

3/The Dynamics of Distributive Systems

*Not being able to make that which is just strong,
man has made that which is strong just.*
Pascal

IN ANALYSES of social stratification, it is a temptation to turn immediately to the interesting and much debated structural problems, such as those concerning the nature, number, and composition of classes. While such questions must inevitably be a part of any adequate treatment of the subject, they are secondary in importance to questions about the processes which give rise to the structures. Moreover, to attempt to deal with the structural problems without prior attention to these processes, as is sometimes done, is to put the cart before the horse and create confusion. For these reasons, the present chapter will be concerned chiefly with problems of dynamics, reserving most structural problems for the next chapter.

Two Laws of Distribution

When one seeks to build a theory of distribution on the postulates about the nature of man and society set forth in the last chapter, one soon discovers that these lead to a curious, but important, *dualism*. If those postulates are sound, one would predict that almost all the products of men's labors will be distributed on the basis of two seemingly contradictory principles, *need* and *power*.

In our discussion of the nature of man, it was postulated that where important decisions are involved, most human action is motivated either by self-interest or by partisan group interests. This suggests that power alone governs the distribution of rewards. This cannot be the case, however, since we also postulated that most of these essentially selfish interests can be satisfied only by the establishment of cooperative relations with others. Cooperation is absolutely essential both for survival and for the efficient attainment of most other goals. In other words, men's selfish interests compel them to remain members of society and to share in the division of labor.

If these two postulates are correct, then it follows that *men will share the product of their labors to the extent required to insure the survival and continued productivity of those others whose actions are necessary or beneficial to themselves*. This might well be called the first law of distribution, since the survival of mankind as a species depends on compliance with it.

This first law, however, does not cover the entire problem. It says nothing about how any *surplus*, i.e., goods and services over and above the minimum required to keep producers alive and productive, which men may be able to produce will be distributed. This leads to what may be called the second law of distribution. If we assume that in important decisions human action is motivated almost entirely by self-interest or partisan group interests, and if we assume that many of the things men most desire are in short supply, then, as noted before, this surplus will inevitably give rise to conflicts and struggles aimed at its control. If, following Weber, we define power as the probability of persons or groups carrying out their will even when opposed by others,¹ then it follows that *power will determine the distribution of nearly all of the surplus possessed by a society*. The qualification "nearly all" takes account of the

¹ See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947), p. 152, or Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 180.

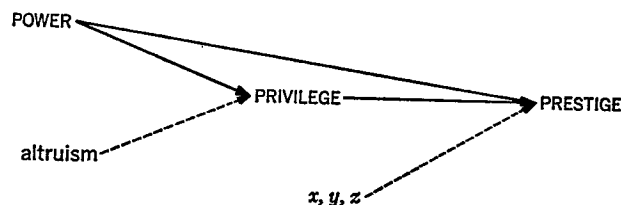
very limited influence of altruistic action which our earlier analysis of the nature of man leads us to expect.

This second law points the way to another very important relationship, that between our two chief variables, power and privilege. If privilege is defined as possession or control of a portion of the surplus produced by a society, then it follows that *privilege is largely a function of power, and to a very limited degree, a function of altruism*. This means that to explain most of the distribution of privilege in a society, we have but to determine the distribution of power.

To state the matter this way suggests that the task of explaining the distribution of privilege is simple. Unfortunately, this is not the case since there are many forms of power and they spring from many sources. Nevertheless, the establishment of this key relationship reduces the problem to more manageable proportions, since it concentrates attention on one key variable, power. Thus if we can establish the pattern of its distribution in a given society, we have largely established the pattern for the distribution of privilege, and if we can discover the causes of a given distribution of power we have also discovered the causes of the distribution of privilege linked with it.

To put the matter this way is to invite the question of how the third basic element in every distributive system, *prestige*, is related to power and privilege. It would be nice if one could say that prestige is a simple function of privilege, but unfortunately this does not seem to be the case. Without going into a complex analysis of the matter at this point, the best that can be said is that empirical evidence strongly suggests that *prestige is largely, though not solely, a function of power and privilege, at least in those societies where there is a substantial surplus*.² If this is true, it follows that even though the subject of prestige is not often mentioned in this volume, its pattern of distribution and its causes can largely be deduced from discussion of the distribution of power and privilege and their causes in those societies where there is an appreciable surplus.

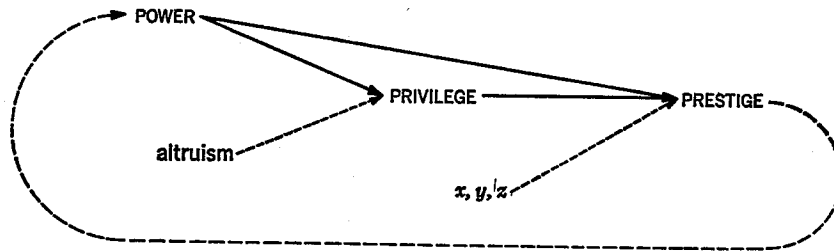
Graphically, the relationship between these three variables, as set forth in the propositions above, can be depicted in this way:



² For evidence supporting this generalization, see p. 430. I have not attempted to establish this generalization by deductive logic since this would be a major under-

The solid lines indicate major sources of influence, the dashed lines secondary sources.

To make this diagram complete, one other dashed line should probably be added, indicating some feedback from prestige to power. Thus a more accurate representation of the relationships would look like this:



Power is the key variable in the triad from the causal and explanatory standpoint. Hence, it is with this variable that we shall be primarily concerned in the analysis which follows.

The Variable Aspects of Distributive Systems

As the statement of the two laws indicates, the second law does not have any effect on the distributive process until the conditions specified in the first have been satisfied. Until the necessities of life have been made available to enough productive, mutually interdependent members of the group, there is no surplus to be fought over and distributed on the basis of power. Thus, as a first hypothesis we would be led to predict that *in the simplest societies, or those which are technologically most primitive, the goods and services available will be distributed wholly, or largely, on the basis of need.*

As the productivity of societies increases, the possibility of producing a surplus steadily increases, though it should be noted that the existence of a surplus is not a function of technological advance alone. Even though we cannot say that the surplus available to a society increases proportionately with advances in the level of technology, such advances increase the probability that there will be a surplus and also that there will be a sizable surplus. Hence, as a second hypothesis we are led to predict that *with technological advance, an increasing proportion of the goods and services available to a society will be distributed on the basis of power.*

taking requiring the introduction of new postulates and would divert the analysis from its primary task. For the same reason I have not attempted to deal with prestige in other parts of this volume except incidentally.

In view of the dualistic basis of the distributive process, and the variations to which this must necessarily give rise, it would be unwise to attempt to develop a single general theory of distribution or stratification to cover all societies. Rather, we will gain far more if we follow the example of the economists in their analyses of the behavior of markets. As they discovered years ago, it is impossible to create a single general theory of market behavior except of the most limited nature. In order to deal effectively with most of the more complex aspects of market behavior, it is necessary to take account of the existence of different kinds of markets. This has led to the distinction between theories of perfect and imperfect competition. The latter can be further subdivided into theories of oligopoly, monopoly, monopsony, and so forth. In other words, on closer inspection the theory of market behavior turns out to consist of a small number of general principles which constitute the general theory of markets, and a whole series of more limited principles applicable only under specific conditions.

