

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Volume I

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**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES AND NON-DEMOCRATIC
ALTERNATIVES

As recently as the mid-1970s liberal democracy seemed in retreat. The overthrow of apparently well-established stabilized democracies in Uruguay, Chile, Turkey and the Philippines by military or executive coup; the tragic civil war in Lebanon; the suspension of democratic elections and rights in India and Sri Lanka, suggested that democracy was too fragile to cope with Third World conditions. In the (post-)industrialized West, academics shaken by student revolts, terrorist attacks, 'stagflation', strikes, and declining party identification wrote grimly of the 'ungovernability' of liberal democracies in contemporary societies (for example, see Crozier *et al.* 1975). They despaired over the short-sighted expenditure-driven policies of mass electorates and democratic politicians (for example, see Brittan, 1975).

It seems likely that hard times will come again. Therefore, it seems appropriate to conclude with a few words of comparison between democracies and the non-democratic alternatives. First, the easiest area in which to document superior performance of democracy is in sustaining civil rights and personal freedom from elite abuse. A review of the yearly studies of political rights and civil liberties by Freedom House (Gastil 1978, 1988) makes this association quite clear. Some authoritarian governments permit substantial civil freedom. Some liberal democracies have adopted restrictions on press freedoms and civil rights, or have abused the positions of minorities. But the general intertwining of electoral competition and political rights with civil freedom is obvious.

Moreover, there is some evidence that democracy contributes to the containment of serious violence. This evidence would probably be more compelling if we had better data on violence in authoritarian systems. But Hibbs's very careful analysis of mass political violence on a worldwide scale (Hibbs 1973) found that regimes in which elites were electorally accountable were less likely to use repression against their citizens. He also observed that such elite restraint when confronted with citizen protest and turmoil helped prevent the escalation of serious violence (*ibid.*: 186-7).

In areas of welfare policy and economic growth, it is more difficult to be sure about the evidence for liberal democracy. Both problems of data and the rather different strategies within each type of regime make comparison a complex task. We would expect from theory, of course, that the liberal democracies would be more likely to develop welfare policies and otherwise respond to consensual policies (if any) preferred by the electorates. It is precisely this expectation that made many scholars of Third World development pessimistic about the ability

of liberal democracies to promote the savings needed for long-term growth (for example, see Huntington and Nelson 1976).

Despite both the hopes and fears of policy tendencies in liberal democracies, the best comparisons of welfare policies before 1980 suggest little difference between liberal democracies and other types of regimes in average welfare policies or average growth in either the Third World or in Eastern versus Western Europe (see the review in Powell 1982b:385–9). More recent studies (Dye and Zeigler 1988), as well as events in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, seem to favour liberal democracies. At the very least, the 1980s have demonstrated that within each type of political regime many economic patterns are possible. They have also demonstrated that voters in liberal democracies can reject parties proposing endless welfare and tax spirals. Thus there seems reason for measured optimism about the capacity for voters to constrain elite behaviour in modern liberal democracies.

As the decade of the 1990s begins, it is too easy to be optimistic about the performance of liberal democracies compared to non-democratic systems. With the ideology of communism in disarray, Soviet control of its European neighbours apparently released, and central command control systems in economic chaos, the victory of liberal democracy and mixed capitalist economies over their most prominent rival seems at hand. Perhaps a more sober lesson is that no regime offers a perfect solution to governing contemporary society. Churchill's dictum remains the safest:

Many forms of government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

(Churchill 1950:200)

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COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST SYSTEMS

LESLIE HOLMES

Until the so-called 'East European Revolution' of 1989–90, approximately one-third of the world's population lived in systems claiming to be building communism; such systems can be called communist. Even by late 1990, well in excess of 1.5 billion people lived in communist systems, although most of these systems appeared likely to become 'post-communist' during the 1990s. Most of this essay is concerned with communist states as they were until 1989, although reference will also be made to the 'post-communist' states at appropriate junctures.

Not one of the communist states has ever made the claim that it was already communist—most claiming to be at some stage of socialism—which has led some commentators to argue that the use of the term 'communist' is inappropriate. However, there are two major reasons why the use of the term 'communist' is still a better label than any other. First, Marx himself (Marx and Engels 1970:56–7) argued that the term communism refers to two phenomena—an ideal towards which society moves, and the political movement which abolishes an existing state of affairs so as to create the conditions for the movement towards the ideal. Indeed, he further made it clear that the political movement was closer to what he meant by communism than was the ideal. Second, there are and have been a number of systems in the world that claim or have claimed to be socialist, but which are not organized in the same way as communist states, and which do not claim to be building a Marxist-style communism; examples are Libya, Tanzania, Nicaragua and Burma (Myanmar). In order to avoid confusion with such states, it makes sense to call the latter socialist and the former communist.

There has been a major debate in the field of comparative communism on the question of whether or not self-ascription—which is essentially the criterion used above—is acceptable in determining whether or not a particular country should be classified as 'communist'. Harding (1981:33) argues that it would be wrong to characterize a regime as communist—or Marxist, as he would prefer to

call it—simply in terms of the goals it professes. For him, there have to be the appropriate means and preconditions for their realization. The problem with this argument is that none of the existing communist or even post-communist systems—with the possible, partial exceptions of Czechoslovakia and what was, until October 1990, the German Democratic Republic—had the preconditions necessary for the building of socialism when the communists took power. Harding argues that if a regime does not have the proper level of development, for instance, ‘Marxism may well become merely a convenient rhetoric of legitimation for Jacobins, populists, nationalists or tyrants’ (ibid.: 33). In fact, there are few if any communist systems which have not been led for at least part of the time by ‘Jacobins, populists, nationalists and tyrants’, and one wonders which actual regimes could be included using Harding’s approach. To be fair to Harding, it seems at times (ibid.: 21) that he wishes to distinguish Marxist from communist regimes. However, on other occasions (ibid.: 23) he does appear to use the term Marxist to apply to *many* of the regimes most observers would choose to call communist, so that the reader is ultimately uncertain as to whether Harding is actually pleading for the use of the term ‘Marxist regime’ only as an ideal type, or whether he does in fact wish to use it as an alternative label to ‘communist’. Let us therefore consider another approach.

One of the most provocative analyses of the issue of what constitutes a communist state is provided by John Kautsky. In a 1973 article, Kautsky argued that none of the variables others have used to identify communist systems is unique to such systems (Kautsky 1973). He argues that the only variable which *does* distinguish them is their symbols, and he feels that symbols are insufficient as a distinguishing criterion. There are two main problems with Kautsky’s argument. First, symbols can be important, especially if the actual organization of society is closely related to such symbols. Second, whilst one can certainly isolate each of the variables he identifies—such as a nationalist component in the ideology, an authoritarian political structure, state intervention in the economy, etc.—and find examples of non-communist systems that have a similar approach to these as the communist systems, the particular *mix* of variables is reasonably distinctive in communist states. Thus, whilst Kautsky is unquestionably justified in arguing that we must not treat communist systems as if they are totally different from all other kinds of system (especially non-communist developing countries), he goes too far in arguing that they are indistinguishable from many other systems.

