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The Art of the Possible – The Bullet or the Ballot Box

Defining Politics in the Emerging Global Order

Olle Frödin

Abstract: In the wake of globalisation different social science disciplines have found themselves entering into similar terrains of inquiry. However, each discipline tends to draw on different and often contradictory understandings of the political, and of related notions such as power. The lack of a shared notion of politics may prevent social scientists from gaining important insights from other disciplines. In this paper I therefore seek to demonstrate that seemingly contradictory notions of politics are better seen as different forms of political interaction. I define politics as activities through which people and groups articulate, negotiate, implement and enforce competing claims. By distinguishing different types of claims made within different institutional circumstances, I outline three basic forms of political interaction: governance, stalemate and social dilemma, and give examples of how each of these forms of political interaction has emerged in response to the global integration of market in different circumstances and areas of the world.

Keywords: constructivism, definition of politics, governance, institutions, political theory, social ontology

The study of politics is plagued by conceptual confusion to such an extent that scholars of politics do not even agree on the nature of their subject of study. Some confine politics to the doings of actors in the formal political sphere, while others see politics everywhere, suggesting that family matters and monetary phenomena are always and everywhere political (e.g. Kirshner 2003). Such conceptual confusion is problematic but perhaps unavoidable since politics, along with other key social science notions such as democracy and justice, are typical examples of 'essentially contested concepts', that is concepts 'the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users' (Gallie 1956: 169). Defining politics is controversial and difficult, not only because different understandings of politics carry with them different implications for methodology, but also because 'defining politics and specifying the content of the discipline are themselves

political processes' as Leftwich (2004: 5) points out. Yet, despite such defini-
tional difficulties, a sufficient degree of consensus on the meaning of politics
was once reached so as to enable a division of the modern social sciences into
separate disciplines such as politics, economics, sociology and anthropology.
The political sphere was thereby analytically disconnected from economics
and social relations, and political, social and economic aspects of human life
came to be studied in separate disciplines, as Wolf (1982: 7–8) notes. Within
the discipline of politics, another distinction was drawn between two different
types of political order, 'ungoverned interaction' or anarchy in the case of
international relations, and governmental authority with regard to domestic
politics (Coward 2006). Given the relative stability of these disciplinary
boundaries, the concept of politics, at least when used as a basis for discipli-
nary divisions, is perhaps best described as 'contingently contested' (Ball
1988). Contingent contestability 'remains a permanent possibility even though
it is, in practice, actualized only intermittently', as Ball (1988: 14) argues. In
the last few decades, worldly and scholarly developments have called into
question established notions of politics and concomitant disciplinary bound-
aries. The constitution and governance of the global political order have
changed in such as way as to challenge established paradigms and disciplinary
boundaries. In the previously dominant state-centric perspective, which pre-
sumed clear disciplinary boundaries, the world is constituted by states claim-
ing a monopoly of violence within their borders. In this view, states interact in
the absence of a global government leading to episodic wars between them in
the event that they cannot cooperate. In the wake of globalisation, it is neces-
sary to acknowledge that increasing transnational connectivity has changed
both the constitution and governance of the global political order (Coward
2006). In a world in which states are best understood as 'disaggregated' sets
of organisations arranged in various networks, many of which are transnational
– where the OECD countries in practice constitute a security complex, where
low-intensity conflicts involving insurgents who do not operate as disciplined
armies are much more common than interstate wars, where transnational cor-
porations and transnational criminal networks may play major roles in the
development of societies, and where it consequently is difficult to distinguish
clear boundaries between public, private, domestic and international realms –
disciplines like international relations, criminology and domestic politics no
longer focus on separate terrains of scholarly inquiry. Social scientists from
various disciplines are now increasingly focusing on how polities and actors
at different levels respond to a dominant global political order (Neumann and
Sending 2007).

As different social science disciplines and branches enter into similar ter-
rains of inquiry, the potential for interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation seems
greater than ever. However, different disciplines carry with them different
understandings of the political, and of related notions such as power. As a
result, a wide variety of different and often contradictory understandings of

politics, and of the nature and role of power and coercion in political processes, circulate in the contemporary social sciences. For instance, normatively oriented scholars may define politics as reasoned deliberation within formal decision-making fora. By contrast, realist IR specialists taking a Clausewitzian perspective view war as a continuation of politics by other means, while Weberians may see the establishment of a monopoly of violence as a precondition for politics. More recently, social scientists drawing on the works of Foucault see politics practically everywhere. Thus, there is a lack of clarity as to whether the use of force implies the breakdown of politics, whether the establishment of a monopoly of violence is a precondition for politics, whether politics is confined to specific arenas or if it is to be found in all areas of social life. While it can be argued that this conceptual confusion merely reflects the fact that scholars seek to do different things with their respective notions, the lack of a shared understanding of what counts as politics may prevent social scientists from gaining important insights from other disciplines in trying to make sense of the contemporary world order.