The same approach is required in stratification theory, if our analysis up to this point is sound. If the first two laws of distribution and the two hypotheses based on them are valid, then *the nature of distributive systems will vary greatly, depending on the degree of technological advance in the societies involved*. The variations should be every bit as great as those which differentiate markets where perfect competition prevails from those where imperfect competition holds sway.

For this reason, the major part of this volume will be devoted to a series of analyses of distributive systems in specific types of societies, with the types defined in technological terms. The handful of universally applicable principles of distribution can be dealt with quite briefly and with reasonable adequacy in this chapter and the next.

While the foregoing is reason enough to base our special theories on societal types defined in technological terms, there is one other great advantage derived from this approach. Past research has made it clear that technology is never an isolated variable in sociocultural systems. On the contrary, it tends to be linked fairly closely with a whole series of other variables which evidently stand in a dependent relationship to it.³ This is especially true of many social organizational variables which are linked with distributive systems and tend to define their limits of possible

³ See, for example, L. T. Hobhouse, G. C. Wheeler, and M. Ginsberg, *The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930) and Alvin W. Gouldner and Richard A. Petersen, *Notes on Technology and the Moral Order* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962) for broadly comparative studies, or Ralph Linton, *The Tanala: A Hill Tribe of Madagascar* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1933) for an excellent case study.

variation, e.g., nature and extent of division of labor, maximum community size, etc. Hence, *by classifying societies on the basis of technology, we are, in effect, simultaneously controlling, wholly or in part, many other relevant variables.* The value of this will become evident beginning in Chapter 5.

To say that many other characteristics of human societies vary with technology is not to say that all do. Clearly some do not, and others do so only to a limited degree. Wilbert Moore has suggested that supernatural beliefs and aesthetic forms are not so closely correlated with technology as most forms of social organization.⁴ The same may also be true of certain basic aspects of family life. However, while these exceptions deserve recognition and careful consideration, they do not vitiate the basic principle involved.

It should also be noted that classifying societies on the basis of the nature of their technology does not imply that all those in a single category have *identical* distributive systems any more than that all oligopolistic markets function the same way. Obviously there are variations within each societal type just as within each type of market, and an effort will be made to identify and account for the more important of them. However, these may be thought of as *second-order variations*, which are best dealt with after the first-order variations have been established and the internal uniformities associated with them clearly delineated.

In dealing with these second-order variations we shall sometimes have to rely on inductive logic to establish both causal and descriptive generalizations. However, this will not always be the case. Sometimes deductive logic can be employed. For example, if the size of a society's surplus affects the nature of its distributive system, and if the size of the surplus depends to some degree on the nature of the physical environment, then we should predict that *differences in the physical environment will lead to secondary differences in distributive systems.* More specifically, the richer the environment, the larger the surplus and the greater the importance of power in the distributive process.

There are also reasons for predicting that the influence of environmental differences will be greater in primitive societies than in those which are technologically more advanced. To begin with, technological advance makes possible the geographical expansion of societies, and the larger the territory occupied by a society, the less the probability that the total environment will be extremely favorable or unfavorable and the

⁴ Wilbert E. Moore, *Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 72-76.

greater the probability that it will include a mixture of favorable and unfavorable land. Hence, environmental variation should be less among the larger, technologically advanced societies than among the smaller, more primitive. In addition, technological advance frequently means the development of alternative solutions to the various problems of production. Technologically advanced societies, therefore, should be less hampered by environmental limitations than primitive societies are, and thus *environmental variation should have less effect on the level of productivity in advanced societies than in primitive.*

Another important source of secondary variation has been identified by Stanislaw Andrzejewski in his important but neglected book, *Military Organization and Society*.⁵ As he has shown, both deductive logic and empirical data indicate that *the degree of inequality in societies of a given level of technological development tends to vary inversely with what he calls "the military participation ratio," that is the proportion of the adult male population utilized in military operations.* Where most adult males are utilized for such purposes, the degree of inequality tends to be less than in those in which military needs are supplied by a small force of military specialists. Thus, this factor can also be used to explain some of the secondary variations which are found among societies of the same technological type.

A third source of secondary variations which can be anticipated is the technological variation which exists even among societies classified in the same category. No two societies are identical from the technological standpoint, and their classification into technological types is based on similarities (or identity) with respect to certain fundamental characteristics and ignores secondary differences. If primary differences in technology cause major differences in distributive systems, *one would expect these secondary differences in technology to generate lesser differences in distributive systems.* Thus, one would expect considerable differences between a society in the first stages of industrialization and one which is highly industrialized, just as one would expect differences between a hunting and gathering society with no alternative mode of food production and one which has some rudimentary forms of horticulture to supplement its diet.

Finally, as will become evident later in this chapter, *one can expect secondary variations associated with the stage a society occupies in what I shall call "the political cycle"* (see page 59 of this chapter). In effect, this is a measure of the degree to which the prevailing distributive system

⁵ (London: Routledge, 1954), especially chap. 2.

is accepted as legitimate. While this is linked somewhat with the level of technological development of societies, it is no simple function of this variable and hence exercises a substantially independent influence.

Force and Its Transformation

Of the two principles which govern the distributive process, need and power, the first is relatively simple and poses few problems of great importance or difficulty. Unhappily, the same cannot be said of the second. Of all the concepts used by sociologists, few are the source of more confusion and misunderstanding than power. Hence it is necessary to spell out in some detail the nature of this concept and how it functions in the distributive process.

As a starting point, it may be well to return briefly to one of the postulates introduced in the last chapter. There it was assumed that survival is the chief goal of the great majority of men. If this is so, then it follows that *the ability to take life is the most effective form of power*. In other words, more men will respond more readily to the threat of the use of *force* than to any other. In effect, it constitutes the final court of appeals in human affairs; there is no appeal from force in a given situation except the exercise of superior force. Hence force stands in the same relationship to other forms of power as trumps to the other suits in the game of bridge, and those who can exercise the greatest force are like those who control trumps.

This fact has been recognized by countless observers of the human scene in every age. As Pascal put it, "Not being able to make that which is just strong, man has made that which is strong just." Cicero made the same point when he said, "Laws are dumb in the midst of arms," and Hobbes asserted that "Covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all."

This principle is also recognized by the leaders of nations, the practical men of affairs. Every sovereign state restricts, and where possible prohibits, the independent exercise of force by its subjects. States may be tolerant of many things, but never of the growth of independent military organizations within their territories. The reason is obvious: any government which cannot suppress each and every forceful challenge to its authority is overthrown. Force is the foundation of sovereignty.

On this point there is no dispute between conservatives and radicals. Their arguments are concerned only with the ends served by the state's use of force. Conservatives insist that might is employed only as the hand-

maiden of right, to restrain and rebuke those who put self-interest above the common good, while radicals maintain that the state employs might to suppress right, in defense of selfish interests.