In one of the best-selling introductions to communist systems, the authors argue that there are four defining characteristics of a communist state (White *et al.* 1990:4–5). First, such states all base themselves upon an official ideology, the core of which is Marxism-Leninism. Second, the economy is largely or almost entirely publicly rather than privately owned, and is organized on the basis of a

central plan; they have 'administered' or 'command' economies rather than 'market' economies. Third, they are typically ruled by a single or at least a dominant communist party, within which power is normally highly centralized and organized according to the principle of 'democratic centralism'. Finally, institutions which in the liberal democracies are more or less independent of the political authorities (for example, the press, trade unions and the courts) are in communist states effectively under the direct control of the communist party, exercising its 'leading role.' This seems to be one of the best analyses of the distinguishing features of a communist system; although it will be argued below that the communist states are dynamic and that some of the above features are less pronounced than they once were even in those countries that are not yet 'post-communist', the question then needs to be raised as to whether or not such a dynamism eventually steers these states away from communism. For now, assuming that this fourfold analysis is more or less valid, some of the variables can be examined in more detail.

The term 'Marxism-Leninism' appears to have been first used by the Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin (in power 1929–53). The ideology is a *materialist* one, meaning that its adherents believe that matter—the material world around us—determines the way we think. In this sense, they differ fundamentally from *idealists*—of whom Hegel is a prime example—who believe that ideas are the reality, and that the world around us is merely a reflection of such ideas. Marxism-Leninism is also supposed to be based on a *dialectical* approach to the world; expressed crudely, this states that everything is in a constant state of flux, and that change occurs as a result of the interaction and development of various factors. For Marxist-Leninists, as for Marxists generally, the most important factor is class struggle, which in turn reflects changes in the nature and ownership of the means of production. Marxist-Leninists believe that there are *laws* to such developments and call their ideology 'scientific'. The first Soviet leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, added two particularly important components to this Marxist base. First, he developed the notion of a tightly-knit, centralized and elitist political party. This idea was originally expounded in *What is to be Done?* (Lenin 1902) before the Russian Revolution of October 1917; subsequently, in 1921, he reiterated the need for a tight-knit party, in which factionalism would not be tolerated even *following* a socialist revolution. This constitutes the origins of the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the monolithic and centralized party. Second, Lenin produced a major analysis of imperialism. Whilst many of his ideas on this have been discredited, a number of revolutionaries in the developing world have been inspired by Lenin's arguments. This is largely because they accepted his view that the world is divided up between imperialist countries and colonies, and because he seemed to show how, largely through a tightly organized and centralized political system, a group of domestic

communists would be able to develop their country independently of the imperial powers.

The above analysis of Marxism-Leninism is only a thumb-nail sketch, and the reader is strongly advised to read both the essay on Marxism in this encyclopedia (pp. 155–66) and the sources cited in the bibliography at the end of this essay (especially Harding 1983; McLellan 1979, 1980). At this juncture, it should be pointed out that some communist states have added phrases to ‘Marxism-Leninism’ to describe their particular ideology. The best-known example is the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which at the time of writing still officially described its ideology as ‘Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought’. The Chinese, more explicitly than many other communists, clearly distinguish between the ‘pure’ ideology of Marxism-Leninism and the ‘practical’ ideology of Maoist thought. According to this approach, Marxism-Leninism is primarily a mode of analysis, a general way of interpreting the world—whereas the ‘practical’ component of the ideology has to apply this general methodology to the concrete situation in a given country at a particular period, and devise policies, and so forth, on the basis of this. One important element that is often to be found in the ‘practical’ ideology, but which in a real sense contradicts the ‘proletarian internationalism’ of classical Marxism, is official nationalism. A good example of this can be found in North Korean ideology, which is described as ‘Marxism-Leninism and Juche’; Juche is very much a nationalist ideology.

The level and nature of state ownership and central planning of the economy has varied considerably between communist states. At one end of the spectrum are countries in which there has been very little private ownership and a high level of *directive* planning; Albania, North Korea and Cuba are examples. At the other end are countries in which private enterprise has not only been tolerated but has even been encouraged, and in which central planning is/was not only much less comprehensive than in other communist states, but also largely *indicative* (i.e. it tends to be more in the form of reasoned suggestions rather than orders). Examples of this type of economy are Yugoslavia, Hungary until 1989, increasingly the USSR and—at least until mid-1989—the PRC.

Although all communist states have been ruled by a dominant communist party, there are two common misconceptions that need to be corrected. The first is that all communist systems are clearly one-party states. Whilst the communist party (which may or may not have the word ‘communist’ in its formal title) *does* typically dominate, a number of communist states for many years formally had a bi- or multi-party system; examples include Bulgaria, the GDR, Poland, the PRC and Vietnam. It must be appreciated, however, that the minor parties do not normally play a very significant role in these countries until the transition to post-communism is underway. Second, in some of the non-European communist states—such as Cuba and Ethiopia—the communist party played little or no role

in the early years of communist rule, in some cases simply because it did not exist. In such cases, the country was called communist mainly in terms of the formal commitment of the leaders to Marxist-Leninist ideology and communism as an end goal—although, strictly speaking, some leaders such as Castro did not even commit themselves to these ideas until some time after they had seized power. This is one of the many reasons why analysts sometimes disagree on whether or not to classify a particular system as ‘communist’.

As mentioned above, communist parties are structured according to the principle of ‘democratic centralism’; indeed, in recent years many other political agencies in communist systems, including much of the state itself, have been formally organized according to this principle. According to Article 19 of the Statute of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) adopted in 1986, democratic centralism within the Party entailed the following:

- 1 election of all leading Party bodies, from the lowest to the highest;
- 2 periodical reports of Party bodies to their Party organizations and the higher bodies;
- 3 strict Party discipline and the subordination of the minority to the majority;
- 4 the binding nature of the decisions of higher bodies for lower bodies;
- 5 collective spirit in the work of all organizations and leading Party bodies and the personal responsibility of every Communist for the fulfilment of his/her duties and Party assignments.

It is particularly important to note that the noun in this basic political principle was ‘centralism’, the modifier ‘democratic’; in other words, ‘democracy’, however defined, was only meant to act as a *control* on a centralized system, not to constitute the basis of the system itself.