In this paper, I therefore set out to clarify the conceptual confusion regarding to concept of politics by outlining a theoretical framework through which seemingly contradictory understandings can be seen as different forms of politics rather than mutually exclusive activities. I begin with a review of some central social science understandings of politics, mainly government-centred, classical and various power-centred perspectives. I then introduce the conceptual framework and use it as a basis to outline three basic types of political interaction. Finally, I give examples of how these different types of interactions have emerged in response to globalisation in different areas and circumstances.

Classical and Modern Notions of Politics

According to the classical Greek understanding, politics refers to the ways in which free citizens of a state or polis govern themselves through public debate. In this view, politics is seen as an activity through which collective decisions are made through discussion and persuasion. Accordingly, politics breaks down in cases where conflicting parties resort to coercion rather than persuasion (Crick 2004: 73). In line with the classical notion, Crick (2004: 67) defines politics as a 'distinctive form of rule whereby people act together through institutionalized procedures to resolve differences, to conciliate diverse interests and values and to make public policies in the pursuit of common purposes'. Consequently, he concurs with Arendt that the use of violence implies the breakdown of politics, not its continuation by other means (Crick 2004: 70).

Government-centred notions are probably the most commonly used in twentieth-century social science. They differ from classical understandings in that they are linked to the potential use of force on the part of a government branch that enjoys the monopoly of legitimate violence. Weber formulated

the most influential government-centred notion of politics, according to which a political community is one in which the administrative staff of a ruling organisation 'successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order' (Weber 1968: 54). In this perspective, politics is made possible by the establishment of a monopoly of legitimate violence, and is confined to specific domains. Thus, politics denotes public deliberation and decision-making on collectively binding rules concerning issues such as tax policy, welfare provision, law reform, education and the provision of various public goods. Since the government possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence, it is capable of compelling obedience from those who are not willing to comply with the binding rules (Leftwich 2004: 14; Weale 2004: 87). The fact that governments may enforce laws through the use of force suggests that government-centred understandings are closely related to power-centred notions of politics, although the latter is wider in scope.

The power-centred view of politics emerged in the early-modern era in conjunction with what Viroli (1992) calls 'the revolution in the concept of politics'. When a recognisable practice of political theorisation re-emerged in Europe in the thirteenth century, politics signified the art of good government or, more specifically, the art of upholding legitimate and just constitutional rule in a community. The meaning of the concept changed following the rise of the doctrine of 'reason of state', which asserted that the preservation of the state, in the sense of domination based on force, can be maintained by any means, just or unjust, fair or foul. While Machiavelli did not intend to dismiss the classical notion of politics, his major work, *The Prince*, played an important role in changing the meaning of the concept of politics in that it publicly articulated the notion of state reason and gave it a certain degree of intellectual and philosophical status. In the wake of the revolution in the concept of politics, the term acquired a mainly negative connotation as a dirty business centred on struggles for power and domination (Viroli 1992).

In twentieth-century political science, questions concerning the distribution of power in society have been seen as defining features of political phenomena, and the most influential definitions of politics of this period were consequently centred on power. For instance, Lasswell (1958) viewed politics as a matter of 'who gets what, when, how' while Easton defined politics as 'the authoritative allocation of values' (Easton 1953). On the basis of power-centred definitions, it is difficult to discern the limits of politics and, thus, to distinguish political science from disciplines like economics and sociology. This demarcation problem has become immensely more complicated as social scientists adopted new concepts of power in the 1970s. For instance, Lukes' (1974) theory of power extended the concept to include culture and institutions, thus challenging one-dimensional conceptions focusing on the capability of an actor to carry out his or her will despite resistance from others, as well as two-dimensional understandings of power in the sense of the capacity

