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Chapter 4

THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

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INTRODUCTION

If, as many social scientists argue, power is the distinguishing characteristic of political activity, then a key question is, to what extent does the distribution of power vary from one society to another? This question has exercised philosophers and political scientists, sociologists and psychologists, among many others. Some provide normative, some empirical answers, and not a few a combination of both, in that having described 'reality', they offer a prescription. Efforts to provide answers go back at least to the Greek philosophers, particularly Plato and Aristotle, both of whom presented ideal forms of government and compared them with the reality of their experience. Thus Plato believed that there exists a number of absolute moral truths to which men should aspire and that the perfect society resulting from the application of such truths could only exist where power was in the hands of philosopher-kings, who understood these truths. His views stemmed from his experience of the Greek city-states, and of Athens in particular, where the reality of tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy – power in the hands of an arbitrary individual, a selfish few, or the mob – appalled him. Aristotle also posited government of a single ruler, the few, and the many, but in ideal and perverted versions of each: monarchy was the ideal for a single ruler, tyranny its perverted form; aristocracy the

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ideal of rule by the few, oligarchy its perversion; and rule by the polity – the responsible citizens – the ideal of rule by the many, democracy – rule by the mob – its perversion.

Later philosophers, such as St Augustine of Hippo and St Thomas Aquinas, brought Christian ideals to bear on politics; others, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes, related their prescriptions to their perceived reality of a dangerous and chaotic world, Machiavelli with his ideal prince and Hobbes with his absolute sovereign or Leviathan. Locke and Rousseau placed greater faith in the ability of men to recognise their mutual self-interests and co-operate in the running of society. Not dissimilarly, utilitarians, like Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, argued that self-interest determined individuals' behaviour and would therefore produce, in Bentham's phrase, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. However, James Mill's son, John Stuart Mill, although strongly influenced by utilitarian ideas, stressed the need to curb the exercise of power, especially to avoid what he termed 'the despotism of public opinion' (1887 [1838], pp. 376–8). Marx, of course, was in no doubt where the power lay: it lay with the class that controlled the means of production, but once this was understood Marx and his successors tended to take the distribution of power as a given dependent variable, which needed no further discussion other than to explain how the dominant class maintained its position and in what circumstances that position could be overthrown. Marxist views apart, however, modern theories about the distribution of power may be divided into four basic types – elite theory, pluralism, totalitarianism, and democracy.

ELITE THEORY

The word 'elite' is widely used socially to denote a superior group in terms of ability or privilege. Furthermore, in a social context it often has a pejorative connotation, leading it to be associated with other terms like 'the establishment', 'the powers that be', and 'the chosen few'. However, while such usages give something of the flavour of its meaning, elite theorists are concerned only with the distribution of power in society, with the distinction between rulers and ruled. In the words of one writer on the subject: 'The core of elitist doctrine is that there may exist in any society a minority of the

population which takes the major decisions in the society' (Parry, 1969, p. 30). Elite theorists are mainly anti-Marxist, and two of the classical theorists, Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, set out specifically to disprove Marx's theories of economic determinism and the class struggle. Elite theorists are also largely anti-democratic, since they argue that democratic theory is at variance with reality and, in practical terms, an inherently weak form of government. In a frequently cited passage Mosca clearly stated the basic premise of elite theorists: 'In all societies – from societies that are very meagrely developed and have barely attained the dawns of civilisation, down to the most advanced societies – two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled.' He goes on to elaborate:

The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, and in a manner that is now more or less legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent, and supplies the first, in appearance at least, with material means of subsistence and with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism. (Mosca, 1939 [1896], p. 50)

Implicit in elite theory is that the dominant group or elite is conscious of its existence, cohesive in its behaviour, and possesses a common sense of purpose (see Meisel 1965). Above all, elite theory is regarded as historically and universally applicable, except for one theorist, C. Wright Mills (1956), who concentrated on the distribution of power in the United States and conceded that the power structure in other societies might differ radically from the American model.

Parry divides the elite theorists into four types, as shown in Figure 4.1, each having a different approach or emphasis

The organisational approach – Mosca and Michels

According to Mosca, 'the individual ... stands alone before the totality of the organised minority' (1939 [1896], p. 53) and both he and Michels (1915 [1911]) believed that the existence of the elite and its domination of society rest on its organisational position and abilities. In short, the organised minority will invariably outmanoeuvre

Elite theorist	Principal works	Approach
A. Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941)	<i>The Ruling Class</i> (1896, rev. 1923, trans. 1939)	Organisational
Robert Michels (1876–1936)	<i>Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy</i> (1911, trans. 1915)	Organisational
B. Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1927)	<i>The Mind and Society</i> (1916, trans. 1935)	Psychological
C. James Burnham (1905–87)	<i>The Managerial Revolution</i> (1941)	Economic
D. C. Wright Mills (1916–62)	<i>The Power Elite</i> (1956)	Institutional

Figure 4.1 Classifying elite theorists (Source: based on Parry (1969), Chapter II).

the less organised or unorganised majority in society. Mosca divided the elite into upper and lower strata, the upper stratum consisting of a small group of political decision-makers and the lower stratum performing lesser leadership functions, such as opinion leaders and political activists. Not surprisingly the more numerous lower stratum provided the main recruitment pool for the upper stratum.

The relationship between the elite or ruling class and the rest of society is measured in terms of authority and elite recruitment and varies according to two pairs of variables. The authority relationship depends on either the autocratic principle, in which authority flows from the elite to the masses, or the liberal principle, in which it flows from the masses to the elite. Recruitment depends on a similar dichotomy: the aristocratic tendency, in which movement is restricted to within the elite, moving from the lower to the upper stratum; and the democratic tendency, in which there is movement from the masses into the elite. These are, however, Weberian ideal types and particular societies will invariably exhibit elements of several variables. For example, an elected executive, such as the President of the United States, fulfils the liberal principle, but the President's Cabinet, all of whom are appointed, fulfils the autocratic principle. Similarly, an autocratic society might recruit members of its bureaucracy on merit, thus fulfilling the democratic tendency. Although Mosca argued that the recruitment or regeneration of the

Mosca

autocratic
liberal
aristocratic
democratic

elite came mainly from within its lower ranks, he acknowledged that a more fundamental change in the elite could occur. Thus the masses or non-elite might become sufficiently discontented or disaffected to overthrow the elite, but in such cases it was likely that an organised minority within the non-elite would be responsible and, in any case, an organised minority would rapidly form a new ruling class.