The ways in which communist parties exercise their ‘leading role’ in society, and in particular over other institutions such as the media and trade unions, are several, and it is beyond the scope of this essay to address this issue fully. In many ways, the single most important manifestation of this is the so-called *nomenklatura* system. The way in which this is exercised varies somewhat from country to country, but the basic concept is common. The communist party is organized hierarchically, and at each level a secretary or secretariat will have a list of posts—the *nomenklatura*—at that level. The party must play some role in hiring and/or firing individuals to/from these key posts; in some cases, the party is to be directly involved in this process, in other cases only kept informed. The important point is that the *nomenklatura* includes all the most politically powerful and sensitive posts at a given level, *not* merely party posts. A city-level *nomenklatura* may well include the editorships of the city’s newspapers, the directorships of many of the production enterprises, the headships of the city’s colleges, etc. Not everyone who is appointed to a

nomenklatura post will be a member of the party, though in most communist states the majority are.

Using the above criteria, it is possible to identify more than twenty states in four continents that were communist until 1989. Listed alphabetically, they were Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Benin, Bulgaria, Cambodia (Kampuchea until 1989), China (PRC), Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (the GDR), Ethiopia, Hungary, North Korea (DPRK), Laos, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Romania, South Yemen (PDRY), Soviet Union (USSR), Vietnam and Yugoslavia.

However, many of the above countries experienced overt systemic crises in the period 1989–90, so that by mid-1991, only four (China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam) would by most criteria still qualify *relatively* clearly as communist. A further thirteen appeared to be at various stages of transition, though not yet clearly ‘post-communist’ (Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Benin, Cambodia, Congo, Ethiopia, Laos, Mongolia, Mozambique, Romania, USSR, Yugoslavia). Four countries still intact were clearly ‘post-communist’ (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland), whilst the remaining two were not only post-communist but had also both united with culturally similar neighbours during 1990 and had thus ceased to exist as sovereign states (GDR, PDRY). In order to understand what brought all this about, it is necessary to analyse the *dynamism* of communist states; what follows must necessarily be presented in a very generalized form, and individual communist states will approximate more or less closely to the pattern outlined.

Communists typically take (as well as lose!) power in crisis situations. The crises most commonly occur either during or in the aftermath of a major international war. In the case of the world’s first communist state, Russia (the USSR from 1922 to 1991), the crisis of 1917 was in part a result of the country’s poor performance in the First World War. Between 1917 and the mid-1940s, only one other country—Mongolia—came under communist rule (1924); in this particular case, the system was in crisis less because of war than because of domestic factors. But in the aftermath of the Second World War, a spate of new communist states came into being. Thus, between 1945 and 1950, communists came to power in eight East European states as well as in China, North Korea and Vietnam. The circumstances varied in each, but in all of them an old regime had collapsed or was collapsing, and in many of them the Red (Soviet) Army and/or other forms of Soviet involvement assisted indigenous communists to take power. There was only one new communist state in the 1950s (Cuba, 1959), and in one sense even this is questionable, in that Castro did not formally commit himself to Marxism-Leninism until 1961; he came to power not in the aftermath of an international war, but largely as a result of the corruption and widespread unpopularity of the Batista regime. Nor were the 1960s a period of

major expansion in the communist world; in the view of many, communists took power in Congo (Brazzaville) in 1968 and in South Yemen in 1969. The second major wave of communist expansion (i.e. after the period 1945–50) took place in the early to mid-1970s. In this case, the major factors leading to crisis were communist success in an international war (in the three Indo-Chinese states of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) and the further collapse of various European empires, notably the French and the Portuguese. Thus the ex-French colony of Benin came under communist control in 1972, whilst Angola and Mozambique rapidly came under the control of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and Frelimo, respectively, following the overthrow of the Caetano regime in Portugal in September 1974 and the subsequent Portuguese abandonment of its centuries-old empire. In the cases of the two other countries that came under communist control in the 1970s—Ethiopia (1974) and Afghanistan (1978)—the crisis that led to the revolutionary change was primarily related to the unpopularity and general decline of legitimacy of the regimes of Emperor Haile Selassie and General Daoud, respectively.

One of the most striking facts to emerge from a comparative analysis of communist accessions to power is that communists do not generally take power in economically highly developed countries or in countries with a strong liberal democratic tradition. In this sense, Marx failed to predict the emergence of the kind of systems we usually call communist. One of the ramifications of the fact that communists usually come to power in developing countries is that the new leaders have generally felt obliged to transform their countries rapidly and fundamentally; they often set about this following their consolidation of power, the duration of which varies considerably from country to country. This desire for rapid transformation can be explained both in terms of their country's need to reach a level of industrialization and general economic development that is, in Marxist terms, appropriate and necessary for the creation of a truly socialist and eventually communist system, and in terms of demonstrating the superiority of the Marxist-Leninist development model over other possible paths—notably capitalism. Given both this commitment to a rapid 'revolution from above'—which typically involves socialization of the means of production and collectivization of agriculture—and the widespread hostility that this frequently engenders, it is common for the transformation to be accompanied by relatively widespread physical terror. Terror has been a salient feature of several communist states, notably the USSR in the 1930s (Stalin's so-called 'Great Terror'), most of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s/early 1950s, Cambodia in the mid- to late 1970s, Afghanistan at the end of the 1970s, and several of the African communist states in the late 1970s and into the 1980s. In some of the Asian communist states, there has tended to be a mixture during the transition phase of overt physical terror and somewhat less draconian 'thought reform'. In the latter,

many people who are deemed by the regime to be either openly hostile or else not sufficiently positive in their attitudes towards communism are sent off to 're-education camps'. In most cases, these are essentially prison-camps in which internees are subjected to intensive resocialization techniques (i.e. brainwashing). China, Vietnam, Laos and North Korea have made extensive use of such camps (for further details on terror see Dallin and Breslauer 1970).

It will be fairly obvious from the above that, in the consolidation and rapid transition phases, communist states typically exercise power primarily in the coercive mode. But as time passes, leaders change and the disadvantages of the predominantly coercive mode (for example, it discourages both initiative and accepting responsibility at all levels) become increasingly obvious. Hence communist leaderships normally seek to place less emphasis on coercion and more on legitimation. At least seven modes of legitimation—old traditional, charismatic, teleological (also known as goal-rational), eudaemonic, official nationalist, new traditional, and legal-rational—can be identified, and can to a limited extent be related to different stages of the development of communist states.

In the earliest stages, one of the main tasks of a new communist regime is to discredit its non-communist predecessor, to undermine old traditional legitimation. Many older people, in particular, may still believe in the divine right of monarchs, and hence find it difficult to develop allegiance to the new type of power system.

As part of their attempts to break down old values, and quite possibly at the same time as coercion becomes the dominant form of power, communists may seek to create the impression that their very top leaders are superhuman and have made extraordinary efforts and personal sacrifices to serve the people. This is an attempt to legitimate in terms of leadership charisma, and can be seen in the personality cults communist propagandists have created around leaders such as Lenin (USSR), Mao (PRC) and Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam); in recent times, the most extreme personality cults have been of Kim Il Sung in North Korea and the late Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania.