to control and set political agendas. According to Lukes' radical view, power is located in collectivities sustaining institutions rather than in the hands of individuals, and can therefore be found even in situations where open conflicts are absent. The matter of power and the political was further complicated as many researchers subsequently turned to the work of Foucault in an attempt to go beyond Lukes' three-dimensional view of power (Gunn 2006). Foucault's understanding of power differs from that of Lukes' in that Foucault did not believe that power is possessed by social classes. Instead, power permeates all social relations and is therefore not 'localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth' (Foucault 1980: 98). Rather than studying shifts in power between groups and actors historically, Foucault was interested in the exercise of power at the micro-level. Power, according to Foucault, stems from abstract political rationalities rather than from individuals and groups with specific interests. By focusing on the 'micro-physics' of power, Foucault rejected notions of social power as located in specific bodies, such as the Crown, the Parliament, or the ruling classes. Foucault thus attacked both government-centred notions of power focusing on sovereignty and Marxist understandings highlighting dominant classes or coalitions of classes that use states as their instrument of rule. In the Foucauldian perspective on politics, focus is not on parties, classes or ideologies but on techniques of rule and strategies and practices through which governance is achieved. Consequently, in the Foucauldian perspective political change involves shifts in governmental rationality and the techniques of rule, rather than shifts in policy or changing class alignments (Gunn 2006).

Contemporary debates are sometimes confused by the fact that scholars may draw on either classical, government-centred or Foucauldian notions of politics. For instance, in a paper comparing how liberal scholars like Rawls, Honig and Connolly and the illiberal philosopher Carl Schmitt address problems of intractable and intolerable disagreement, Skorupska concludes that they all see politics as a solution. This may sound paradoxical but is explained by the fact that they use very different notions of politics. A disagreement is intractable and intolerable in cases where there is disagreement over which right should be protected in cases where two actions are conflicting, and where there seems to be no way of reaching rational consensus to settle the conflict in a non-coercive manner acceptable to all. In their various ways of addressing this problem, Rawls, Honig and Connolly fall back upon a normative definition of politics as a non-coercive activity based on reason and reflection through which 'the elementary problem of human living-together' is settled by peaceful means. By contrast, Carl Schmitt did not believe in peaceful, rational solutions to problems of intractable disagreement. In his view, peaceful rational solutions were only viable when politicians shared similar perspectives and where controversial questions could be excluded from the political domain. Schmitt held that in case rational consensus to intractable and intolerable disagreements is not possible to achieve, a decision, enforced through

coercion, must be made. For Schmitt, such decisions are what the political is ultimately about (Skorupska 2008).

This brief review has shown that contemporary scholars use very different and sometimes contradictory notions of politics. While some view the establishment of a monopoly of violence as a precondition for politics, others see politics as a peaceful activity founded on reasoned deliberation within specific decision-making domains, thus excluding the potential use of force as a defining feature. Most twentieth-century political scientists viewed politics as an essentially conflict-ridden activity concerning the distribution of resources and influence. More recently, scholars have adopted notions of power through which they see politics everywhere in society, even in the absence of conflicts. Against this background it is not clear whether cooperation counts as politics, whether politics is confined to specific arenas or whether it can be found in all areas of social life, whether it ultimately relies on violence and, thus, whether it refers to competition for power by any means, or whether it is a peaceful activity by definition.

Is Politics Everywhere?

These definitional differences point to the challenge of defining politics taxonomically. A taxonomic definition of politics requires the establishment of a criterion indicating what is distinctive about all cases of politics. If by politics we refer to government or governance, the definition may become too wide, in that schools and banks also have government and governance without usually being considered as political organisations. The use or potential use of force by the government is another criterion, but this may lead us to define politics too narrowly, in that it links politics to a specific institutional structure characteristic of a particular historical period in Europe. One may also define politics in terms of conflicts over power, but we then need a further criterion defining which conflicts would count as political (Nicholson 2004: 45).

Drawing on the later works of Wittgenstein, some scholars have questioned the possibility of defining politics in taxonomic terms. From this viewpoint, politics is a cluster term that refers to family of properties of which none is essential. Politics comprises a wide range of phenomena loosely connected in a 'family resemblance'. The term 'politics' thus lacks a single common property required for class terms. In countering this view, Frohock (1978) argues that politics can be defined by means of two core terms, namely 'directiveness' and 'aggregation'. All political phenomena seem to involve aggregations, – collections of agents that act on one another, that is 'directing' one another's behaviour. Although this is a wide enough definition, the dilemma of defining politics remains unsolved. This is because the core terms of politics, 'directiveness' and 'aggregation', are necessary but not sufficient criteria. Hence, tennis leagues can be directive aggregations without being political, as Fro-