Mosca was originally strongly anti-democratic, but later shifted his ground and accepted that representative government was the best way to articulate interests in a society, to which the elite should respond, and of controlling the autocratic authority of the bureaucracy through the liberal authority of a representative assembly. None the less, Mosca remained firmly elitist in his views: a ruling class was necessary to provide leadership and to manipulate the rest of society for its own good. In fact, Mosca would have restricted the franchise to the middle and upper classes, but conceded that historically it was too late to reverse the trend towards universal suffrage.

Although Michels' principal work was much narrower in scope than that of other elite theorists in that it concentrates on political parties, his famous 'iron law of oligarchy' (1915 [1911], pp. 377-92) has much wider implications and applications. Michels sought to test his theory of oligarchy - self-perpetuating dominance by the few - by examining the organisation of European socialist parties, especially the German Socialist Party, since he argued that if his 'iron law' really existed then there could be no better test than finding out who exercised power in parties that claimed that their mass membership controlled the party. Michels concluded that organisation was the inevitable consequence of the scope and complexity of human activity. Once established an organisation becomes dominated by its leadership: 'who says organisation, says oligarchy' (1915 [1911], p. 418). In order to function successfully in the modern conditions of mass electorates a political party needs a mass membership to raise funds, promulgate its policies, and, above all, to fight elections. This was not a new observation: M. Ostrogorski (1854-1919) had made the same point in detail in his *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties* in 1902, but Michels took it an important stage further.

Arguing that parties are essentially machines for winning and retaining power, Michels says that in order to do this they need to moderate their ideologies and policies to win support beyond the confines of their party activists. The initiative in all this lies largely

reproduce
→
Michels
iron law
oligarchy

MICHEL'S
New Soc.
theory

with the party leadership and they, and the party's bureaucrats and legislative representatives, have a clear organisational advantage over ordinary party members. This advantage is reinforced by a psychological factor - the apathy of the majority of the population, who are basically ignorant of and uninterested in politics, except when it directly affects their interests. Here Michels anticipates one of the ideas of Kornhauser (1959), whose theory of the mass society posits circumstances in which the non-elite is available for manipulation by the elite and vice-versa, which will be examined later in this chapter. Michels, of course, regards the manipulation of the non-elite by the elite as the normal state of affairs in society.

The psychological approach - Pareto

Pareto and Mosca were contemporaries and rivals; they differed on the constitution of the elite, the reasons for its existence, and the manner of its recruitment or regeneration. Like Mosca, Pareto says the elite is divided into two sections, but Pareto draws a distinction between what he terms 'the governing elite' and 'the non-governing elite'. The governing elite are those who directly or indirectly influence political decisions, and the non-governing elite those who hold leadership positions in society, but who do not influence political decisions. This means that Pareto's elite is a larger group than Mosca's and that he comes closer to the commonplace concept of a social elite.

There are, however, more important distinctions between the two theorists in explaining the existence of the elite. Pareto explicitly rejects the Marxist notion that the dominant group in society is the product of economic forces, or social forces for that matter, and asserts that the elite stems from human attributes, from individual abilities and instincts. Human beings, according to Pareto, do not act logically but seek to justify their actions logically through ideologies or values, which Pareto calls 'derivations'. These values or derivations produce instincts or states of mind that Pareto calls 'residues' and it is these that form the basis of human activity. Pareto divides the residues into two types or classes - 'instincts of combination' and 'persistence of aggregates'. The former involves the use of ideas and imagination, and Pareto dubs those who operate on this basis as 'foxes'; the second stresses permanence, stability and order, and those who operate on this basis Pareto calls 'lions'. In this

Pareto
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Vladimir
L. S. S. S.

el. la
residues
instincts
derivations
foxes
lions
instincts of combination
persistence of aggregates

instincts of combination
persistence of aggregates
foxes
lions

Pareto is reminiscent of Machiavelli, whose ideal in *The Prince* is a combination of wisdom and ruthlessness, similar to Pareto's ideal elite of a mixture of 'foxes' and 'lions' (see Figure 4.2).

Pareto acknowledges that his ideal elite of 'foxes' and 'lions' seldom materialises and that the balance between the two changes, so that there is a 'circulation of elites'. Thus 'foxes' replace 'lions' and 'lions' replace 'foxes', but 'foxes' gradually replace 'lions', whereas 'lions' suddenly replace 'foxes'. Recruitment or regeneration, therefore, can be either by evolution or revolution, but in either case the downfall of one elite is brought about by its own inherent vices: 'foxes' become over-manipulative or compromise once too often; 'lions' become too self-important and unacceptably ruthless, for example.

Pareto also differs from Mosca, and other elite theorists, in that he does not subscribe to group coherence and common purpose amongst the elite, but argues that individuals act as individuals and for this reason often fail to foresee the consequences of their own actions, as well as those of others.

The economic approach – Burnham

James Burnham agrees with Marx that power lies with those who control the means of production and acknowledges that, whereas in

Class I	Class II
'Instincts of combination'	'Persistence of aggregates'
'Foxes'	'Lions'
Intelligent	Strong-minded
Imaginative	Reliable
Manipulative	Possessing integrity
Persevering	Ruthless
Consensual	Confrontational
Compromiser	Inflexible
Patient	Impatient
Ideal = political fixer, wheeler-dealer	Ideal = determined, charismatic leader

Figure 4.2 Pareto's types of elites (Source: Pareto, *Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, Sec. 2178, 2227, 2274, 2275).

the aftermath of the industrial revolution this was the capitalist owners, in advanced industrial societies control of the means of production has passed to those with managerial and technical expertise, including leading members of the bureaucracy. These, according to Burnham, constitute the new elite. The state becomes subordinated to the needs of the managerial elite and industrial societies will become increasingly centralised and subject to bureaucratic control. Burnham saw a convergence between the already state-dominated USSR and advanced capitalist societies and, in a sense, posits what some observers were later to describe communist systems as – administered societies.

The institutional approach – Mills

Wright Mills argues that the American elite is embedded in the structures of society and that power is therefore institutionalised. He concludes that the United States is dominated by an industrial-military-political complex of overlapping elites, with movement from one elite to another and that the key members of this complex constitute a *power elite* – those in 'positions to make decisions having major consequences . . . in command of the major hierarchies and organisations of modern society' (1956, p. 4). The elite may be based on a conscious conspiracy or simply shared values, but its power stems from its position, rather than from status, wealth, class, or ability.