But charismatic legitimation, like coercive power, typically begins to seem less appropriate and effective as educational standards rise and as the essentially secularizing effects of communist power take effect. Thus communists begin to look for other modes of legitimation. Indeed, it is usually at about this time that the transition from power exercised primarily through coercion towards more legitimation-based power begins to occur. In this period, an emphasis on teleological (or goal-rational) legitimation often becomes evident. At this stage, communists seek authority largely by reference to their all-important role in leading society towards the distant end-goal (or *telos*—hence teleological) of communism (see Rigby 1982). The publication of

the CPSU Programme in 1961 is a good example of this attempt at teleological legitimation.

For a number of reasons—including the cynicism caused by the years of coercion, by new leaders criticizing the faults of their predecessors, and by economic shortages; and doubts about the practicality of achieving many goals within a sufficiently short time-frame that it could act as a stimulus to people—goal-rational or teleological legitimation often fades into the background over time. In its place, typically, is a form of legitimation that is less ambitious and more geared to satisfying the immediate demands of the consumer. Such a form of legitimation is called eudaemonism (here meaning conducive to happiness), since it seeks to satisfy citizens through regime performance. This was very much a feature of many European communist states in the late 1960s and the 1970s, when there was simultaneously an emphasis on realistic socialism (as distinct from the more idealistic socialism implied in teleological legitimation) and the better satisfaction of consumer demands. Many European communist states at that time introduced economic reforms that were designed, *inter alia*, to meet these requirements. China can be seen to have introduced a somewhat similar—if in many ways more radical—plan at the end of the 1970s, whilst Vietnam also moved in this direction in the 1980s.

Unfortunately, the economic reforms are typically far less successful than communist leaderships anticipate, so that legitimation in the eudaemonic mode becomes problematic. There are various responses to this. One is a new emphasis on official nationalism, whereby communist leaders try to gain support for the system by appealing to nationalist feelings in the populace; this attempt may hark back to a glorious pre-communist past (as Ceausescu did in Romania), or it may emphasize contemporary national achievements (for example, the GDR's emphasis on sporting success in the Olympic Games). Such nationalism contains dangers, however; for instance, too much emphasis on the past can undermine the relatively new and radical ideas of communism, whilst official nationalism can trigger unofficial nationalism amongst ethnic minorities.

Another regime response can be called 'new traditionalism'. In this, communist leaderships emphasize the advantages of earlier periods of communism, and either implicitly or explicitly suggest that current difficulties would be reduced if there were to be a return to some of the traditional communist values. Examples of this include Gorbachev's emphasis on the positive aspects of the Lenin era (including Lenin's economic policies from 1921) and, since the middle of 1989, the Chinese leadership's increasingly favourable re-assessment of the Maoist era (1949–76). Once again, there can be problems with this form of legitimation. Contemporary conditions will often be very different from those pertaining in the earlier period, for instance, which means

that today's leaders have to be selective in choosing from their predecessors' policies—some of which would be totally inappropriate.

Partially because of the problems of official nationalism and new traditionalism as legitimation modes, many communist leaders either essentially avoid them or else limit their use of them. Instead, there emerged in several communist states in the 1980s an emphasis on legal-rational legitimation. According to some political theorists (see for example Poggi 1978), this form of legitimation is the only one appropriate to the 'modern' state, and there were certainly signs of moves towards modernity in countries such as Hungary, Poland and the USSR, even before 1989. One of the salient features of legal-rationality is an emphasis on the *rule of law* and, as a corollary, the depersonalization of politics and economics. Signs of this development are not only the references in communist politicians' speeches to the rule of law, but also more concrete manifestations, such as the limiting of tenure for political officeholding, granting citizens the right to bring legal charges against officials at any level, genuinely contested elections, and greater tolerance of investigative journalism (for a more detailed comparative analysis of the moves towards legal-rationality see Holmes 1991). In the USSR, these changes have been closely associated with the Soviet leader since March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, and are manifest in his emphasis on political and economic restructuring (*perestroika*), greater openness and honesty (*glasnost*) on the part of the authorities, and more political rights for the citizenry (*demokratisatsiya*).

It seems likely that these moves towards legal-rationality have been taken by many communist leaders because other modes of legitimation have not been sufficiently successful. In particular, the relatively recent encouragement of citizens to criticize corrupt, inefficient or arrogant party and state officials can be seen on one level as a method by which the leaders hope to be able to ensure proper implementation of the economic reforms. In the past, the leaders have often adopted policies designed to improve economic performance, only to see their own officials sabotage these policies, since they were perceived as being against those officials' interests. Thus, both Deng (PRC) and Gorbachev—in different ways and to different extents—have used moves towards legal-rationality, including mass involvement in campaigns against corrupt officials, as one way of improving economic performance. The motive for such an approach was probably less a commitment to a genuine rule of law as this is generally understood in the West than to a means of improving such performance. It appears that the leaders' ultimate aim is (or was) to be able to return to a form of eudaemonic legitimation—only this time, based on a real improvement in the economy and thus in living standards.

But developments in the late 1980s suggested that communist leaders cannot control (i.e. limit) the moves towards legal-rationality that they themselves feel compelled to initiate. The moves towards more open politics and privatization (an

economic aspect of the general move towards legal-rationality, since it represents a depersonalization and deconcentration of the running of the economy) often encourage citizens to demand and expect more than the communists can and/or are willing to provide. This tension became very visible in the USSR, in China and in several East European states at the end of the 1980s. One response is the move back towards coercion; the Beijing massacre of June 1989 and its aftermath typifies this. But some communist countries—notably most of the East European states—proved incapable of reversing the trend. Many communist leaderships found themselves and their system in a fundamental identity crisis. The more they accepted elements of legal-rationality into the system, the more the ‘communist’ system began to resemble what for so many years had been portrayed as the arch-enemy, the liberal democratic capitalist system. Even worse, the new hybrid system seemed to incorporate many of the worst aspects of both kinds of system, rather than the best. On the one hand, the communists were now accepting unemployment, inflation and growing inequality. On the other hand, citizens had still not been granted high levels of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of travel—or the living standards of the West. In addition to this basic dilemma, the leaderships of many communist states began to lose faith in what they were doing, as the leader of their role-model (i.e. the USSR) acknowledged that his country was in crisis and uncertain of its future direction. It was in this situation of fundamental contradictions, pressure from below, and loss of their principal role-model that many communists realized by 1989–90 that the very dynamism of communist power had brought them to a point at which that power and system had run its course.

At this point, two questions need to be addressed. First, why are some countries further along the path of transition from communism to post-communism than others? Second, what are the salient features of post-communist states?

The answer to the first question is a complex one. Among the many factors to be included in an explanation are political culture, level of economic development, awareness of what is occurring elsewhere in the world, and, it seems, the way in which the communists came to power. Thus there appears to be a reasonably clear pattern whereby countries in which communism was in essence installed by a foreign power move more rapidly to post-communism than countries in which native communists assumed power largely by their own efforts. For example, Poland and Hungary are at a more advanced stage of transition than Yugoslavia or Albania. However, the identity crisis described above also applies to the latter countries, and it is almost certainly only a matter of time before they become ‘post-communist’ states too.