hock (1978) points out, meaning that we still need further criteria to define politics. Recognising the problem of defining politics in a too narrow manner, recent works have simply acknowledged that politics may be found everywhere in social life. For instance, Squires (2004: 119) argues 'politics is everywhere because there is no realm of life immune to relations of conflict and power'. Similarly, Leftwich holds 'politics consists of all activities of conflict (peaceful or not), negotiation and co-operation over the use and distribution of resources, whether they may be found within or beyond formal institutions, on a global level or within the family, involving two or more people (Leftwich 2004: 15). White (1993) adopts a similar view of politics as a 'process whereby power is mobilized and exercised to achieve individual, institutional or collective goals'. In this perspective, politics pervades society and the economy. White holds that markets can be seen as complex political systems with their own specific distributions of power and diverse sets of power relations, in which market actors seek to adjust the rules of the game to promote their own interests, or use their control over economic assets to constrain the choices and opportunities of other actors (White 1993). In a similar vein, Kirshner (2003) argues that monetary phenomena are always and everywhere political. Such broad definitions of the political beg the question of what we are to do with them. Even though it can be argued that politics is everywhere, what analytical purpose does it serve to equate social and economic interaction in general with politics?

I believe that while power can be found everywhere in social life, not all power relations are by definition political. Politics, thus, is not everywhere. However, all social relations may become politicised. In the following, I outline a conceptual framework through which this line of argument will be clarified.

Institutions and Social Interaction

The mere existence of power relations does not necessarily entail conflict. In most areas of social life, institutionalised power relations are generally accepted and most interaction within institutional environments is therefore peaceful. A brief discussion on the ontology of social reality will clarify this statement. Searle (1996: 7–12) distinguishes between 'observer- independent' features, – features of the world that are entirely independent of human attitudes and observer relative features, that is institutions, like money, parliaments, property, marriage and elections, that only exist in social relations. Since institutions depend on shared understandings, e.g. subjective attitudes, for their existence, they can only be maintained as long as they enjoy a requisite degree of collective acceptance (Searle 2001: 207). Institutional facts exist within frameworks of constitutive rules that enable various organised social activities. Institutions also determine various deontic powers, that is rights, duties, obligations, authorisations, permissions, empowerments, requirements

and certifications (Searle 2005: 10). Deontic powers are linked to different types of constitutive rules. For instance, Ostrom (2005) distinguishes various forms of rules, such as participation rules and decision rules, which determine what those governed by the rules are allowed to do and not do. By establishing rules that specify various rights and obligations of different actors, institutions determine different power relations. Rights, obligations and power relations, as well as interests tend to be linked to different identities. Since actors have multiple identities and roles that they bring into play in different situations, interests vary according to the context. For example, an individual may in the course of a day invoke the identity of, or become identified as, customer, seller, citizen, voter, family member, relative, father, employee, man, friend, Belgian, white, Flemish or worker. The kind of identification usually deter-mines in which terms people define their individual or collective interests. Each identity usually comes with a set of formal or informal rights, obliga-tions, powers and norms of appropriateness and repertoires of socially accept-able practices that apply to different social situations (Davis 1992: 11; Wendt 1994: 385). For instance, it is usually socially acceptable for actors who iden-tify themselves as buyers and sellers in the market to act in strategic and max-imising ways, but within formal legal constraints, vis-à-vis each other. Thus, within markets, actors may be expected to be profit-maximisers, and they therefore develop strategies in line with this expectation. However, the same actors are usually expected to act on the basis of solidarity when they are iden-tified as friends or family members. As Davis (1992: 46) notes, people may indeed be profit-motivated as consumers, but as parents they usually have little thought of profit when they care for their children. Thus, actors tend to invoke different identities associated with different logics of action in different institutional settings (Frodin 2009).