If force is the foundation of political sovereignty, it is also the foundation of the distributive system in every society where there is a surplus to be divided. Where coercive power is weak, challenges inevitably occur, and the system is eventually destroyed and replaced by another based more firmly on force. Men struggling over control of the surplus of a society will not accept defeat so long as there is a higher court of appeals to which they may take their case with some likelihood of success and profit to themselves.

The principle involved here is essentially the same as the principle of escalation with which modern military men are so concerned. Small wars based on small weapons inevitably grow into more deadly wars utilizing more deadly weapons if, by advancing the level of conflict, one of the parties anticipates turning defeat into victory. Similarly, in the case of conflicts within societies, the parties involved are always motivated to take the issue to the final court of appeals so long as there is the likelihood of benefiting by it. While men will not resort to armed revolution for trivial gains, when control over the entire surplus of a society is involved, the prospect is more enticing. The attractiveness varies directly with the weakness of the current regime.

Nevertheless, as Edmund Burke, the famed English conservative, recognized, "The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again: and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered." Though force is the most effective instrument for seizing power in a society, and though it always remains the foundation of any system of inequality, it is not the most effective instrument for retaining and exploiting a position of power and deriving the maximum benefits from it. Therefore, regardless of the objectives of a new regime, once organized opposition has been destroyed it is to its advantage to make increasing use of other techniques and instruments of control, and to allow force to recede into the background to be used only when other techniques fail.

If the new elite has materialistic goals and is concerned solely with self-aggrandizement, it soon discovers that the rule of might is both inefficient and costly. So long as it relies on force, much of the profit is consumed by the costs of coercion. If the population obeys only out of fear of physical violence, a large portion of the time, energy, and wealth of the elite are invariably consumed in the effort to keep it under control and separate the producers from the product of their labors. Even worse,

honor, which normally ranks high in the scale of human values, is denied to those who rule by force alone.⁶

If materialistic elites have strong motives for shifting from the rule of might to the rule of right, ideologically motivated elites have even stronger. If the visions and ideals which led them to undertake the terrible risks and hardships of revolution are ever to be fulfilled, the voluntary cooperation of the population is essential, and this cannot be obtained by force. Force is, at best, the means to an end. That end, the establishment of a new social order, can never be fully attained until most members of society freely accept it as their own. The purpose of the revolution is to destroy the old elite and their institutions, which prevent the fulfillment of this dream. Once they are destroyed, an ideological elite strives to rule by persuasion. Thus *those who seize power by force find it advantageous to legitimize their rule once effective organized opposition is eliminated*. Force can no longer continue to play the role it did. It can no longer function as the private resource of a special segment of the population. Rather it must be transformed into a public resource used in the defense of law and order.

This may seem to be the equivalent of saying that those who have at great risk to themselves displaced the old elite must now give up all they have won. Actually, however, this is not at all necessary since, with a limited exercise of intelligence, force can be transformed into authority, and might into right.

There are various means by which this transformation can be effected. To begin with, by virtue of its coercive power, a new elite is in a good position to rewrite the law of the land as it sees fit. This affords them a unique opportunity, since by its very nature law is identified with justice and the rule of right. Since legal statutes are stated in general and impersonal terms, they appear to support abstract principles of justice rather than the special interests of particular men or classes of men. The fact that laws exist prior to the events to which they are applied suggests an objective impartiality which also contributes to their acceptance. Yet laws can always be written in such a way that they favor some particular segment of society. Anatole France saw this clearly when he wrote, "The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the street, and to steal bread." Edwin Sutherland provided detailed documentation of the presence of such bias, as have a host

⁶ For a good discussion of the limitations of rule by force, see Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom, *Politics, Economics, and Welfare* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), pp. 107-109. See also Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957), chap. 4.

of others.⁷ In short, laws may be written in such a way that they protect the interests of the elite while being couched in very general, universalistic terms.

Often a new elite finds that it does not even need to change the laws to accomplish its ends. Typically the old laws were written to serve the interests of the holders of certain key offices, and once these offices have been seized, the new elite can use them as resources to build their fortunes or attain other goals.

Institutions which shape public opinion serve as a second instrument for legitimizing the position of new elites. Through the use of a combination of inducements and threats, educational and religious institutions, together with the mass media and other molders of public opinion, can usually be transformed into instruments of propaganda for the new regime. A determined and intelligent elite working through them can usually surround itself with an aura of legitimacy within a few months or years.

The concept of "propaganda," or the manipulation of consensus, is an integral element in the synthetic theory of stratification. A recognition of this phenomenon and the special role it plays in the distributive process enables us to avoid the impasse which has driven Dahrendorf and others to despair of ever reconciling the conservative and radical traditions. Consensus and coercion are more closely related than those who preach the Janus-headed character of society would have us believe. *Coercive power can often be used to create a new consensus.*

There is probably no better example of this than the Soviet Union. Here a small minority seized control of the machinery of state in 1917 and used the coercive powers of the state to transform the educational system of the nation and the mass media into one gigantic instrument of propaganda. Within a single generation the vast majority of Russians were converted to a sincere and genuine support of most of the basic elements of the Communist Party's program.⁸

In the short run, propaganda may be used to support a great variety

⁷ Edwin Sutherland, *White Collar Crime* (New York: Holt, 1949). For a very different kind of documentation of the partiality of laws, see Philip Stern, *The Great Treasury Raid* (New York: Random House, 1964) or any of the many excellent books on political lobbying by vested interests and the benefits derived therefrom.

⁸ For documentation of this sweeping generalization, see Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959). On the basis of interviews with hundreds of displaced persons from the Soviet Union immediately after World War II, these writers concluded that there was only limited questioning of the wisdom of state socialism, centralized planning, and the other major elements of Soviet domestic policy. The chief criticisms were directed at the means employed by the Party in achieving its ends—especially the use of terror. This same conclusion has been reached by most other experts on the Soviet Union.

of programs and policies adopted by an elite. In the long run, however, its basic aim is the dissemination of an ideology which provides a moral justification for the regime's exercise of power. Gaetano Mosca put it this way:

Ruling classes do not justify their power exclusively by *de facto* possession of it, but try to find a moral and legal basis for it, representing it as the logical and necessary consequence of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognized and accepted.⁹

Most of the theories of political sovereignty debated by philosophers have been intellectualized versions of some popular ideology. This can be seen in the now discredited belief in the divine right of kings. In our own day, the belief in popular sovereignty serves the same justifying function. A basic element in our current American ideology is the thesis expressed by Lincoln that ours is a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Another basic element is incorporated in Francis Scott Key's oft-sung phrase, "the land of the free." It is difficult to exaggerate the contribution of these beliefs to the political stability of our present political system and of the distributive system based on it.