The second question is also difficult to answer satisfactorily—especially in a relatively short article like this. Most basically, a post-communist state is one

which has in the past been ruled by communists, but in which the communists have now lost their politically privileged position. But such a definition tells us relatively little about the new political configurations and values, the economic system, etc. Ideally, it would be desirable to examine these variables in detail; in practice, this is not yet possible, for various reasons. On one level, post-communism is more accurately conceived of as the rejection of something—the coercion, elitism, corruption, mendacity, hypocrisy and incompetence of actual communist systems—than the adoption of a clear set of political, economic and social goals and methods. In this sense, it is easier to agree on what it is not than on what it is. It is true that there appears to be a widespread belief in the various states either at or approaching the post-communist stage that a pluralist political system and a more competitive, largely privatized economic system akin to Western systems is desirable. Under the new arrangements, citizens are to have much greater freedom than they have had to organize themselves without excessive interference from the state; in short, the establishment or revitalization of civil society is a salient feature of early post-communism. Nevertheless, there are also very divergent views within all of these countries on the nature, pace and direction of change that is desirable and/or possible. Even where there is a reasonably high level of consensus on goals, the means for achieving these are in many cases far from clear. Perhaps the best example is the problem of creating a largely privatized, competitive economy—what is often called a ‘market’ system. Many Poles and Russians, for instance, declare their support for a market system, yet have few concrete ideas on how to create one.

One of the ramifications of this apparent gap between ends and means is that as the euphoria of removing communist governments is replaced by various harsh realities of early post-communism, such as worsening domestic inflation and unemployment in the context of a global recession, a mood of disappointment and even despair may set in. Such despair could in the future be exploited by new, authoritarian, nationalist—and possibly racist—demagogues who, though not communist, may from many perspectives be at least as undesirable as their Marxist-Leninist predecessors. But such a dismal scenario for post-communism is not the only possible one. If the global economy performs well in the 1990s—however improbable this seems at the beginning of the decade—interaction with the rest of the world could secure a brighter future for post-communism.

In the preceding discussion, post-communism has been treated in very general terms, almost as if it is a single phenomenon. Whilst there are many similarities between the various countries at or approaching the stage of post-communism, there are also important differences and potentialities, relating to factors such as level of ethnic homogeneity, availability of natural resources, etc. Partially for this reason, it is quite possible that some post-communist states and

societies will perform much better than others. This is another reason why it is not possible to provide a detailed analysis of 'post-communism'—at least at present.

Two final points can be made by way of a conclusion. First, although most communist systems have found themselves in profound identity crises in recent years, some of the values once putatively espoused by communists in power (for example, a commitment to limiting inequalities; state subsidisation of basic foodstuffs, housing, transport, etc; full or near-full employment, etc.) may again become popular in the post-communist era. This said, such values are more likely to be achievable within a social democratic system than a communist one. Second, the fate of the post-communist countries is likely to have implications for those systems that are currently either still communist or in transition. If the post-communist systems are perceived as representing no real improvement on communism, this could provide communists still in power with an opportunity to prolong their rule. However, this would be only a temporary respite. The dynamism of communism in power is such that democratic centralism, the *de facto* one-party state and the centrally planned national economy eventually become outdated and are replaced—suddenly or gradually, violently or peacefully, from below, above or outside, depending on the particular circumstances. Communism is often a relatively effective system for modernizing societies, but it is incompatible with law-based, pluralist modernity or post-modernity.

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CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

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Like many concepts in contemporary political science the concept of authoritarianism is rather controversial. The concept has had a long and rather confusing history in the literature of political inquiry. This confusion and controversy springs from the fact that there is no generally agreed upon definition of the concept to frame our discussions of it and other related concepts, such as democracy and totalitarianism, which are used to classify contemporary political regimes. The whole issue of classifying regimes is confused further because these concepts stand at the interface between wouldbe scientific accounts of politics and government, and the polemically charged world of actual political practice. These types of concepts therefore not only denote characteristics of regimes but they also connote positive and negative judgements on their normative worth. In general, the concept of an authoritarian regime has in recent times carried a rather negative connotation, although this has not always been the case historically.

The question of normative connotation, in turn, bridges back into the realm of scientific analysis because it speaks to a crucial issue related to all regime forms: namely legitimacy, or the principles upon which political actors attempt to justify the way they organize the process of government in any particular society. The influential political sociologist Max Weber long ago established the view that the key to the long-term stability of any type of regime is the degree to which the populace over which it holds sway comes to believe in the legitimacy of its fundamental principles of organization (Weber 1968). The belief in a regime's legitimacy conveys authority upon specific governments that act in the name of the regime and thereby, in theory at least, increases that government's capacity to maintain order and govern a particular society.

The concepts of regime form and legitimacy bring us immediately to one of the crucial political problems of much of the contemporary world: the problem of governance, or the ability of governments to maintain order and simultaneously resolve the problems that confront a given society. Conceptually

that question involves the analysis of the interaction of three distinct dimensions: state, regime and government. Can specific governments channel the power capacities of the state into a form of governance (regime) capable of being sustained over time and throughout changes in governments even when such governments produce policies that solve problems? In the contemporary world, especially among the less developed countries, the bulk of the most crucial problems that confront governments are economic in nature.

Many of the most important questions surrounding the analysis of contemporary authoritarian regimes are linked directly to these conceptual issues of governance and legitimacy. Many analysts explain the emergence of authoritarian regimes as the result of situations in which the legitimacy of other regime forms, such as democracy, is undermined because governments are unable to solve many of the most pressing economic problems confronting a society. The incapacity of governments can set off a crisis of confidence in the existing regime which renders it vulnerable to being overturned by way of insurrection, a *coup d'état* or the like. The new government is often authoritarian in that it seeks to concentrate governmental power in a strong executive which moves to impose solutions to pressing problems by means of force and coercion if necessary. In short 'authoritarianism' is often caused by a severe crisis of governance within a 'democracy'.

In the recent past many strong governments that came about by these means then declared their intentions to create an authoritarian regime within which successive governments would be constituted in an ongoing process of fundamentally reordering and restructuring a society. However, as analysts like Linz (1970) have pointed out, contemporary authoritarian regimes have found it particularly difficult to legitimate themselves because the concept of democracy (however disputed) has today become so pervasive that it has all but monopolized legitimacy throughout the world. Thus authoritarian regimes are immediately perceived as illegitimate, especially in the long term. By this argument contemporary authoritarian regimes are only able to create a transitory sense of legitimacy linked to an immediate crisis at hand; a legitimacy rooted in exceptional circumstances and destined to fade as the crisis either fades or else proves intractable to authoritarian measures as well.