Testing elite theory

The most common type of evidence presented to support elite theories seeks to answer two questions: who is selected for particular positions in society and how are they selected? The first question is usually answered by examining the socio-economic backgrounds of those who hold or secure positions regarded as designating membership of the elite, such as members of legislatures, holders of political and administrative office in the state, and, in some cases, holders of offices in political parties and other organisations thought or known to be important in wielding or influencing the exercise of power. In some ways the evidence thus adduced is very compelling, since it is a common finding that, regardless of how they are defined or constituted, elites are unrepresentative in socio-economic terms of the

populations from which they are drawn. With few exceptions they tend to be drawn from the upper echelons of society in terms of education, occupation, income, and socio-economic status.

The principal exceptions are found in communist societies, where efforts were made to secure significant representation of workers and peasants and, to a lesser extent, women. Even here, however, the elite remains unrepresentative in other respects, especially in terms of career patterns. Clearly such phenomena need explaining, but so also does the fact that there are many more individuals who have similar socio-economic backgrounds, yet are neither members of the elite in positional terms nor have sought elite positions. However, this is a question which will be explored further in Chapter 7. Of more immediate relevance is the nature of this type of evidence for the existence of an elite.

It is essentially inferential and deductive, in that it assumes that those holding particular positions in society actually exercise power and that all decisions are taken by them. A variation of this elite test is to examine particular decisions and ask whether those apparently involved have a common socio-economic background, but this, too, suffers from similar deficiencies; both methods are intrinsically circumstantial.

The second type of question addresses itself more to the concerns expressed by Michels about the ability of the elite to perpetuate itself in positions of power and influence. It therefore examines the recruitment process itself by asking who does the choosing and how is it done? Of course, many political positions or offices are elective and therefore involve a much larger group than the elite, however the latter may be defined. Although in some cases the choice is limited to a single candidate, many more cases offer a genuine choice to the electorate of two or more candidates, but studies in a number of countries show that in socio-economic terms the differences between successful and unsuccessful candidates are not great and that the selection of candidates is often in the hands of a small group of party leaders and activists, clearly lending support to Michels' oligarchical ideas. The evidence cannot and should not be ignored, but amounts to only a limited examination of the recruitment process, which, as already noted, will be explored further in Chapter 7.

A further type of test is known as the reputational approach, of which a typical and important example is Floyd Hunter's *Community Power Structure: A study of decision-makers* (1953). Hunter asked a

representative panel of local citizens who they thought made decisions in Atlanta. They were asked to choose from lists supplied by local organisations and 'notables', such as the chamber of commerce, newspaper editors, and civic leaders. The panel's responses led Hunter to conclude that Atlanta was controlled by a business elite. Perception is a very important factor in social life in general and politics in particular, but the perceptual or reputational approach leaves the problem of matching impression or appearance with reality and distinguishing between potential and actual power. Again, it is not a case of dismissing the evidence, but asking whether it is sufficient.

The strongest challenge to elite theory, however, comes from what is known as the decision-making approach, an approach particularly identified with Robert A. Dahl, one of the leading proponents of pluralist theory.

PLURALISM

Dahl (1958, p. 466) sought to test elite theory by examining particular policy decisions and asking whether an identifiable elite was responsible for the outcome in each case. To do this he applied his elite test, arguing that for an elite to exist and dominate the decision-making process the following three criteria had to be met:

1. The hypothetical elite is a well-defined group.
2. There is a fair sample of cases involving key political decisions to which the preferences of the hypothetical ruling elite run counter to those of any other likely group that might be suggested.
3. In such cases, the preferences of the elite regularly prevail.

In *Who Governs?* (1961), which is based on decision-making in the town of New Haven, Dahl (as noted in the earlier discussion of power in Chapter 3) examined particular issues in three policy areas – urban renewal, public education, and the making of local party nominations. He concluded that the outcomes of the decisions on the three issues were determined by three mutually exclusive groups and therefore that no single elite existed, but there was a plurality of interests. However, far from suggesting that this plurality of interests competed on equal terms, Dahl argues that the various interests are unequal, particularly in the availability of resources,

and therefore in their ability to influence decisions. Dahl also drew a distinction between what he termed 'social notables', 'economic notables', and the holders of political office. Effectively he was suggesting a system of competing elites.

Dahl describes such a system as a *polyarchy* – the rule of the many, in which the state and its political structures provide an arena in which interests can bargain and compete over policy proposals. Implicit in the polyarchical view of society is that a basic consensus exists about the form of society and its political structures, so that no one, except possibly a tiny minority, is seeking fundamental change in those structures or in the policies pursued through them. No one group in society constitutes a majority interest, and society therefore consists of competing, though not necessarily equal, minority interests. By definition no particular interest can perforce expect to prevail, even where its interests are directly and significantly affected, but, as another leading pluralist Nelson Polsby (1963) argues, in a polyarchy virtually all views or interests will be listened to by those charged with decision-making.

The pluralist view developed out of the concept of pressure or interest groups – organisations which seek to influence policy decisions affecting their views or interests. Interest group theory argues that society consists of a great variety of interests, many of which organise themselves to press the government to respond to their demands. As far back as 1908 A. F. Bentley put forward such a view in *The Process of Government*, but studies of pressure politics flourished in the 1950s and later, especially after the publication of David Truman's *The Governmental Process* in 1951. Pluralists took interest group theory a step further by arguing that if an interest existed it would develop organisational representation, since this was the only means of making its presence felt. The stress on organisation provides a linkage with the organisational elite theorists, especially Michels, though this was not the intent.

It was no accident that pluralist views came hard on the heels of increased academic interest in pressure politics, nor that it fitted in well with what was called 'the end of ideology thesis' (see Chapter 10), the view that there was, in liberal-democratic societies, a basic agreement on ends, and only disagreement over means. The common denominator was the American political system which, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, best fitted interest group theory, pluralism, and the end of ideology thesis. How applicable

these ideas were and are to other political systems is a different matter. Even so, it is the pluralists who have provided the principal non-Marxist challenge to elite theorists.