Finally, the transformation of the rule of might into the rule of right is greatly facilitated by the pressures of daily life, which severely limit the political activities of the vast majority of mankind. Though the majority may become politically active in a significant way for a brief time in a revolutionary era, the necessity of securing a livelihood quickly drives most from the political arena. For better or worse, few men have the financial resources which enable them to set aside their usual economic activities for long. As a result, the affairs of state in any civilized society, and in many that are not, are directed by a small minority. The majority are largely apolitical. Even in popular democracies the vast majority do no more than cast a ballot at infrequent intervals. The formulation of public policy and the various other tasks required by the system are left in the hands of a tiny minority. This greatly facilitates the task of a new regime as it seeks to make the transition from the rule of might to the rule of right.

The Rule of Right

On first consideration it may seem that the rule of right is merely the rule of might in a new guise, and therefore no real change can be expected in the distributive process. Such a view is as unwarranted as that which

⁹ Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, translated by Hannah Kahn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), p. 70.

denies the role might continues to play in support of vested interests, even under the rule of right. The fact is that, as the basis of power is shifted from might to right, certain subtle but important changes occur which have far-reaching consequences.

To begin with, if the powers of the regime are to be accepted as rightful and legitimate they must be exercised in some degree, at least, in accord with the conceptions of justice and morality held by the majority—conceptions which spring from their self-interest and partisan group interests. Thus, even though the laws promulgated by a new elite may be heavily slanted to favor themselves, there are limits beyond which this cannot be carried if they wish to gain the benefits of the rule of right.

Second, after the shift to the rule of law, the interests of any single member of the elite can no longer safely be equated with the interests of the elite as a whole. For example, if a member of the new elite enters into a contractual arrangement with some member of the nonelite, and this turns out badly for him, it is to his interest to ignore the law and break the contract. However, this is not to the interest of the other members of the elite since most contractual arrangements work to their benefit. Therefore, it is to their interest to enforce the law in support of the claims of the nonelite to preserve respect for the law with all the benefits this provides them.

Vilfredo Pareto, the great Italian scholar who has contributed so much to our understanding of these problems, has pointed out a third change associated with the shift from the rule of might to the rule of right. As he observed, those who have won power by force will, under the rule of right, gradually be replaced by a new kind of person and in time these persons will form a new kind of elite. To describe the nature of this change, Pareto wrote of the passing of governmental power from "the lions" to "the foxes."¹⁰ The lions are skilled in the use of force, the foxes in the use of cunning. In other words, the shift from the rule of might means that new skills become essential, and therefore there is a high probability that many of the elite will be displaced because they lack these skills. This displacement is greatly facilitated by the fact that the interests of the elite as a class are no longer identical with the interests of each individual member, which means that individually they become vulnerable. Even those who hang on are forced to change, so that in time the nature of the elite as a class is substantially altered, provided it is not destroyed first by a new leonine revolution or coup. Though this change means increased reliance on intelligence and less on force, as Pareto's

¹⁰ See Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, translated by A. Bongiorno and Arthur Livingstone and edited by Livingstone (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1935), vol. III, especially paragraphs 2170-2278.

choice of the term "fox" and his emphasis on "cunning" indicate, the shift to the rule of right is not the beginning of the millennium when lambs can lie down safely with lions—or foxes. Nor is it the end of the era in which self-interest and partisan group interests dominate human action.

As Pareto's analysis suggests, the rule of the foxes means not merely the rise and fall of individuals, but also changes in the power position of whole classes. Specifically, it means some decline in the position of the military and a corresponding rise by the commercial class and the class of professional politicians, both of which are traditionally skilled in the use of cunning. To a lesser degree, it means some improvement in the status of most of the nonmanual classes engaged in peaceful, civilian pursuits.

Fourth, and finally, the transition from the rule of might to the rule of right usually means greater decentralization of power. Under the rule of might, all power tends to be concentrated in the hands of an inner circle of the dominant elite and their agents. Independent centers of power are viewed as a threat and hence are destroyed or taken over. Under the rule of right, however, this is not the case. So long as they remain subject to the law, diverse centers of power can develop and compete side by side. This development is not inevitable, but it can, and probably will, happen once the elite no longer has to fear for the survival of the new regime. As many observers have noted, the degree of unity within a group tends to be a function of the degree to which the members perceive their existence as threatened by others.

In view of these changes, it becomes clear that shifts from the rule of might to the rule of right and vice versa constitute one of the more important sources of variation within societal types defined in technological terms. In other words, even among societies at the same level of technological development, we must expect differences along the lines indicated above, reflecting differences in their position on the might-right continuum.

The Varieties of Institutionalized Power

As the foregoing makes clear, *with the shift from the rule of might to the rule of right, power continues to be the determinant of privilege, but the forms of power change.* Force is replaced by institutionalized forms of power as the most useful resource in the struggle between individuals and groups for prestige and privilege, though force still remains in the picture as the ultimate guarantee of these more genteel forms.

Institutionalized power differs from force in a number of ways which deserve note. To begin with, it is a socially acceptable form of power,

which means that those who exercise it are less likely to be challenged and more likely to obtain popular support than are those who use force. Second, institutionalized power tends to be much more impersonal. Individuals claim the benefits of institutionalized power not because of their personal qualities or accomplishments, which might easily be challenged, but simply because they occupy a certain role or office or own a certain piece of property. To be sure, it is often assumed that those who enjoy the benefits of institutionalized power are entitled to them by virtue of superior accomplishments or personal qualities, but this is not the crucial issue and the beneficiary does not have to demonstrate these things. It is enough just to be the occupant of the role or office or the owner of the property. Institutionalized power insures that the benefits flow automatically to such persons without regard to their personal qualities or accomplishments. This is, of course, the chief reason why those who gain power by force strive to convert force into institutionalized power.

Institutionalized power takes many forms, but it always involves the possession of certain enforceable rights which increase one's capacity to carry out one's own will even in the face of opposition. It would be impossible to identify and discuss all these many forms here, but it is important to identify some of the more basic and show their varied nature.¹¹

One of the basic distinctions within the category of institutionalized power is that between *authority* and *influence*. Authority is the enforceable right to command others. Influence, by contrast, is much more subtle. It is the ability to manipulate the social situation of others, or their perception of it, by the exercise of one's resources and rights, thereby increasing the pressures on others to act in accordance with one's own wishes.¹² Though these two forms of institutionalized power are quite distinct on the analytical level, they are often hopelessly intertwined on the empirical.

Institutionalized power varies not only in the mode of its action but also in terms of the foundations on which it rests. Here one can speak of

¹¹ There have been numerous attempts to classify the various forms of power, but none have been completely successful. For three of the better efforts, see Herbert Goldhamer and Edward Shils, "Types of Power and Status," *American Journal of Sociology*, 45 (1939), pp. 171-182; Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950), chap. 5; and Robert Bierstedt, "An Analysis of Social Power," *American Sociological Review*, 15 (1950), pp. 730-738.