Historically the concept of authoritarianism has a long lineage in which the underlying concept has been linked to numerous other conceptual terms such as autocracy, dictatorship, oligarchy, patrimonialism, sultanism and many others. For much of human history various kinds of authoritarian modes of governance were preponderant throughout the world. In most cases authoritarian regimes were rooted in value systems which conveyed legitimacy on them. For Weber most of these types of regimes fell under a single historical general category which he called traditional authority (Weber 1968).

In the Western world the most important kind of traditional authority, patrimonialism, was linked to the emergence of the modern state. As a regime form patrimonialism was linked to centralizing monarchs who concentrated power in a single personalized central authority from which came law. Over time this top-down system of rule was articulated through sets of civil and military officials who became the core of an administrative apparatus that evolved into the modern bureaucratic and professional military arms of the state.

In the classic patrimonial system, defined by Weber (1968) as a theoretically construed ideal type, politics was dominated by a small political class of notables who contended among themselves for offices in the service of the patrimonial prince; the primary division among them was faction. They were retainers or 'clients' of the patrimonial ruler and they depended upon grace or patronage for their positions. The ruler in turn sought to control the fractious estate of notables by manipulating the flow of patronage or prebends. Some grasp of this traditional regime form of patrimonialism is necessary because many of its central dynamics appear today in what is often called patron-client relations or clientelism. While clientelism is a feature that appears in different guises in many contemporary regimes, it is particularly visible and dominant in contemporary authoritarian governments in the less developed world, which in some respects echo patrimonialism. These 'neo-patrimonial' expressions of authoritarianism, however, are detached from the original traditional legitimating base of patrimonialism, and like other expressions of contemporary authoritarianism they exist in a world where modern democratic values define them as either illegitimate or at best temporary expedients (tutelary regimes) on the way to democracy.

There is another important reason to linger briefly with these traditional modes of authoritarianism or autocracy; they may reveal a core concept of authority which persists, albeit weakly, as a defining and legitimating principle of all expressions of authoritarianism. Articulated originally in organizations like the Roman Catholic Church, this concept links the authority to rule to a body of esoteric and transcendent or sacred knowledge which must be translated into human affairs. This 'authority' to interpret or reveal transcendent esoteric principles pervaded and justified all traditional modes of authority from the golden stool of the ancestors of the Ashanti tribe, through the mandate of heaven of the Chinese, to the doctrine of the divine right of monarchs in the West. Be it in the church, imperial China, or the France of Louis XIV, the image was of a transcendent source of law connected to a central governing authority that defined law and implemented it through a staff of highly trained officials.

This core idea of a central authority that both dictates (gives) and administers law to a society persists into the contemporary world of political regimes in many important ways. We can see traces of it in institutions embedded in otherwise

democratic systems—the United States Supreme Court for example. It was clearly evidenced in the plebiscitary connections to the French ‘national will’ claimed by Charles de Gaulle and more than a little evident in the constitution of the Fifth Republic which de Gaulle ‘gave’ to the French. More directly we see the persistence of claims to interpret authoritatively secular bodies of knowledge in many ‘authoritarian’ or ‘totalitarian’ regimes linked to explicit ideologies, such as Marxism or other expressions of a putative national or collective will, destiny or the like. We also see it in many contemporary authoritarian regimes where strong executives deploy teams of highly trained experts (technocrats) who claim special ability (elitism) to interpret esoteric bodies of knowledge (economics, administration, etc.) that are deemed crucial to promote the economic development and modernization of a country. They often advance the argument that to serve the national good such technically sound principles must be imposed in the face of the selfish particular wills of classes, interest groups, regions or political parties. To this day many political leaders, as well as political analysts, associate central executive authority with a notion of ‘general good’, while legislative bodies and political parties are often associated with faction and particularist interests. It is not an accident that all authoritarian regimes pivot around a strong executive power.

Hence, while ‘liberal democratic’ values appear to be carrying the day at the rhetorical level of legitimacy, principles that focus on and justify a central role for strong executives served by a technically sophisticated elite corps of officials are far from absent in the current world scene. What really exists then is an ongoing tension between bottom-up and pluralistic ‘democratic’ conceptions of regime authority and legitimacy and more top-down monistic conceptions of rule. According to the British political theorist Michael Oakeshott, these notions are linked to two distinct conceptual traditions regarding the organization of the state that have evolved in tense interaction over centuries in the West. One, *universitas*, sees state and society as a singular corporate entity administered by an executive board of fiduciary agents charged with directing the entity to substantive corporate goals or ends; the other, *societas*, sees society as an aggregation or plurality of interests held together in a state by a set of rules or procedures that allow them to pursue their multiple interests in concert. *Universitas* leans toward an executive-centred administrative concept of rule with authoritarian overtones while *societas* leans toward a more legislative-centred concept of democracy in which government articulates (represents) in a rule-bound fashion the multiplicity of interests inherent in society (Oakeshott 1975).

While authoritarian regimes may find it hard to legitimate themselves in the current scene, there is little question that they do hark back to a modernized and technocratic version of *universitas* as a justifying principle; in many situations of chronic economic crisis the argument has its appeal. Moreover, while many countries are currently in transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes

they are in fact building systems that embody strong *universitas* components within formally democratic frameworks.

Current conceptualizations of authoritarian regimes in political science were shaped first in the theories of modernization and development that gained dominance in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the work of a leading core of political scientists linked to the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council. Using a 'structure function' mode of analysis, this body of theory saw all societies as following a linear path from traditional to modern. In this perspective, 'democracy' was a modern form of government linked to a society reaching a certain level of economic and social development where the necessary social prerequisites (functionally derived) for democracy had been achieved.

In modernization theory democracy was a desirable end state toward which societies could and should aim in their march to development and modernization. The crucial theoretical as well as practical political problems emerged when societies were in transit from traditional modes of state organization to modern modes. In that intermediate phase societies could be diverted into more negative types of regime, usually defined as some species of authoritarianism or totalitarianism. In this body of theory the negative regime types were defined primarily in contrast to the positive regime type—democracy. The negative regime types were also linked to modernization; totalitarianism being viewed as a negative manifestation of modernity and authoritarianism as an expression of traditionalism destined to fade away as societies modernized.

The theory posited a linear movement toward modernity with positive (democratic) and negative (totalitarianism) poles. Authoritarianism became a kind of residual regime category that defined a condition which societies either had to break out of to modernize or lapsed back into when democratic structures were grafted onto more backward societies not yet sufficiently developed to receive and root them. Both democratic and totalitarian regimes were defined in ideal typical terms, while authoritarianism became a category into which fell a variety of regimes that did not fit into either of the two predominant ideal types. Moreover, the different modes of authoritarian governments were not looked at in their own terms but rather as a kind of by-product of the pathology of democracy manifested in various stages of the transition process.