A critique of pluralist theory

The most obvious criticism that could be made of Dahl's study of New Haven, as it was of Hunter's study of Atlanta, was that it was atypical – that there was no reason to doubt the findings, but that they were not necessarily valid for other cities, let alone American politics generally. Certainly, American local government is not uniform in that significantly different systems operate from state to state, and case studies, such as Robert Presthus' (1964) *Men at the Top*, found greater evidence of elitism in other places in the United States than Dahl found at New Haven.

However, the most serious criticism of pluralism relates to what Steven Lukes has called the second and third dimensions of power. These were discussed in Chapter 3, but they are worth examining again in the context of pluralist theory. Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1970) point out that pluralists deal only with observable decisions, issues that actually get onto the political agenda, and therefore ignore those that are kept off the agenda. This was tested by Crenson (1971) in a study of US Steel's ability to control the political agenda in the steel town of Gary, Indiana. This is the second dimension of power. Lukes (1974) suggests that there is a third dimension, that of latent conflicts arising from the real interests of members of society. This relates to the Marxist concept of ideology as 'false consciousness', in which individuals are unaware of their real interests because the prevailing values in society lead them to misconstrue reality. Thus the perceptions of individuals will affect their political behaviour, leading in some cases to inaction rather than action.

The second dimension is a serious criticism of the pluralist view and it is not difficult to find evidence to support it, but the third dimension, while logically impeccable, is difficult to prove, since truth, like beauty is ultimately in the eye of the beholder. Nevertheless, it too is a serious criticism and in particular questions the consensual notions of pluralist theory. Clearly there are competing interests in any society, but even in American politics it is also clear that those who are active in politics are a minority; that those who hold and wield political power are a minority; that those who

exercise influence are a minority; and, while it is possible to agree with pluralists that they are not all part of the same minority, it is an assumption that the majority of the members of society are represented in the political process and that they necessarily accept the political system and the policies it produces in their name. If this is the case for the United States, then it is even more the case for other political systems, some of which appear to fit elite theory more closely than they do pluralist theory. For instance, before the Communist Party gave up its 'leading role' in 1990, the Soviet Union appears to accord with elite theory. The Leninist theory of the Party as the 'vanguard of the proletariat' is explicitly elitist and the ability of its leaders to maintain control over it seems a clear example of Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy'. On the other hand, some writers claimed to have detected signs of pluralism in the USSR, arguing that interests were institutionalised through the Party, which responded to demands from below, as well as issued instructions from above (see Skilling and Griffiths 1971; Solomon 1983).

Much of the evidence for pluralism, like that for elites, is circumstantial, and pluralist theory can be seen as a form of elite theory, but one of competing elites, rather than a single elite. Additional light is thrown on both elite and pluralist theories by examining political socialisation, participation and recruitment in Part IV, but it is also helpful to look at totalitarian and democratic theories of the distribution of power.

TOTALITARIANISM

Totalitarianism and democracy are often understandably seen as diametrically opposed concepts, but they have in common concern with mass political participation in contrast with elite theory, which tends largely to dismiss the masses as subordinate and subject to manipulation by the elite, and pluralism, which sees the masses as a multiplicity of competing interests. Furthermore, both totalitarianism and democracy can usefully be seen as ideal types which in practice are tendencies rather than absolutes.

History is replete with regimes in which considerable power has been concentrated in the hands of an individual or small group of individuals, largely unrestrained, often arbitrary in its use, and in which failure to obey risks severe punishment, not infrequently

death. Aristotle called such rule tyranny and both Greek and Roman history produced their quotas of tyrants; much of the history of medieval England is concerned with attempts to impose restraints upon monarchs; eighteenth-century Europe is sometimes described as 'the age of absolutism'; and the period between the First and Second World Wars has been called 'the age of dictators'. These regimes were variously described as tyrannical, absolutist, dictatorial, and, more recently, authoritarian. A number of justifications have been advanced for absolute rule, ranging from Plato's philosopher-kings to the divine right of kings, and Hobbes' *Leviathan* to Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat. In the first two, absolute rule was tempered by wisdom and God's law respectively; in the latter two, the end justifies the means, order being vastly preferable to violent chaos and a classless, communist society to anything that preceded it. Totalitarianism could therefore be said to be in the absolutist tradition, taking absolutism to its logical extreme by seeking to control everything in society, but this is also its distinguishing feature. Tyranny, absolutism and dictatorship demand obedience, but do not seek to be all-pervasive, to re-shape society in its entirety: totalitarianism demands not only obedience but belief.

Defining totalitarianism

Two types of definitions have been advanced, the phenomenological and the essentialist. Carl J. Friedrich (1954, 1969, p. 126) provided the most well-known phenomenological definition, according to which a totalitarian state has the following six characteristics:

1. A totalist or all-embracing ideology.
2. A single party committed to that ideology, usually led by one man.
3. Police power based on terror.
4. A monopoly of communication.
5. A monopoly of weaponry.
6. A centralised economy and control of all organisations.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, who collaborated with Friedrich in a study of totalitarianism, produced a definition to which he added the purpose of totalitarian regimes:

Totalitarianism is a system in which technologically advanced instruments of political power are wielded without

restraint by a centralised leadership of an elite movement, for the purpose of effecting a total social revolution, including the conditioning of man on the basis of certain arbitrary ideological assumptions proclaimed by the leadership, in an atmosphere of coerced unanimity of the entire population. (Brzezinski 1967, pp. 19-20)

Both Friedrich and Brzezinski emphasise the extent to which society is penetrated and controlled by those holding political power, to which Brzezinski makes the important addition that totalitarian regimes through that control and penetration seek to transform society from the present or perceived reality to an idealised form reflected in an all-pervasive ideology.

The second type of definition, the essentialist, seeks to isolate the essences or key attributes which explain the sort of characteristics delineated by Friedrich and Brzezinski. Hannah Arendt (1951, p. 466), in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, states that 'total terror [is] the essence of totalitarian government'; J. L. Talmon (1952, pp. 1-2) argues that totalitarianism politicises the whole of life and 'is based on the assumption of a sole and exclusive truth in politics. It may be called political Messianism'; similarly, Harry Eckstein and David Apter (1963, p. 434) say that 'the essence of totalitarianism ... is that it annihilates all boundaries between the state and the groupings of society, even the state and the individual personality'.

Both types of definition stress the relationship between politics and society and a reasonable short definition of totalitarianism would be: a social system involving the political control of and intervention in all aspects of public and private life.