¹² In many sociological writings the relationship between power and influence is extremely confusing. Sometimes they are treated as synonymous, other times as two distinct phenomena with no area of overlap. Influence should be treated as one special type of power. This approach is consistent both with good English usage and with the insights of some of the abler social theorists. For example, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (5th ed.) defines influence as "the act or the power of producing an effect without apparent force or direct authority" (emphasis added).

a distinction between *the power of position* and *the power of property*. The power of position means *the power which rightfully belongs to the incumbent of any social role or organizational office possessing authority or influence*. This can be seen in the case of officers of state who enjoy great authority and influence so long as they continue to occupy their post, but who lose it when they are replaced. While this is one of the more impressive examples of the power of position, the same basic phenomenon can be seen in the case of the incumbents of a host of lesser roles. One must include under this heading not merely positions in political organizations, but also those in economic, religious, educational, and military organizations, together with age and sex roles, roles in kin groups, roles in racial and ethnic groups, and every other kind of role or office with authority or influence.

A second foundation on which institutionalized power commonly rests is the *private ownership of property*. Though property and position have often been closely linked, the connection is neither necessary nor inevitable. The ownership of property¹³ is frequently dissociated from occupancy of a particular office or role. Since property is, by definition, something in short supply and hence of value, the owner of property controls a resource which can be used to influence the actions of others. The more he owns, the greater is his capacity to influence, and thus the greater his power. In some instances, as in the ownership of slaves or of a political office which has been purchased,¹³ the power of property can take the form of authority. It also takes the form of authority to the extent that the owner is entitled to proscribe certain actions by others—that is, order them *not* to do certain things, such as trespass on his land.

Before concluding this brief introduction to institutionalized power, it may be well to take note of Simmel's observation that where the rule of law or right prevails, there is always a two-way flow of influence (and sometimes, one might add, of authority as well) between the more powerful and the less powerful.¹⁴ This point is easily forgotten, since the very concept "power" suggests a one-directional flow. To say that there is a two-way flow does not mean that the flow is equally strong in both directions, but it does mean that one should not ignore the secondary flow or the factors responsible for it and the consequences of it.¹⁵

¹³ On the purchase of offices, see pp. 224–225.

¹⁴ Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited and translated by Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), part 3.

¹⁵ More recently the same point was made by Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom in their book *Politics, Economics and Welfare*, part 4, where they point to the existence of four sociopolitical systems, two of which, price systems and polyarchical systems, involve some measure of influence by the less powerful over the more powerful.

Political Cycles

As a reading of history makes clear, there has usually been a more or less cyclical alternation in human societies between periods in which the rule of might held sway and others in which the rule of right was dominant to greater or lesser degree. These political "cycles," as I shall call them, each span the existence of a given political regime.¹⁶ Each cycle begins with the forcible seizure of power by a new elite and involves an initial phase of violence during which organized resistance is either destroyed or suppressed. The next phase is one in which the regime strives to reduce its dependence on naked force and to increase its legitimate authority. During this phase the trend toward constitutionalism, or the rule of right, may be halted or even reversed if the power of the elite is seriously challenged by forces either at home or abroad. However, unless there is a steady succession of such challenges, the long term trend involves a reduction in the active role of force and coercion and an increase in the role of persuasion and incentive until finally the cycle comes to an end when the regime is overthrown by its successor or some foreign conqueror.

To introduce the concept of cycles into our theory is not to imply that history repeats itself or that one cycle is exactly like another. Obviously cycles differ in a number of significant ways.

To begin with, cycles do not have any uniform duration. Some are very brief, as in the case of the cycle which began in Russia with the February Revolution of 1917 and ended with the October Revolution in the same year. Others extend over centuries, as in the case of the present British cycle, which dates back to the middle of the seventeenth century.

Short cycles differ considerably from those of longer duration. Because they are so brief, the process of legitimation, or constitutionalism, hardly gets started, and a new era of violence may be instituted before the last has really ended.

Even where cycles are of comparable duration, other factors inevitably influence the progress of constitutionalism, either hindering or promoting its growth. For example, the nature of the struggles which initiate the cycle can be quite important. Other things being equal, constitutionalism develops more quickly after a prolonged and bitter war to free the nation from foreign tyranny than after a revolution which sets brother

¹⁶ I shall use the term "regime" to refer to the members of a particular political elite who come to power by force and to all their successors who come to power by legitimate means. Thus a regime governs from the time of its victory in one revolution until its defeat or overthrow in a subsequent war or revolution.

against brother. The nature of the preceding regime or regimes is also likely to have some effect. Societies which have never developed a tradition of constitutional government move more slowly in this direction than those which have such a tradition. Also, it is logical to predict that the traditions of constitutionalism develop more quickly after a brief and limited palace revolution than after a prolonged and far-reaching social revolution.

The economic situation of a nation is also likely to affect the degree to which constitutionalism develops. One would predict that a high level of productivity and a rapid advance in the level of productivity would each be conducive to the development of constitutional government. Both provide increased opportunities for men to satisfy their desires without recourse to violence.

Taking all of the foregoing together, it may be predicted that *constitutional government will be most highly developed where (1) the political cycle is of long duration, (2) the present regime was established during a war of national independence, (3) constitutional government flourished before the present cycle began, (4) there have been few, if any, serious threats to the existing regime, (5) a high level of productivity prevails, and (6) there is a period of rapid economic development.* In short, the full flowering of constitutional government depends upon a peculiar combination of circumstances which have not occurred often in human history.

Other important differences in political cycles are linked with the nature of the elite which overthrew the old regime and dominated the first phase of the new cycle. Sometimes plunder and self-aggrandizement are their sole concern; these may be called "materialistic" elites. Trujillo's regime in the Dominican Republic and the Saudi dynasty in Arabia are classic examples from recent history.

In some instances, however, elites are motivated by ideals and visions of a more equitable social order. These may be called "ideological" elites.¹⁷ The Communist regimes which won control in Russia, Yugoslavia, and China in recent decades are examples of this type of elite.

Frequently there is some mixing of these two elements, and sometimes this mixture is highly complex. For example, a frank and honest appraisal of the American Revolution indicates that both elements were present. While some of the Founding Fathers were chiefly concerned with the attainment of the noble ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution, others were more con-

¹⁷ Pareto makes a similar distinction, though without using these labels (paragraph 2268).

cerned with avoiding the payment of taxes to the British crown. The fact that materialistic and ideological elements are sometimes intermingled suggests that we must think of this distinction in variable, rather than categorical, terms.

When one materialistic elite succeeds another, only minor changes are likely in the distributive system. One gang of rascals replaces another in those public offices which provide the best opportunities for plunder. These are often called "palace revolutions," since all that is involved is a turnover in personnel in the elite positions. Sometimes, if such an elite is especially vigorous and inventive, these changes in personnel may be accompanied by changes in the formal structure of government. A republic may give way to a monarchy, or vice versa. Such changes may be motivated by a desire either to make the government a more efficient instrument of plunder or to simulate social reforms and thus for a time to silence potential critics.

When ideological elements are dominant in a successful elite, much more substantial changes can be expected in both the political and the distributive systems. Along with sweeping changes in personnel, there are usually pervasive and meaningful changes in the structure of government (and often other basic institutions as well). The term "social revolution" is often employed to emphasize the difference between this type of revolution and "palace revolutions." The labels are not important, but the differences to which they direct attention are: palace revolutions affect only the few, while social revolutions affect everyone—even the Dr. Zhivagos who strive mightily to ignore them.