To restate, the critical step in the transit to modernity and its positive expression democracy was the transition phase when societies could either be diverted, at a late stage, into totalitarianism, particularly in the form of communism, or in earlier stages fall back into some species of authoritarianism. Not surprisingly the theory saw what came to be called the 'Third World' of underdeveloped countries as the most likely to lapse into some kind of authoritarian government. Also not surprisingly this theory became the basis of the propensity of governments like that of the United States to develop

programmes such as the Alliance For Progress to provide financial and technical aid designed to promote development, modernization and democracy in regions like Latin America. This is an area where the scientific world of political theory and that of political practice clearly overlapped.

An important and somewhat critical variation on the modernization theme came in the work of scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington. In his celebrated *Political Order in Changing Society*, Huntington (1968) argued that rather than produce a stable base for democracy, modernization in fact produced political ferment which, if it went beyond the existing containment capacity of governmental institutions, would produce political decay and the collapse of public order. For Huntington order and security were the primary political values and of necessity preceded any positive regime form. Order and security in turn were dependent on creating governments that could govern and encase that capacity in institutions. In this updated version of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Huntington, among others, argued that in many underdeveloped societies the military was often the only modern, professionalized and organized national institution available to lead a society through the perilous transition to an institutionalized democracy. In this view, a military-based authoritarian regime could in fact act as a means to create a stable political order that could eventually elaborate the institutional structure necessary to maintain order and governability while containing the disruptive effects of modernization.

This work produced an important shift in the causal train. Modernization often produced decay and disorder creating a primary need to reconstitute governmental capacity, impose order and create institutions. Political decay literally pulled the military into politics where they in fact were one of the few organizations capable of reconstituting a modern state structure (leviathan) that could be eventually democratized. In some crucial ways an institution-building, military-based authoritarian regime could be an agent of controlled modernization and a precursor of modern democracy.

Theoretical concern with authoritarianism was spurred by the proliferation of non-democratic regimes in the underdeveloped world. In places like Africa many of these regimes had a rather personalistic and patrimonial flavour which allowed them to be treated as a regressive feature in the transition phase. A crucial development was the proliferation of military-based authoritarian regimes among the more developed countries of Latin America between 1964 and 1973, and the imposition of an authoritarian regime in Greece from 1967 to 1974. Reacting to these events, social scientists began to look anew at authoritarian Spain and Portugal and to note that behind the democratic façade Mexico was really an authoritarian regime. These regimes lacked the patrimonial flavour of those in Africa and in fact were highly organized and complex regimes that openly proclaimed their intent to spur the economic

development and modernization of their respective societies. These claims gained credibility when later observers began to note that rapidly developing Asian countries such as South Korea and Taiwan were being led by strong governments operating within decidedly authoritarian frameworks.

Writing in the midst of these events and processes, Juan Linz in a now classic article (Linz 1970) mounted a strong argument which challenged the bi-polar continuum of democracy and totalitarianism and urged the necessity to recognize a specifically authoritarian regime type. This type was not traditional in form, but distinctively modern. Linz based his concept on the Spanish case and developed a definition which contrasted this regime to many of the recognized features of democracy and totalitarianism.

Authoritarian regimes are political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism: without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities); without intensive nor extensive political mobilization (except some points in their development); and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.

(Linz 1970:255)

Linz's influential work helped shape many people's approach to the issue, particularly students of Latin American politics. It was followed by another classic, Guillermo O'Donnell's *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (O'Donnell 1973). Aside from defining a specific type of modern authoritarian regime, the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime, O'Donnell completed the reversal of the relationship between modernization and authoritarian regime forms. Cast in the new framework of dependence theory, the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime was viewed as a necessary product of capitalist development and modernization within relatively developed but dependent societies such as those in the southern cone of South America. Whereas earlier works had related to practical political polemics in a more indirect and implicit manner, O'Donnell's influential work, by linking the phenomena of dependence and capitalism to specific modes of authoritarianism, made a direct link between would-be scientific discourse and the ideologically charged political rhetoric of the day. The discussions that have raged around these issues since highlight the ways in which practical political considerations penetrate and, for good or ill, shape and/or distort theoretical discussions regarding regime forms.

This consequential overlap came out clearly in an article by political scientist Jeanne Kirkpatrick (1979), 'Dictatorship and double standards', in which she differentiated between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Relegating the former category exclusively to Marxist-Leninist regimes, Kirkpatrick argued that authoritarian regimes, while repressive, were more benign and capable of reform into capitalist democracy; therefore United States policy in Latin America, in

particular, should reflect those theoretically construed differences. The fire-storm of criticism provoked by this article saw one cartoon retort which noted that the real difference between the two was that while totalitarian regimes arrested, killed and tortured people, authoritarian regimes left many of those functions to the private sector.

The joke was based on a rather important insight into the ongoing totalitarian versus authoritarian conceptual debate; by and large 'totalitarian' was used to refer to regimes linked to command economies (state socialist) while 'authoritarian' referred mainly to regimes linked to economies driven at least in part by markets and private economic interests (capitalist). Using mainly political structural variables to define authoritarianism, Amos Perlmutter sought to go beyond this debate by rejecting the totalitarian category and collapsing those regimes into a very broadened definition of authoritarianism. In Perlmutter's *Modern Authoritarianism: A Comparative Institutional Analysis*, the central category is 'the modern authoritarian model', which he defines as 'an exclusive, centralist political organization populated and dominated by an oligarchic political elite' (Perlmutter 1981:7).

In contemporary discussion the concept of totalitarianism has in fact faded and we seem to be working now with two very broad categories: democracy and authoritarianism. Not surprisingly the concept of authoritarianism seems more than ever to be a residual category into which are shovelled all regime forms that cannot lay some claim to being democratic; and often the concept of authoritarianism is defined by elaborating traits that are the negatives of positive democratic traits. Perlmutter, for example, goes on immediately to add that 'these regimes are characterized by repression, intolerance, encroachment on the private rights and freedoms of citizens and limited autonomy for nonstatist interest groups' (ibid.: 7).

Given the scope of the category, attention of necessity immediately shifts from the concept of modern authoritarian regime itself to the delineation of sub-types. Unfortunately the list of sub-types expands and contracts depending who is doing the defining and the idiosyncrasies of the particular regime(s) the analyst is examining. At the moment we simply do not have a generally accepted classification scheme of sub-types.

In his broad-brushed approach Perlmutter lays out a scheme of sub-types which can serve as a useful starting point for the analyst seeking an orientation to this conceptual thicket. Focusing on what he calls parallel and auxiliary structures such as police, party, military and professional organizations he stipulates four main types: the Party State; the Police State; the Corporatist State; and the Praetorian State. The latter category is broken down further into the Personal, Oligarchic and Bureaucratic-Authoritarian sub-types. It must be stressed that this and all such schemes remain open to intense criticism and debate. For example, Perlmutter's typology takes one of the most influential

concepts regarding modern authoritarianism in Latin America, O'Donnell's bureaucratic-authoritarian regime, and relegates it to the status of a sub-type of a sub-type: a rather debatable move to say the least.