On the basis of experience and learning processes, actors tend to develop rationalities and strategies that are sensitive to different institutional contexts. Thus institutionalised roles and identities, such as those of buyer and seller, parent, or citizen, official and politician, function as scripts that inform actors what to do, and what others are likely to do, in different situations. In this way, institutions establish different agreed-upon situation definitions, accord-ing to which actors invoke particular roles and logics of action in different institutional contexts. In this paper, such shared situation definitions will be called 'transaction domains'. The term transaction domain refers to a mutu-ally agreed-upon definition of a situation according to which a particular logic of interaction, exchange or decision-making is considered socially acceptable Transaction domains lay down particular routines according to which certain logics of action, such as profit-maximisation, relational ratio-nality, legal rationality, reciprocity, commitment, duty and so on, are consid-ered appropriate or lawful. Moreover, each transaction domain is associated with different deontic powers, namely rights, obligations, permissions, autho-risations and empowerments, pegged to a particular role or identity. Power

and authority therefore tend to be differentially distributed within different domains. Hierarchical forms of governance may be accepted in some domains, whereas consensual forms of decision-making are required in others. For instance, civil servants may be obliged to comply with orders, while members of a political committee are expected to make decisions in a more consensual manner (Frodin, 2009).

In everyday life people tend to encounter a range of different transaction domains in which they draw on different roles, identities and forms of decision-making. As consumers, family members, politicians, voters or civil servants, people enter into different transaction domains where they have different rights and obligations and where they consequently act according to different logics of action. For example, in a liberal-democratic, capitalist welfare state, actors may carry out different informal obligations as friends or family members; they accept that most rights to make collective decisions are delegated to politicians and officials; they may invoke their rights as citizens in relation to different welfare institutions while they simultaneously acknowledge the authority of public officials; they also recognise that most private goods are allocated via the market, and that 'democracy stops at the factory gates' as the well-known aphorism goes. This suggests that liberal-democratic societies are not democratic in all respects. Rather, in some domains, such as the corporate sector, the family, and in various branches of the civil administration and the military, hierarchical forms of decision-making are generally accepted. Democratic decision-making is only expected in some domains, of which the parliament is the most notable. Political transaction domains may exist separately from market and civil society domains given that domain consensus has been established on such an institutional structure. Domain consensus is a concept borrowed from organisation theory (Thompson 1967: 27). We here use this term to signify the acceptance of a set of transaction domains within a particular area of social life. This definition applies to expectations about what actors will and will not do in certain social situations. Domain consensus is established when interacting actors share similar cognitive dispositions regarding behavioural expectations, rights and obligations that apply to a set of transaction domains (Frodin, 2009).

Complex institutional orders are made up of a multitude of transaction domains that structure social relations in different ways, each of which cannot rely solely on the probability of third-party enforcement. Most people accept a shared 'script' according to which they are officially expected to invoke different logics of action in the roles of consumer, party member, citizen, public official, friend, relative, politician and private company employee. This means that institutions must be collectively accepted or complied with, reluctantly, carelessly or willingly, not only by groups in control of coercive means but by a wider stratum of the population. This suggests that much power is in the hands of ordinary people who may restrain elite actions. For instance, people may find it hard to accept that particular logics of exchange, such as market

principles, are applied to certain domains of social life, such as the higher education or health-care sectors.

Having outlined this basic framework, the paper turns to the question of distinguishing politics from other forms of social interaction.

Governance and Politics

All domains of social life may indeed be considered political, that is politicised, but only if someone questions a certain institutionalised practice or an entire institutional order and calls for reforms or revolutionary changes. For instance, power relations in the family or in private companies may be politicised. However, as long as a specific institution or practice is generally accepted, we may speak of governance. Governance here denotes the coordination and conciliation of interdependent activities via institutions. For instance, markets and bureaucracies can be employed to allocate goods and provide public services without anyone questioning this state of affairs. We may then speak of governance founded on a mixture of markets and administrative planning. Governance refers to processes in which different actors and organisations pursue their own goals and retain their autonomy, while they simultaneously orient their actions towards common outcomes. Cooperative relationships, or institutionalised forms of interaction, are prerequisites for governance. This implies that governance requires domain consensus as well as goal consensus. From this viewpoint, everyday practices involving institutions, such as monetary phenomena, are not always and everywhere political unless someone openly questions why, for instance, central banks are independent of parliamentary control. A certain institutional structure is consequently not considered political unless it is politicised. In other words, while this framework remains open-ended as to which social relations may become politicised, it does not claim that politics is everywhere by definition. Only if all social institutions are politicised can politics be found everywhere.