While the differences between political cycles should never be minimized, neither should the underlying similarities. In every society there is a natural tendency for those who seize power by force to strive to rule by constitutional means, so far as circumstances permit. Yet in the end every regime is destroyed by force or the threat of it. This is the basic theme on which there are a thousand variations.

Cyclical theories have never had a great appeal for Americans, who, because of their peculiar national experience, have inclined to more optimistic theories of history. For those chiefly familiar with American history, supplemented somewhat by an acquaintance with British history, it has been easy to interpret human history as a whole, including the political component, as one more or less consistent movement from the crude, the primitive, and the tyrannical, to the efficient, the productive, and the democratic. Unfortunately, when we broaden our horizons to take account of Cuba, Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Hungary, Yugoslavia, France, Poland, Germany, Russia, Syria, Iran, India, Vietnam, China, and

indeed most of the rest of the world, our faith in the progressive character of political history is badly shaken. For who would dare assert that there has been any progressive trend of long duration leading to an increase in either constitutional or democratic government in these nations?

Progressive theories of political development are likely to find wide acceptance only in those societies fortunate enough to enjoy an unusually long cycle during which the legitimation process can come to full flower. Britain and the United States have been unusually fortunate in this regard, with the former enjoying a cycle now three centuries old and the latter one which will soon be two centuries old. By contrast, in just the last half century both Poland and Cuba have each experienced the violent overthrow of no less than four regimes and the initiation of four new political cycles. Unhappily, the experiences of these nations are more nearly typical than those of Britain and the United States. This is probably the major reason why American theory in the field of stratification seems so strange and irrelevant to many foreign observers. It is adapted to a very special set of conditions which have no counterpart in most societies.

The Middle Classes and the Institutionalization of Power

As historians and students of politics have long recognized, revolutions are the work of small minorities. Hence, when the revolution is over, the new elite is obliged to employ the services of others to achieve their objectives. Only in this way can they hope to bring the surplus of the society effectively under their control and effect its transformation into the kinds of goods and services they desire.

Fortunately for the new elite, their position of power provides them with the necessary resources for securing the help they need. The portion of the economic surplus they already control can be used to hire an army of technicians and specialists who can bring still more of the surplus under control. This can then be used to hire others to transform the raw materials into fine homes, beautiful clothes, works of art, public monuments, personal services, and the thousand and one things that men of power and privilege desire, or, in the case of an ideological elite, to staff the institutions which will transform society.

This process leads to the creation, extension, or perpetuation of a middle stratum of technicians and specialists working in the service of the elite. These include public officials, craftsmen, artists, servants, merchants, soldiers, priests, and scholars. The chief task of the officials is to locate the economic surplus and separate it from its producers. As Shaw's Caesar put it when challenged to explain his great interest in Egyptian

taxes, "My friend, taxes are the chief business of a conqueror of the world." Craftsmen and artists are necessary to transform the surplus into the kinds of goods and services desired by the elite. Merchants facilitate the movement of goods to the places where they are wanted by those with the means to purchase them. Personal servants provide the innumerable services which men of rank cannot provide for themselves. Priests and scholars contribute to the maintenance of public order and, when they fail, the military can take over. In short, a complex apparatus is brought into being, the primary function of which is to insure the elite's continued control over the economic surplus and its transformation into the varied kinds of goods and services the elite desires.

As should be evident, those in the employ of the elite are rewarded in proportion to the value of their services to the elite, and the scarcity of the supply of replacements. Contrary to such functionalist theorists as Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, these roles are not rewarded in proportion to their contribution to the common good.¹⁸ It is the needs of the elite, not the needs of the total society, which determine the demand curve for such services. *The distribution of rewards in a society is a function of the distribution of power, not of system needs.* This is inevitable in such imperfect systems as human societies.

When a political cycle survives for an appreciable period of time, the nature of the middle classes and their relation to the political elite gradually changes. In eras of constitutional rule there is a tendency for these classes to arrogate to themselves certain of the powers and privileges of the elite. This is not difficult since it is their normal function to act on behalf of the elite. Powers delegated often become powers lost; once lost they are not easily recovered. Thus it appears that *the greater the degree of constitutionalism in a society, the less the middle classes function merely as agents of the elite and the greater their personal independence, autonomy, and security.* This is an important development and we shall have frequent occasion to refer to it in later pages. However, it should not be allowed to obscure the more basic relation between the middle classes and the elite which continues even in an era of constitutionalism.

Reactions

Up to this point we have viewed the struggles for power and privilege chiefly from the standpoint of the elite, noting how, by various means, they bring the surplus of society under their control. This is only half the story, however, since in sociology, as in physics, *actions produce reactions.*

¹⁸ Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 10 (1945), pp. 242-249.

Thus the exercise of power and privilege by elites invariably produces reactions by other members of society. These are no less important than the actions which produce them, hence they will be our primary concern for the remainder of the chapter.

These reactions are extremely varied, and one of the major tasks of stratification theory is to determine how the different segments of the population react, and with what consequences. The goal is to predict as accurately as possible the nature, frequency, and consequences of reactions to elite rule. In our examination of these reactions we shall begin with those which are the least threatening to the current elite and proceed by stages to the discussion of revolutionary movements, which pose the greatest threat.

Of all the many reactions to the exercise of power and privilege in societies, the one most valued by the elites themselves is that of *competition among nonelites for positions in their employ*. In order to attract the best qualified men to these important middle stratum positions, elites make them more desirable than other nonelite positions. In the case of certain key positions, the inducements are substantial. A vigorous competition naturally develops for these positions, and members of the elite are only too happy to encourage it since they are the chief beneficiaries. Whatever expenses they incur can easily be recouped many times over when these positions are filled by capable, zealous, and loyal men.

Every system of power and privilege also sets in motion a deadly *struggle for survival among the offspring of the common people*, except in those societies which are able to control reproduction or in which there is a temporary shortage of population such as may be created by major plagues, famines, or other disasters. Unhappily, mankind has always been able to produce more offspring than society can maintain, especially when the economic surplus is skimmed off by a privileged elite. Usually there has not been land enough for every farmer's son to farm, nor farmers enough for every farmer's daughter to marry. Hence some of the common people of almost every generation have been reduced to the status of beggars, criminals, and prostitutes. Such persons have usually had short lives, since at this level the competition for survival is intense.¹⁹ From the stand-

¹⁹ It would be a mistake to suppose that conditions would have been very different if there had been no elite to appropriate the economic surplus. Without the elite, there would have been no economic surplus, since population growth would have kept pace with gains in productivity—at least prior to the development of modern methods of birth control. Strange as it may seem, until modern times there was an economic surplus in societies chiefly because the ambitions of the elite kept the growth of population in check.

Taking a long-run view of this problem, it is clear that the exploitative character of elites and their expropriation of the economic surplus were necessary prerequisites

point of the elite, the struggles which developed among the common people have been a matter of little concern, since human fecundity always insured an ample supply of qualified producers. In fact, these struggles probably served the interests of the elite by diverting attention from their own exploitative role, thus affording them a considerable measure of security against popular protest and revolution.