The origins of totalitarianism

Hannah Arendt (1951) explains the origins of totalitarianism in socio-historical terms, basing her conclusions on an analysis of the rise of Nazi Germany, but also applying them to the Soviet Union. She argues that totalitarianism in Germany developed as a consequence of four factors: first, a breakdown of community resulting from rapid industrialisation before and military defeat in the First World War, combined with the introduction both before and after the war of liberal ideas; second, the rapid enfranchisement of the masses in the absence of an appropriate liberal political culture,

leaving them open to manipulation by demagogic leaders; third, the creation in the form of the National Socialist Party of a mass movement with which individuals could identify; and, finally, a population sufficiently large and widespread against whom considerable prejudice already existed - the Jews, who could be cast in the role of scapegoat for the ills of society. Similar, though not identical, features could be listed for the Soviet Union.

Talmon (1952) offers an ideological explanation, tracing totalitarianism back to eighteenth-century messianic beliefs, Rousseau's concept of the General Will, and Jacobin ideas in revolutionary France, all of which, he argues, are based on the belief that there is 'a sole exclusive truth in politics'. Talmon further argues that totalitarianism can take ideologically left and right forms, with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany representing the totalitarian right and communist regimes in the USSR, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Eastern Europe representing the totalitarian left. The latter he describes as 'democratic totalitarianism' because the regimes claim to know the true interests of the people and thus be able to realise their democratic will. Support for this view can be found in the Leninist doctrine of democratic centralism in which free discussion was centred within the Communist Party, but the party remained the custodian of the truth and the guide to action.

A third explanation of the origins of totalitarianism has been put forward by a number of psychologists who argue that some individuals exhibit particular psychological tendencies, such as aggression, intolerance towards groups in society other than their own, and deference to authority, attracting them to highly disciplined organisations, which, in certain social conditions, may secure or seize political power. The best known of the psychological explanations is that advanced by Theodor Adorno *et al.* (1950) in *The Authoritarian Personality*. They sought to measure various personality traits which, for example, rendered individuals receptive to taking orders, intolerant of opposition, and having a highly structured view of the world. In particular, they developed a number of scales, the best known of which was the Fascism or F-Scale. Erich Fromm (1941) in *Escape from Freedom* suggested that individuals who were alienated from the modern world sought refuge in authoritarian or highly structured societies, while Milgram (1974) conducted a series of laboratory experiments to test the extent to which individuals accepted orders from those they perceived to be in authority over them.

It is important to note that much of the research into totalitarianism was conducted in the late 1940s and early 1950s, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. It tended, therefore, to concentrate far more on what Talmon called totalitarianism of the right and on Nazi Germany in particular. Relatively speaking, far less attention was paid to communist systems. Studies of the 'authoritarian personality' in particular were directed largely at the Nazi experience, seeking explanations of how Hitler had 'subjugated' the German people, secured their 'unquestioning obedience', and 'persuaded' a significant number of them to perform what others regarded as atrocities. Thus one of the major criticisms made of Adorno and his colleagues is that they do not deal adequately with 'left-wing authoritarianism'. Later studies, like Milgram's, are criticised for the artificial nature of their experiments, but also because they concentrate on the concept of obedience to the neglect of the more subtle concept of acceptance. On the other hand, although Arendt's study (especially the first edition published in 1951) documents more fully totalitarianism in Nazi Germany than in the Soviet Union, the latter is far from ignored, while Talmon concentrates almost entirely on totalitarianism of the left, to which he regards communists as the natural heirs. It is worth noting that even when the earliest of these studies was published the Soviet Union had already existed nearly three times longer than Nazi Germany, though not, of course, Fascist Italy, and that since then the communist regimes of Eastern Europe had a life of some forty years and the People's Republic of China continues to survive.

None of the explanations offered alone seems to provide complete explanation of the origins of totalitarianism, but each emphasises a credible part of what is probably a wider whole. The rapid societal changes and the military defeats which preceded the Soviet and Nazi regimes may well have provided fertile ground for messianic answers to the uncertainties, dislocation and hardship that faced many people in Russia and Germany at the time, and it would be surprising if some individuals were not better psychologically suited to and disposed towards authoritarian regimes, but account also needs to be taken of the particular circumstances in which Lenin's Bolsheviks and Hitler's Nazis came to power.

The Tsar had been overthrown in Russia in February 1917 and, until the return of Lenin, his fellow Bolsheviks proposed to cooperate with the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky,

but Lenin immediately abandoned the policy and single-mindedly set in train the Bolshevik seizure of power, which took place in October 1917.

In Germany Hitler's Nazi Party rose from winning less than 3 per cent of the national vote in 1928 and electing a mere twelve members to the Reichstag to winning 37 per cent of the vote in July 1932 and being the largest party, with 230 out of 608 seats, still short of an absolute majority, however. At a further election in November 1932 the Nazi vote dropped by two million and its number of seats fell to 196, but the NSDAP remained the largest party. However, the extreme fragmentation of the parties in the Reichstag made forming a government extremely difficult and, as leader of the largest party, Hitler was invited to take office as Chancellor at the end of January 1933. As it was the Nazis held only three of the eleven Cabinet posts, but Hitler used his power as Chancellor very skilfully, called another election in March, at which the Nazi vote increased to 44 per cent and the number of seats to 288, again short of a majority. But the election of fifty-two Nationalists gave Hitler a majority in the Reichstag and the means to consolidate the Nazi grip on power.

In both cases the role of the leader was crucial, but so also was what they did with power once it was in their grasp. The Bolsheviks and the Nazis not only moved swiftly to strengthen their grip, but used the power they had to impose a totalitarian regime, placing their supporters in key positions in the police and enforcing their will by the systematic use of terror. Once in power it became extremely difficult to loosen that grip: opponents were quickly eliminated, the media brought under strict party control, and the ideological penetration of society set in train.

A similar pattern can be delineated for the countries of Eastern Europe which came under Soviet hegemony at the end of the Second World War. For the most part totalitarian regimes were imposed from outside and depended ultimately, as the events of 1989 illustrated, on Soviet backing, but once installed the communist regimes rapidly made themselves virtually invulnerable internally. Much the same is true of the PRC: once Mao Zedong had militarily defeated the Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek the way was open to extending his totalitarian regime to the whole of mainland China. The question remains, however, whether these regimes should properly be described as totalitarian.