While political actions are not necessarily confined to a specific arena, they usually involve the making of claims. Politics, in its very basic form, is about claims-making. Political claims are made with reference to someone else. For instance, sovereignty claims would be meaningless in the absence of others aspiring to establish sovereignty. Claims imply counterclaims or contestation, otherwise there would be no point in making them, as Sheehan (2006) points out. Politics, then, can be defined as an activity through which 'individuals and groups articulate, negotiate, implement, and enforce competing claims' to social change or to maintain status quo (Sheehan 2006: 3). Such a definition may include both classical understandings of politics as well as concepts of the political related to the potential use of force. It is possible that neither John Rawls nor Carl Schmitt would have denied that their respective notions of politics include people making various claims. The difference between classical

notions centred on reasoned deliberation and power-centred notions of politics concerns the basis upon which claims are made, and the means by which they are defeated or defended. When political claims are made, actors tend to appeal to some principle, standard of justice and/or a readiness to take some kind of action (Sheehan 2006). The character of politics is determined by the kind of powers that the claims-makers possess, appeal to and employ. Thus, the ways in which claims are made, and the power upon which they are based, are of crucial significance for the character of politics. By singling out different types of claims, and different institutional contexts in which they are made, we may distinguish different types of politics.

Tilly (1976) distinguishes three types of claims. Firstly, competitive actions claim something – a piece of land or an asset – that is also claimed by other groups, defined by the claims-maker as rivals, competitors or participants in the same contest. Secondly, reactive collective actions consist of collective efforts to reassert institutionalised claims when they are violated or challenged by someone else. Finally, proactive claims have not previously been made, and may aim at higher wages, better working conditions, civil rights or a widening of existing channels for political decision-making.

An additional distinction can be made between formal and informal political claims. By formal activities we refer to activities relying on rules and procedures that are codified, communicated and enforced through channels widely accepted as official, unlike informal institutions, which tend to be unwritten, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels (Helmke 2004). Actors and groups can make claims and engage in activities that rely upon a shared formal institutional order or ignore it or defect from the formal rules of the game. A critical question regarding the stability of contemporary institutional orders concerns whether most economic and political activities rely upon, or are harmonious with, formal institutions. In a system of mass democracy, a critical mass of people must accept the formal channels for political expression and use them to air their voices and express their collective interests. Discontented groups have to accept domain consensus and seek to change the character of the formal order, rather than openly contest it. Making claims within formal constraints means accepting domain consensus. Formal political claims may concern the articulation of policy, or aim at changing the existing institutional order through constitutional amendments. Informal political claims can be expressed in a variety of ways. Discontented groups may violate the law, revolutionaries may aim at major institutional transformations and insurgents may engage in informal warfare in which they do not operate as disciplined armies. This means that institutionalised channels for political interaction are bypassed, contested or ignored.

In the next section, I combine the concepts introduced above so as to distinguish different types of political interaction.

Governance, Stalemate and Social Dilemma

Conventional liberal democratic politics confined to specific domains, such as Parliaments, are founded on a particular type of domain consensus. This type of politics requires that formal laws regulate most social and economic activities. Given this wide acceptance of the rule of law, political changes can be pursued through reasoned deliberation within formal channels of political interaction, and political decisions can then be implemented relatively uniformly across an entire society. In Crick's view, such an institutional structure is a basic requirement for political rule: 'Political rule is based upon the mutual recognition by all that there are differing interests and values to be conciliated in societies and that public procedures for reaching acceptable compromises can be institutionalized' (Crick 2004: 69–70). It follows from this perspective that politics 'is a distinctive form of rule whereby people act together through institutionalised procedures to resolve differences, to conciliate diverse interests and values and to make public policies in the pursuit of common purposes' (Crick 2004: 67). I believe that this definition is too narrow. As noted above, I view politics, in the widest definition of the term, as interrelated claims-making activities. Crick's narrow definition would deem situations in which two claims-making groups fail to conciliate their conflicting claims as non-political. Hence, according to Crick's definition of politics all claims-making activities that do not result in conciliation or peaceful solutions would be considered as non-political. I argue that forms of rule founded on domain consensus as well as goal consensus amount to governance, defined as the coordination and conciliation of interdependent activities. This suggests that in a situation in which interrelated actors manage to conciliate their conflicting claims through political interaction, they achieve governance.

Liberal-democratic rule is a form of governance to the extent that conflicting interests can be harmonised and generally acceptable compromises can be reached. However, domain consensus on a liberal democratic institutional order is not a guarantee for governance. Institutionalised channels for political interaction merely enable political exchanges. They do not guarantee that political exchange processes will result in optimal or 'rational' outcomes. Political interaction processes may result in stalemates in case the parties involved are unwilling to act rationally on a higher level of aggregation in accordance with wider collective interests. In other words, domain consensus does not necessarily entail goal consensus. Political stalemates may therefore bring about governance failures even in stable institutional environments where domain consensus has been established.