A third reaction to the exercise of power and privilege is one which usually annoys elites but represents no serious threat to their security or status. This is the response of *petty thievery* by those in subordinate positions. Wherever household servants are employed, petty thievery is almost taken for granted. In many societies it is common practice for craftsmen to keep part of the materials with which they work for their own private use, and peasants often hide a portion of their harvest from tax collectors or from landlords with whom they have sharecropping arrangements. Such practices are irritating to elites, but because the losses are small and involve many isolated incidents, it is usually not worth their while to do much about them. Occasionally, when some flagrant violation is detected, the offender may be punished severely in the hope of intimidating others, but this procedure rarely stops the practice.

A fourth type of reaction to the exercise of power and privilege manifests itself in the *efforts of members of the middle classes to gain control over powers, privileges, and resources traditionally reserved to the elite*. Most elites, when they come to power, limit control over key resources to their own number. For example, in many societies the ownership of land has been the privilege of a noble elite. Similarly, the franchise was limited at first to the wealthy.

This situation causes great insecurity for members of the middle classes, since their position of modest power and privilege is so largely dependent on the continuing goodwill of their superiors. If they lose favor, they have no resources to fall back on. Hence, there is a natural desire to gain control of some resources which would free them from this dependence. Not only does this hold the promise of greater security for the future, it also insures greater power and privilege in the present.

Certain members of the middle classes have not only the motives, but also the means to implement them. This is especially true of officials

to social progress. Had there been no exploitative elites, there would have been no economic surplus to support the technicians, inventors, artists, philosophers, prophets, and other cultural innovators who brought modern civilization into being. If one values modern civilization, or any important aspect of it, he has the age-old phenomenon of exploitation to thank for it. This is no justification for all aspects of these systems of exploitation, since much of the economic surplus was used in culturally unproductive ways, but it does serve as yet another reminder of the complexity of the human condition.

serving an elite which is anxious to withdraw from the tiresome tasks of managing its own affairs to cultivate the art of leisure. As with petty thievery, such action is so subtle in character that an elite is often oblivious to its existence until it is too late to do anything about it.

This particular pattern of reaction to the exercise of power and privilege is especially important because it plays such an important role in the development of constitutional government. Those who respond this way are men of cunning rather than men of force, to use Pareto's terms. Because of this, they find a complex system of law well suited to their purposes, and they strive by every means at their disposal to increase the law's importance and power.

A fifth type of reaction to power and privilege manifests itself in *crimes of violence directed against members of the elite and their agents*. More often it is against the latter since, as the working arm of the elite, they come into more frequent contact with the lower classes, who are the chief offenders. These crimes are always taken very seriously. The severity of the punishments undoubtedly reflects a recognition of the existence of widespread, latent hostility toward the holders of power and the realization that anything less than prompt and severe punishment may encourage more widespread violence. Furthermore, when crimes of this sort occur, the interests of the elite and the middle classes coincide and all the holders of power line up on the same side, thus making for a very unequal contest.

Up to this point, the reactions with which we have been concerned have all involved the uncoordinated actions of individuals. Sometimes, however, the exercise of power and privilege in a society leads to *collective* reactions by large numbers of the common people. For the moment we shall be concerned only with the nonviolent cases.

This type of action is possible only under two conditions. Either there must be a constitutional regime in power which recognizes the right of the common people to organize in defense of their own interests, or the ruling elite must be hard pressed by foreign foes and badly in need of the military service of the common people. A good example of the latter may be seen in the early successes of the Roman plebeians in their struggles with the patricians in the fifth century B.C. It is probably no coincidence that this type of reaction has become so much more common in the last century in the western world. Ever since the French Revolution drastically changed the techniques of warfare by introducing conscription and the mass army, elites have been much more dependent on the common people. This may well have been one of the major reasons for the extension of the franchise in the last century and for the growing acceptance by

elites of labor unions, workingmen's political parties, and all the other organizations designed to promote and protect the interests of the common people.

A final form which the reaction to power and privilege often takes involves the clergy. Earlier they were listed among the members of the middle classes which act as agents of the ruling elite. Actually, this is not completely accurate, since the clergy enjoy a basis of power partly independent of the ruling elite. Unlike the other specialists and technicians who make up the middle classes, the clergy perform services which the masses value. Furthermore, they are also agents of a higher power than the elite and because of this even the elite usually respect and fear them to some degree. Hence, they are in a unique position to make demands on the economic surplus. In fact, according to archaeologists, the demands the priests made in the name of the gods they served were probably the basis for the formation of the first economic surplus in the ancient Middle East.²⁰

Throughout history there has been a *continuing struggle between the political and religious elites in most nations*. In these struggles the chief weapon of the religious elite has been their influence over political ideologies. By themselves they can often block the coveted path to legitimation and therefore can often fight the political elite on fairly even terms.

Sometimes the political elite has emerged victorious, sometimes the religious. Usually, however, the result has been a compromise involving an alliance of church and state. In exchange for the ideological support of the priests, the political elite protect them against religious competition. Such an arrangement usually works to the common advantage of both parties.

The net effect of these many and varied reactions to the exercise of power and privilege by political elites is the strengthening of the tendency toward constitutional government. Constitutional government is, in essence, government which is based more on consent than on force. To obtain this consent, some concessions are required.

In effect, constitutional government rests on the foundation of an exchange which serves the interests both of the elite and of the other segments of the population. The elite forswear the use of violence except under more or less specified conditions, hence introducing an element of predictability and order into the life situation of the others. In exchange they receive the consent of others to their rule, which includes the tacit support of their use of force when it is in keeping with the dictates of the

²⁰ See V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself* (London: Watts, 1936), especially the latter part of chap. 6 and all of chap. 7.

law. In a sense, there is something approximating a social contract, but since it is between unequals, it differs from the idealized versions described by earlier writers.

Thus the views of both conservatives and radicals contain an element of truth. Government does indeed rest on the foundation of consent, as the conservatives have maintained, but it also rests on the foundation of force, as the radicals have asserted. In short, both positions are true, but neither is the whole truth.

The Downfall of Regimes

Despite the best efforts of political elites, no regime survives forever. From the standpoint of the study of distributive systems, the forces which bring about the downfall of regimes are no less important than those which stabilize and strengthen them.

Though many factors contribute to the downfall of political regimes, there are only two means by which they are actually overthrown, *war* and *revolution*. It is on these which we must focus.

From the standpoint of any theory of distribution, war is simply a special form of the ubiquitous and continuous struggle for control of the economic surplus. What makes it distinctive is that it involves a struggle between two established elites rather than between elite and nonelite elements of the same society. Every established elite has at its disposal armed forces to protect or advance its interests. The chief deterrent to war has usually been the absence of profitable opportunity. No elite ever embarked on a war of conquest unless the probable gains outweighed the probable costs. As a result, wars have been less likely when there has been a reasonable balance of power between nations than when one nation enjoyed a definite advantage.

