long history in American politics of both left and right. On the right, populism has been associated with nativism and nationalism. In its new incarnation, the populism of the right is concerned with threats to individual freedom arising from government regulation as well as the collusion of the major financial and commercial concerns in an elite politics that threatens small business people, independent entrepreneurs, farmers, non-union workers, and those who believe