According to the argument advanced here, the classical notion of politics amounts to peaceful forms of claims-making resulting in governance, while politics also comprises a wider set of interactions, including failures to find solutions to 'the elementary problem of human living-together'. For instance, if political actors engage in competitive informal claims-making, that is if

they have not established domain consensus on channels for peaceful forms of political interaction, politics basically boils down to a social dilemma type of situation. A social dilemma develops whenever individuals in interdependent situations face choices in which 'the maximisation of short-term self-interest yields outcomes leaving all participants worse off than feasible alternatives' (Ostrom 1998: 3).

On the basis of the framework presented above, the preconditions for governance are affected by the ways in which actors define individual and collective identities and interests, and the ways in which they invoke and act on these interests in different situations. Informal institutions such as customs, status systems, gender relations and other non-organisational identities may affect formal structures in various ways. Consequently, the entire set of both formal and informal roles and identities must be taken into account in analysing politics in a particular setting. Different identities and roles may overlap and people may find it difficult to integrate them into a consistent pattern of values (Ahrne 1994). 'Informal' group loyalties and roles, such as those of a caste, may prevail over formal roles. If informal roles and interests overshadow the formal order on a major scale, formal governance regimes will collapse. From the viewpoint of this theory, there is no opposition between Putnam's (1993) statement that a strong society empowers the state and Migdal's (1988) assertion that a strong society may undermine a state. This is because Putnam and Migdal simply refer to different institutional orders. Putnam's 'strong society' operates within the confines of a formal institutional order whereas Migdal's 'strong society' is contesting it. A strong civil society, in the sense of a counter-hegemonic counterpart to the state, can only flourish in an environment where the formal institutional order is accepted and sustained by public, private and civic organisations jointly. Weak states in Migdal's sense are not sustained by formal rules since they are co-opted or contested by clans, warlords or patron–client networks that follow other rules than those formally sanctioned (Frodin, 2010).

The latter form of politics, that is competitive, informal claims-making, can be found in environments where political as well as administrative institutions are weakly established, such as in medieval and early-modern Europe and in contemporary 'failed states'. Competitive 'informal' claims-making was a dominant form of politics in medieval and early-modern Europe, where governments basically consisted of shifting coalitions among competing feudal lords or warlords, of which kings headed the most powerful coalitions. Most kings faced serious challenges to their hegemony as a great deal of power was located in city-states, craft brotherhoods, peasant communities, principalities and semi-autonomous provinces (Tilly 1976). In other words, political powers were weakly institutionalised and widely diffused. Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa a Western model of statehood carried 'the taint of being a foreign, white imposition on local, self-governing communities' (Bayly 2004: 265). This was because the specific kind of domain consensus required for the

formal model of government to function was usually not in place since informal group loyalties and roles, such as those of a kinship network, tended to prevail over formal roles. For example, Price (1975) found that officials in postcolonial Ghana, who were mandated to act in accordance with the formal rules of the bureaucracy, sometimes felt unable to ignore kinship norms that obliged them to provide jobs and favours to relatives. In cases like this, domain consensus has not been established since the informal norms of kinship overtrump the formal roles of citizen and public official. As independent states were established in sub-Saharan Africa, Western legal and political notions tended to be alien whereas informal sources of power tended to prevail. As a result, African politics have sometimes taken the form of informal claims-making on the part of patron–client networks operating in accordance with a short-term logic of reciprocity (Chabal and Daloz 1999). According to the classical notion, politics would not exist in sub-Saharan Africa since formal political institutions are weakly established or non-existent. To avoid such absurd conclusions, we may instead use the terminology introduced here and classify African politics as predominantly informal claims-making activities generating social dilemmas on the aggregated level. In order to illustrate further the practical implications of this typology, I use it to show how different responses to the predominant global political order have resulted in different outcomes across the world, depending on different initial conditions.