Pareto suggested that one of the factors which may upset the balance of power, and hence precipitate wars and revolutions, is the overreliance of constitutional governments on cunning. In other words, they strive to replace military might with skill in diplomacy and similar techniques, and in the end bring about their own destruction. While Pareto may have overstated the case, there is reason for believing that constitutional regimes have this tendency.

On the other hand, constitutional regimes are less likely to initiate aggressive action. Those who have come to power by the exercise of cunning, or intelligence, are less inclined to use force except as a last resort, unless the risks are obviously slight (as in Britain's wars with African tribes during the period of colonial expansion).

Finally, since the fruits of war usually go only to the elite, one would predict that the larger the percentage of the population involved in the decision of whether or not to fight, the less the probability of aggressive action. Thus the likelihood of a democratic nation starting a war of aggression is less than that of a nondemocratic state. One should not assume, however, that this factor is decisive, since even in a democracy an elite can sometimes stir the populace to militance through the skillful use of propaganda.

When an elite is victorious in war, it has three options so far as its treatment of the conquered elite is concerned. First, it may destroy the latter and assume its powers directly. Second, it may incorporate the conquered elite in its own system of power in a subordinate position. Third, it may replace it with a new elite of its own choosing, one which would comply with its demands in future years and permit much of the surplus of its own society to be drained off by tribute, trade, or other means. A conquered elite survives as an elite only if the second alternative is adopted. Otherwise the old regime comes to an end and with it the political cycle, with all that this implies.

War poses fewer problems than successful revolutions, since in the case of war, both parties possess the necessary means. In the case of revolution, the situation is more complicated. A successful revolution requires at least three ingredients: (1) men, (2) organization, and (3) resources. But where can these be found apart from elites themselves?

In every state there is always one group which possesses the necessary resources. This is none other than the organization entrusted with the defense of the state and the existing regime: *the military establishment*. It is no coincidence that in the course of history the great majority of revolutions have been carried out by military men. Others may be hostile and others may be greedy and ambitious, but they lack the means to implement their desires. The military always has the *means* at its disposal: it only requires the *motivation*. Since the means are the rarer of the two, revolutions originating in the armed forces of a nation are vastly more common than ones originating elsewhere. Furthermore, they are far more likely to be successful. In fact, they rarely fail unless the military is divided against itself.

Machiavelli recognized this danger and in *The Art of War* advised that "war . . . ought not to be followed as a business by any but princes or governors of commonwealths; and if they are wise men they will not suffer any of their subjects or citizens to make that their only profession." The British aristocracy also recognized the danger, and for this reason long maintained the purchase system whereby top positions in the mili-

tary were reserved for men of wealth, who had a vested interest in the preservation of the status quo. As Lord Palmerston put it a century ago:

If the connection between the Army and the higher class of society were dissolved, then the Army would present a dangerous and unconstitutional appearance. It was only when the Army was unconnected with those whose property gave them an interest in the country, and was commanded by unprincipled military adventurers, that it ever became formidable to the liberties of the nation.²¹

Judging by the startled reactions with which so many Americans greeted the various "colonels' revolts" in Asia and the Middle East after World War II, these principles are poorly understood in this country. As noted previously, training in American history is poor preparation for understanding the political life of most of the rest of the world.

Many, if not most, of the revolutions led by military men have been simply palace revolution.²² For this reason, the majority of sociologists have shown little interest in them, thinking them of minor importance.

This lack of interest in palace revolutions is largely a reflection of the influence of Marx and Engels. Their work, both scholarly and political, has oriented modern social science to a one-sided concern with social revolutions. However, if our analysis of the nature of political cycles is correct, palace revolutions can also be extremely important. *Where they are a recurrent phenomenon, they seriously hinder the development of constitutionalism.* For those who value the freedom of the individual from tyranny and despotism, this is no minor matter.

While military men are usually the leaders of palace revolutions, *intellectuals* are likely to be the leaders of social revolutions. They alone can supply the one crucial ingredient without which social revolutions are impossible—a new ideology to challenge and destroy the existing one. Ideologies are the stock in trade of intellectuals. They are the opinion leaders with respect to important philosophical questions. Intellectuals may be engaged in any type of employment, but they are concentrated in teaching, preaching, and the arts.

Intellectuals are easily alienated by systems of power and privilege. They are like ministers without portfolio, experts without the power to translate their ideas into public policy. Hence there is a natural basis for alienation. Enlightened elites, therefore, usually find it wise to flatter

²¹ Quoted by Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), chap. 2. This volume provides a fascinating discussion of the operation of the purchase system in nineteenth-century England and some of the events which led to its eventual elimination. Quoted by permission.

²² There have been some exceptions, however, as the careers of Atatürk and Nasser testify.

them with attention and honors, thus securing their gratitude and support.

Such tactics have usually worked quite well. Most intellectuals have stoutly defended the conservative position, thus making a major contribution to the defense of power and privilege. By their skill with symbols they have successfully proven to the common people the inevitability, as well as the countless advantages, of the *status quo*.

Sometimes, however, elites become careless, or certain intellectuals have refused to respond to their blandishments. By themselves, rebellious intellectuals are no threat to a political elite. They lack the numbers and resources necessary to bring about a successful revolution. However, working in conjunction with others, they can provide the catalytic agent, the counterideology, which is necessary for every successful social revolution.

Another segment of the population of most societies which is attracted with great frequency to social revolutions is that made up of *ethnic, racial, and religious minorities*. These groups usually hold special grievances against the dominant majority and thus are more receptive to counterideologies. Unlike the lower class members of the dominant group, there is no common cultural tie to provide a basis for identification with the elite.

Such groups can usually supply numbers to revolutionary causes, and organization as well. Above all, they can sometimes provide financial resources, which are often so difficult for revolutionary movements to acquire. While minority status groups are usually excluded from the higher social and political levels of society, as we noted earlier, they sometimes make substantial economic advances. The economic success of the Jews in Europe, the Hindus in Africa, the Japanese in Hawaii, and the Jains in India are but a few examples. The wealthy members of such groups have often been among the major financial backers of social revolutions.

No social revolution can succeed, however, so long as the army stands firmly behind the existing regime. Lenin saw this clearly when he wrote, "No great revolution has happened or can happen without the disorganization of the army." Katharine Chorley came to a similar conclusion in her book, *Armies and the Art of Revolution*, which is probably the best study available on the role of the armed forces in revolutions.²³ In her opinion no revolution of the masses can be successful unless the military forces of the old regime are either subverted or neutralized. So long as the military stand firmly behind the regime, it not only can survive but

²³ (London: Faber, 1943).

can crush any rebellion directed against it. History shows few exceptions to this.

Thus, we are again driven back to a recognition of the crucial role played by specialists in force, both in the preservation and destruction of political regimes. Although a few revolutions have succeeded without support from the armed forces, these have usually occurred at the time the army was badly demoralized and disintegrating, e.g., the Russian Revolution of 1917. Having postulated that force is the final court of appeals in human conflicts, these facts should not surprise us.