We are obviously not going to settle these conceptual issues here. In broad terms contemporary authoritarian regimes are defined first as negatives of the positive characterization of procedurally bound constitutional democratic regimes. Thus, as Latin American legal theory has it, modern authoritarian regimes are 'regimes of fact' and of 'exception'. Lacking legal, procedural or democratic checks, authoritarian regimes are command systems (usually executive decree) in which governmental power is exercised in an essentially arbitrary and therefore unpredictable pattern. Such regimes usually focus on a strong executive exercising power in conjunction with a cartel of political, military, bureaucratic and other elites (entrepreneurial, labour, professional, etc.) who shape the policies dictated to the larger society. While the prevalence of democratic values seems to check the ability of authoritarian regimes to establish their legitimacy, the persistence of *universitas* concepts of state organization, as well as a perceived need for an authoritative capacity to interpret esoteric but necessary knowledge, does hold out the possibility of some type of legitimation, especially in the face of a severe crisis like war, economic collapse and the like. Structurally such regimes run the gamut from highly personalized neo-patrimonial regimes to highly organized regimes rooted in military, bureaucratic and other institutional bases.

Clearly we are not going to be able to come up with a singular theory of origins for such a complex, varied and global phenomenon. There are some general views available to survey, particularly with regard to the recent experiences of Latin America. In general, we can delineate three types of explanations of origins which, while distinct, often overlap in practice: cultural explanations, broad structural economic explanations, and more specifically political structural and behavioural explanations.

Cultural explanations focus on imputed underlying patterns of institutions and values that predispose a society toward authoritarianism. In its strongest form the view sees authoritarianism as the dominant motif of a society always straining to break out of alien democratic structures artificially grafted onto these societies. This case has been made in its strongest and most convincing form in work on Latin America by authors such as Howard Wiarda (1973). Weaker forms of the argument have some clear merit, especially in regard to the kinds of organizational structures adopted by authoritarian regimes as well as the pre-existence of values that can be used to help construct legitimacy for such a regime. In the strong or deterministic form, however, the argument has numerous problems. One is the fact that culturally the traits highlighted in one regional tradition cannot account for authoritarianism in other regional and cultural contexts. Another follows from a Weberian argument that if all

traditional cultures were essentially authoritarian at one point, how is it that today some are modernized forms of authoritarianism, some are neo-patrimonial, while others are democratic? Some other intervening variables must be at work.

A host of broad structural explanations emphasizing socio-economic factors have been advanced to explain the many different types of autocratic, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes that have populated the modern political landscape. Many involve variations on the central thesis of modernization regarding a crisis of transition from traditional to modern society. Authors like Ulam (1960) for example, pointed to the disruptive effects of early capitalist development on traditional societies to explain modern communist revolutions. In the same vein Barrington Moore (1966) stressed the response of pre-existing aristocracies to the commercialization of agriculture as a key to whether countries moved toward democracy, fascism or peasant-based communism. Many of these types of explanations echo the sophisticated analysis of the consequences of modern revolution propounded by Alexis de Tocqueville (1955) in *The Old Regime and The French Revolution*; particularly his insight that modernizing revolutions in traditional autocracies will most likely lead to a greater centralization of power in a Bonapartist-type state. Tocqueville also introduced the theme of the propensity of mass mobilization to lead to the creation of centralized and manipulative control structures.

As far as contemporary authoritarian regimes are concerned, the most systematic and theoretically rich work to date has been that of Guillermo O'Donnell (1973). Although formulated to account for recent authoritarian regimes in the southern cone of South America, O'Donnell's work, with suitable modifications, has broader significance. Cast in the dependence perspective, it reverses the relationship between modernization and regime outcomes; specifically O'Donnell argues that successful modernization in the context of dependent capitalist development produces a highly modernized form of authoritarianism, not democracy. The causal linkage is forged by the political imperatives that spring from the necessity of relatively advanced countries such as Argentina and Brazil to make a transition from easy import-substituting industrialization to a broader and deeper form of capitalist industrialization. The specific imperative is the need to reverse earlier populist policies of cooptive inclusion of working-class groups and now push the same groups back out. This exclusionary imperative demands a government with the will and ability to apply sustained repression of the excluded.

Although rooted in an economic argument, O'Donnell's theory does link into more explicitly political explanations. His work is closely connected to those who see regime formations as shaped by periodic crises produced by the underlying imperative of all societies to resolve an ongoing tension between

the need to accumulate capital for investment and the need to build legitimacy for regimes.

My preference is to express that as a tension between political logic and economic logic; a contradiction or trade-off that is particularly severe in less developed countries. Political logic pushes for governments to build support for themselves and the regimes that frame them by, among other things, meeting the concrete bread-and-butter demands of individuals and groups, which often means to increase general levels of consumption. Economic logic however, especially in capital-short countries, demands that an investable surplus be accumulated primarily by restricting consumption. The reality is that any accumulation strategy entails a cost (restrict consumption) that falls unequally on the populace as a whole. Often groups targeted to bear the costs (workers, peasants, popular sectors, middle-class groups) resist, either through political means if available or direct confrontation if not. Thus, periodically countries can become politically immobilized around these issues—open competitive or even semi-competitive democracies are particularly vulnerable—provoking the formation of an authoritarian regime with enough concentrated power to impose the cost allocations inherent in any model of development or stabilization strategy.

Purely political explanations come in a variety of forms. Huntington, again, sees the ‘crisis of transition’ as a source of the ‘political decay’ of traditional institutions and thereby a ‘praetorian situation’ in which social conflict is unmediated by institutions (Huntington 1968). This Hobbesian situation creates an inclination to pull the military into power and create a regime oriented to impose order by force. This explanation is particularly apt for the more underdeveloped countries of Latin America and regions like Africa where the kinds of authoritarian regimes that emerge are highly personalized versions of neo-patrimonialism. A variation on this type of institutional argument would point to moments of crucial transition such as decolonization or economic restructuring as rendering societies particularly vulnerable to a praetorian situation. It is noteworthy that the patterns of highly personalized and factionalized authoritarianism in contemporary Africa bear marked resemblance to the personal dictatorships of nineteenth-century Latin America, often called the age of the *caudillos* (leaders). In both cases sovereignty, owing to the need to convert the administrative fragments of previous imperial systems into modern nation-states, was the central problem confronting governments. Not unlike Europe in the age of the centralizing monarchs, the problems of state and nation building have called to the fore strong and often charismatic leaders in the less developed world.

One might advance the argument, albeit with some hesitation, that in the developing world extreme praetorian situations tend to produce highly personalized authoritarian regimes of the neo-patrimonial type while issues of