Totalitarianism in practice

It is common to describe Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the USSR, the PRC, the various communist regimes of Eastern Europe, and one or two other countries like North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam (North Vietnam before the American withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1972) as totalitarian. To a considerable extent these societies do fit Friedrich's six characteristics and Brzezinski's definition.

All are characterised by a single ideology, which claims to be all-encompassing in its applicability. There is an ideological view on all aspects of life, not simply the 'political' in a narrow sense. Thus arts are not merely harnessed for propaganda purposes, but must reflect the ideology; history assumes ideological truth and is rewritten and, if necessary, rewritten again and again to reflect that 'truth'; sport and other leisure activities are seen as a reflection of the ideology; and all expression of thought must be couched in ideological terms.

Each of the societies was or remains dominated by a single party. In a limited number of cases, such as Poland and the PRC, other parties were permitted to exist, but subject to strict control. Moreover, the single or dominant party is committed to the official ideology and the state apparatus is penetrated by or subject to party control. The dominance of a single individual obviously characterised the Soviet Union under Stalin, Germany under Hitler, Italy under Mussolini, and the PRC under Mao, but other dominant leaders emerged elsewhere – Tito in Yugoslavia, Enver Hoxha in Albania, Kim Il-sung in North Korea, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and Fidel Castro in Cuba, although the position is less clear in other cases. However, after the demise of their leaders Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany collapsed in military defeat and the successors of Stalin, Mao, Hoxha, and Ho Chi Minh were and are less secure. Similarly, although clear leaders emerged in all the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe and Deng Xiao Ping became the dominant figure in the PRC, none was as secure as Stalin, Hitler and Mao. The Italian Fascist and the Nazi regimes were heavily dependent on their respective leaders and it is doubtful whether they would have survived the peaceful demise of Mussolini and Hitler. In the Soviet Union Khrushchev successfully resisted attempts to overthrow him from within the Communist party, before eventually succumbing to a party coup in 1964. His successor Leonid Brezhnev secured a firm grip on the party, but it never assumed Stalinist proportions and none of Stalin's successors

achieved his dominance. Indeed, in all communist regimes the party has been the vehicle of leader dominance.

The use of terror, backed by a widespread network of informers, encouraging informing (even from within the family), and generating an atmosphere of suspicion and fear, is also common to these societies. Police powers were enormous, often used arbitrarily, so that no one felt safe, and ultimately justice was conceived in terms of loyalty to the ideology, the party and, often above all, to the leader. Periodic purges reinforced the system, and fear of the concentration camp and the gulag, or worse, was ever present.

Control of all means of communication, especially the media, was crucial. Indoctrination, particularly through the education system, was widespread and the dissemination of information strictly controlled, not simply by preventing the 'wrong' information from reaching individuals, but in ensuring the provision of 'correct' information in appropriate ideological form. In Ceaucescu's Romania, for instance, all typewriters had to be registered and contacts with foreign tourists reported to the police within twenty-four hours.

Both the police and the armed forces were subject to strict control and the principal means of force were firmly in the hands of the state. The police, particularly the secret police, were a crucial means of societal control and the military clearly subordinate to the political leaders. Armed resistance was not necessarily impossible, but highly unlikely. The military was not only subject to indoctrination, but heavily penetrated by politically reliable individuals. In the case of communist regimes this was formally so through a network of political commissars.

In order to meet the policy objectives of the single or dominant party the economy was subject to central direction. Communist regimes especially had elaborate economic plans, usually covering five-year periods, with detailed production targets. Other societal organisations were subject to state control and there was widespread ideological penetration of all aspects of society.

The term 'totalitarian' clearly implies an absolute rather than a relative state of affairs, but for analytical purposes this is a disadvantage, since not only can it be argued that no society has ever been totalitarian in the absolute sense, but it means that a given society must be classified as totalitarian or not. Contradictory as it may appear, therefore, there is much to be said for using totalitarianism as an ideal type against which particular cases can be measured. This

allows more fruitful comparisons between cases and of particular cases over time. In this sense, for example, Nazi Germany may be said to have been more totalitarian than Fascist Italy and the Stalinist Soviet Union more totalitarian than the post-Stalinist Soviet Union. This also makes sense in considering various aspects of political behaviour, especially socialisation. In the absolute sense socialisation in a totalitarian society must be totally successful, yet the experience of Eastern Europe under communism should serve as a reminder that the reality is more complex.

Applied therefore as a tendency rather than an absolute, totalitarianism is a more useful analytical tool. Least of all should it be used pejoratively, even though regimes normally associated with it are widely regarded as abhorrent. As an analytical tool it could, possibly usefully, be applied to fundamentalist Islamic regimes, such as Iran after the fall of the Shah. Muslims do not, of course, accept that their religion is an ideology, but Iran (and to a lesser extent some other Islamic states) share many of the characteristics associated with totalitarian states – an all-pervasive ‘ideology’, a single party or its equivalent, something close to a monopoly of communications, and extensive control over the operation of society.

Totalitarianism also focuses attention on the role of ideology and values and it should be acknowledged that all societies are pervaded by definable sets of values, but that key characteristic of totalitarian societies is that no conflict is permitted between rival or alternative sets of values. It is therefore misguided to see totalitarianism itself as an ideology; it is the relationship between ideology and society that characterises totalitarianism.

DEMOCRACY

‘Democracy’ and its adjectival antonym, ‘undemocratic’, are among the most widely used words in the political vocabulary, and possibly among the most disputed. With the exception of a small handful, such as Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, all modern regimes have claimed or claim to be democratic. Is it therefore a meaningless term? What is almost certainly the most famous definition of democracy illustrates the problem. In his Gettysburg address Abraham Lincoln spoke of ‘government of the people, by the people, and for the people’.

It may be assumed that ‘government of the people’ presents no problem, but beyond that difficulties arise which allow for wide-spread variations in interpretation. If it is conceded that in populous and complex modern societies not all the people may regularly or frequently be engaged in government (though not all would concede it), then ‘government by the people’ may be interpreted to mean governing in the name of the people or through their representatives, but how are such claims to be substantiated? Similarly, ‘government for the people’ may be no more than sheer altruism, but it may also mean claiming to know better than the people, knowing where their true interests lie. It is such claims that allow so many disparate regimes and societies to assume the epithet ‘democratic’.

Historically democracy can be traced back to the Greeks, but neither Plato nor Aristotle looked favourably upon it. Plato feared the demagoguery that he associated with democracy and Aristotle regarded it as the perverted form of the rule of the many, although Aristotle’s ideal of the polity or responsible citizenry has much in common with modern ideas of democracy. Similarly, in the eighteenth century democracy was widely equated with the rule of the mob and the Founding Fathers of the United States were not believers in democracy; they too feared the mob, regarding it as ignorant and therefore strongly inclined to irresponsibility. Individuals had, they believed, rights – freedom of speech and association, freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, and freedom of religion – but these were the rights of free men and citizens, and citizens had responsibilities as well as rights. Those rights, now normally seen as an essential part of democracy, in fact preceded modern ideas about democracy, as does the right to vote. In many of the New England townships direct democracy was indeed practised (and continues to be practised) through town meetings that decided particular issues and elected office-holders, but the right to participate was not universal. The right to vote in various elections, now regarded as absolutely fundamental to democracy, not only excluded women, but was linked to the ownership of property or subject to other limitations. Democracy was therefore treated with, at worst, outright hostility and, at best, fear and suspicion, so that its positive image is historically relatively recent.

Clearly democracy involves the consent of the governed and of the implementation of the popular will. Contract theorists like Locke (1924 [1690]) certainly favoured the idea of an elected government,

but effectively introduced the other side of the democratic coin, that of popular control. Rousseau's ideal (1913 [1762]) was the Greek city-state in which all citizens (only a minority of the population in reality) could participate directly in making decisions, but he regarded this ideal as impractical in the Europe of his day, seeing only the island of Corsica as being a possible location for its fulfilment. In particular, Rousseau did not regard the idea of representative democracy as an adequate substitute for direct democracy. None the less, this is the principal form that democracy has taken in the modern world.

In practice, democracy is best seen as a principle involving popular consent and control on the part of the governed which may find expression in various political practices and forms of government. Like totalitarianism, it is more fruitful to see democracy in relative rather than absolute terms, so that it is possible to conceive degrees of democracy. This raises two fundamental questions. How is popular consent to be elicited? And how is popular control or accountability to be achieved?

The most obvious answer is by means of elections, but elections generate a whole series of further questions. Who should be allowed to vote? What is to be decided by elections? If it is to choose representatives, what should be the basis of representation – territory, population, interests, or what? How frequently should elections be held? What type of electoral system should be used? Should the will of a simple or relative majority (the largest number) prevail, or should an absolute majority of more than 50 per cent be necessary for certain decisions? Who should be able to decide when elections are held or should elections be held at fixed intervals? All these questions raise issues to which there are a multiplicity of answers, some of which are shown in Figure 4.3.

The democratic mechanisms available may be direct in the sense that the people (usually those who constitute the electorate) participate directly in deciding something, such as choosing a leader or determining a policy issue through a referendum. The device of recall allows a specified proportion of the electorate to demand that an elected representative or office-holder present himself or herself for re-election before the normal term of office has expired, and the initiative is a similar variation on the referendum, allowing the electorate to demand that an issue be decided by a direct vote. Both devices are used in a number of American states and both may be

Consent		Control	
Elections	} direct	Elections	} direct
Referenda		Referenda	
Initiatives		Initiatives	
Recalls		Recalls	
Legislative representation	} indirect	Rule of law	} indirect
Pressure politics		Judicial review	
		Legislative scrutiny	
		Ombudsman systems	

Figure 4.3 Democracy: consent and control mechanisms.

used to elicit consent and exert control. There are also indirect means of consent and control in that they may operate through intermediaries, in the form of organisations (such as the legislature or the judicial system), individuals (such as legislative representatives or an ombudsman), principles (such as the rule of law), or devices (such as judicial review).

It is therefore misleading to define modern democracy simply in terms of majority rule. The American Founding Fathers, precisely because they were not democrats, deliberately built a number of anti-majoritarian devices into the United States Constitution by incorporating a separation of powers to prevent any one individual or group of individuals from dominating all three branches of government – the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary – and various checks and balances, such as Senate approval of presidential appointments and the President's legislative veto. A particular problem arises when a permanent or quasi-permanent majority exists based, for instance, on religion or ethnicity, leading to significant discrimination by the majority against one or more minorities. This was the situation which prevailed in Northern Ireland between 1920 and 1972 with a Protestant/Unionist majority using its numerical advantage to discriminate against the Catholic/Nationalist minority. Using de Tocqueville's famous phrase, John Stuart Mill wrote of his fear of the 'tyranny of the majority' (de Tocqueville 1966 [1835–40], pp. 231–4), especially that of the 'ignorant' or less

well-informed majority prevailing over an enlightened or better-informed minority (Mill 1887 [1840]).

Public opinion will be discussed in Chapter 9, but at this point it should be noted that in practice democracy is complicated by the very nature of public opinion, which can vary in intensity and in the extent to which it affects various individuals or sections of the public, as well as in relation to levels of information and socio-economic characteristics. Modern democracy therefore demands tolerance of others' opinions and in particular of the existence and opinions of minorities.

Furthermore, it is widely argued that various rights, including the right to vote and freedom of speech and association, are of little use if individuals or groups of individuals are suffering from high levels of social or economic inequality. Such individuals may care little about democracy or their rights and be far more concerned about survival and their material needs. Lipset (1960, 1983), for example, has argued strongly that there is a causal relationship between economic development and democracy. Using levels of income, industrialisation, urbanisation and education, he sought to demonstrate that democratic regimes developed and were sustained in those societies which had essentially met the material needs of their members. Linking the legitimacy of regimes with their material efficiency, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) suggested that a major factor in the political stability of such societies was solving what they termed 'non-bargainable' issues, such as those relating to language, religion and culture before basic economic matters are addressed. An important criticism of this view is that it is really theorising about the conditions conducive to stability rather than democracy and that it is therefore stability which is the key variable. Stability, however, is historically and contemporaneously more widespread than democracy and it is therefore more logical to suggest that stability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy.

The same applies to the political, social and economic rights widely associated with democracy: even where various rights are widely available in practice, they are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the existence of democracy (see Benn and Peters 1959; Finer 1970; Held 1987). Nor is it a matter of appropriate mechanisms, necessary as they are: ultimately democracy relates to values and attitudes and is therefore a matter of judgement not objective fact. As Edmund Burke (1883, vol. II, p. 29) wrote in the eighteenth

century: 'If any ask what free government is, I answer, that for any practical purpose, it is what people think so.'

THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER: AN OVERVIEW

Only elite theory and Marxist theory purport to offer a universal description and explanation of the distribution of power. Totalitarianism and democracy offer descriptions and explanations only for particular societies. Both elite and Marxist theories have something to say about totalitarianism and democracy. Mosca lent support to Mussolini's Fascist regime and the ideas of both Mosca and Pareto have been associated with the concept of the totalitarian state. Some Marxists not only readily identified Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany as totalitarian, but also similarly regarded the USSR under Stalin. Elite theorists are often contemptuous of democracy, but some see it as a means of rejuvenating the elite and making it responsive to the needs of the non-elite. Schumpeter (1943, p. 269) adopts the position of a democratic elitist by defining democracy as an 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'.

Marxists also tend to be contemptuous of democracy, at least of what is termed 'bourgeois democracy'. Marx himself did not believe that democracy was compatible with a capitalist society and envisaged a Rousseau-like direct democracy, using the example of the Paris Commune of 1871 to expound his vision of a communist society which would, by definition, be democratic. In a communist society the state would be replaced by direct popular control, involving elected officials (who would be paid proletarian wages and be subject to recall) and the abolition of the police, a standing army and a distinct judiciary (all of which would be replaced by citizens who would enforce law, order and justice). Private property would be abolished, the social division of labour would end, the market and monetary economies would disappear, and a classless society would emerge. The ideal of the communist society was 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' (Marx 1989 [1875], pp. 24-87). Marx never spelled out how a communist society would come about, other than through an ill-defined 'dictatorship of the proletariat', nor how it would be sustained. However, he did

acknowledge that there would be a lower or earlier phase of communism, and a later or higher stage. Subsequently, Lenin in *The State and Revolution* argued that these two stages were socialism and communism.

Lenin's view of democracy stemmed directly from his experience of practising politics: he stressed the dictatorship of the proletariat, essentially in the form of domination by the Communist Party as the 'vanguard of the proletariat'. A crucial Leninist doctrine was that of 'democratic centralism', based on the principles of 'freedom of discussion, unity of action', so that once the Party had decided on a course of action, all should work unequivocally to realise it. In practice, democratic centralism meant the overwhelming dominance of the Party leadership, epitomised by the Stalinist period, but still applicable to the post-Stalinist communist parties of the USSR and Eastern Europe until their position was undermined by *perestroika* in the Soviet Union and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Democratic centralism could be said to continue to prevail in the People's Republic of China, but not without noting that the dominance of the Chinese Communist Party was severely disrupted by the chaos of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1969, the experience of which still reverberated well after Mao Zedong's death in 1976.

Elite theorists regard the practice of communist parties in power as indisputable evidence of a ruling class or elite in the 'socialist' societies in the USSR, the PRC and Eastern Europe. Certainly the oligarchical nature of these parties and the material privileges accorded to party *apparatchiks* and senior officials gives much credence to the claim. Although Marxists agree that the inherent contradictions of capitalist societies will inevitably cause a redistribution of power, some theorists argue that only a democratically organised but revolutionary mass movement can bring about a shift in power from the dominant capitalist class to the proletariat, others that a transformation to communism can be brought about by working within the liberal-democratic state.

The pluralist view of the distribution of power has been the subject of much criticism, but some of its leading proponents have sought to respond positively to that criticism, especially by acknowledging that the state develops its own interests and should not be seen as a neutral arbiter between competing interests. It is also accepted that the distribution of resources between competing

interests is far from equal and that social and economic inequalities may restrict political equality and therefore the operation of democracy (see Lindblom 1977 and Dahl 1985). In addition, it can be argued that the pluralist contribution has been further enriched by the recognition of what have become known as new social movements (NSMs). These are pressure or interest groups concerned with issues such as feminism and the environment, cutting across traditional socio-economic cleavages, less formally organised, and emphasising protest rather than operating through traditional political machinery. NSMs will be discussed further in the context of political participation in Chapter 6.

One attempt to link all four sets of ideas about the distribution of power was made by Kornhauser (1959). He posited four Weberian ideal types of society, each depending on the relationship between elites and non-elites. Kornhauser argued that the form of society depended, on the one hand, on the extent to which elites were accessible, that is, open to ideas and influence from the non-elite, and, on the other, the extent to which non-elites were available for manipulation by the elite. From this relationship four types of society emerged. The first was a communal society – a traditional society with a closed elite and non-elites bound together by ties of kinship and community and therefore not available for manipulation. The second was pluralist society, characterised by competing elites, open to ideas and influence, and non-elites with diverse commitments and therefore unavailable for manipulation. The third was totalitarian society, which Kornhauser called 'a state of total mobilisation' of the non-elite by the elite, but in which the elite is not open to ideas and influence by the non-elites. The fourth type was mass society, characterised by a lack of communal or societal ties, enabling the elite to manipulate non-elites and the non-elites to manipulate elites. Kornhauser gives as examples of societies showing tendencies towards the mass society the United States during various populist movements in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the depression years after 1929, and the McCarthy period in the 1950s, and the Poujadists in France in the 1950s, but his classic example is the Weimar Republic, which, he argues, shows all the characteristics of the mass society.

Kornhauser's analysis provides one particular way of looking broadly at the distribution of power under different conditions. In general, he argues that most societies exhibit a mixture of two or

more of his ideal types. What he demonstrates principally, however, is the value of an eclectic view rather than attempting to take a single, uniform view of how power is distributed in societies in general. There is thus a need to recognise that different models of the distribution of power fit different societies, that more than one model may be applicable, and that the applicability of a particular model is likely to vary significantly over time. This last point is vividly illustrated by the events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989 and since: what often seemed immutable changed so rapidly that few foresaw it and only the bold feel able to predict with any certainty what new distribution of power will emerge. Nor should it be assumed that a pluralist or a democratic model will become the norm, nor that the capitalist societies of the West will be the economic role models for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Those capitalist societies themselves face significant change, especially from the growing economic, social and political influences of the EC and the consequences of the free-trade agreement between the United States and Canada, quite apart from the potential impact of relations with the Third World and environmental factors, such as global warming and the exploitation of the earth's natural resources. Power and its distribution are not static but dynamic concepts and any analysis of political behaviour within societies, which is the subject of Part III, must take account of that.

PART III

POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR
AND SOCIETY