Political Interactions in Response to the Global Market Integration

The establishment of a global market order has forced individuals and societies to respond in various ways in the face of the enormous transformation process that followed. The character of national, regional and local responses to the onslaught of global market forces has been crucial in determining the development of societies across the world, since economic globalisation has increased both the possible profits and the price of failure to adapt, as Evans (1997) argues. Some societies have been better equipped to respond effectively to globalisation in a coordinated manner than others, depending on their initial conditions. As noted above, the preconditions for governance, in this case coordinated actions aimed at collectively reaping the benefits of global market integration, are dependent on the ways in which actors define individual and collective identities and interests, and the ways in which they invoke and act on these interests. For instance, actors may embrace the existing order and its logic and thus remain loyal to it. In the contemporary globalised world order, such identities and interests are likely to emerge among cosmopolitan, well-educated middle classes capable of moving and working across the world in the upper end of global labour market. By contrast, actors whose social standing risks being eroded by the logic of the dominant order, or whose livelihood is threatened by it, may instead resist it either through formal channels, such

as the formal political system, or informally by engaging in illegal activities or by taking up arms. Resistance may be expressed in various ways, such as nationalism or religious fundamentalism, and take various forms ranging from the rise of xenophobic parties in Europe to armed resistance in Afghanistan. Finally, some movements may seek to transform rather than reject the global order, such as transnational environmentalist movements or counter-hege-monic globalisation movements which call for social protection to address the short-comings of the dominant market order (Evans 2008)

In order for national societies or regions to respond to globalisation in line with the dominant economic logic in a coordinated way, a considerable part of the population has to embrace the existing order and the opportunity structure it presents. Such responses are favoured by certain structural conditions, and are more likely in societies where the level of education is high, where valued resources are widely dispersed, where the majority of the people are incorpo-rated into, and dependent on, a formal legal order, and where the main societal interests are mobilised into parties and civic organisations on the basis of inclusive collective identities such as class or ideology, than in societies where the general level of education is low, where valued resources are concentrated in the hands of smaller elites, where large parts of the population are margin-alised from the formal sector and where the principal societal interests are mobilised into patron-client networks on the basis of exclusive identities founded on kinship or ethnicity. Coordinated national governance within the global order requires both domain consensus and a great deal of goal consen-sus. The preconditions for such forms of governance may be very difficult to replicate since they often have evolved through long-term historical processes under conditions where nation-wide governance has been absolutely neces-sary. For instance, the Dutch system of 'consensual corporatism' is sometimes held as an example of a political system that has successfully attained gover-nance to promote economic development continuously through close cooper-ation between the public and the private sectors. According to Werlin (2003) the Dutch political system is held together by a common devotion to the poli-tics of accommodation, pragmatism and consensus, as well as a shared respect for independent experts and for the judiciary. The system of consensual cor-poratism relies upon a context-specific type of domain consensus which may partially result from the country's particular geographical location, in that cooperation in the Netherlands has always been essential in order collectively to defend the country against the sea, as Hill and Hupe (2006) point out.

Some societies such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia have, given their relatively favourable historical conditions, largely managed to attain gover-nance in response to the global integration of markets, although it is important to note that even in the most prosperous societies of the world, substantial job losses and the partial dismantling of social services have contributed to putting increasing strain on the social contract (McMichael 2004). In other areas such as in Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain, it has been more difficult to reach a

broad social accord on structural reforms required to maintain competitiveness in the global economy. This has resulted in stalemates and, eventually, increasing government debt and severe financial problems.

In yet other parts of the world, the responses to globalisation have been even more contradictory and conflicting. For instance, in India a strong, formal economy has emerged in larger cities and in smaller islands of export-oriented high-technology parks, while the majority of the working population remain in the informal sector (Frankel 2005: 625). The number of people employed in the informal sector of the economy has grown by around 4 per cent per year since 2000, while formal employment growth has been sluggish or even declining (Basile and Harriss-White 2010; Gupta 2009: 39–43). In the beginning of the 2000s, a mere 27 million Indians were employed in the formal sector, and the IT-sector, supposedly 'at the heart of India's miracle story', only employed 3 million people, according to Gupta (2009: 38). At the same time, between 83 and 93 per cent of the Indian labour force were estimated to work in the informal economy (Harriss-White 2003: 17). Thus, the globalisation process in India has been accompanied by increasing informalisation. According to Harriss-White, the informalisation of the Indian economy is partially a result of the adaptive response to global market integration on the part of a particular section of the Indian society which she calls 'the intermediate classes'. The intermediate classes are well-connected outside of the metropolitan areas, and consist of small-scale factory owners, traders, small shop-owners, local agribusiness elites and co-opted local officials. Given their political clout, they have managed to maintain their positions in the globalised era since they possess the necessary connections to do business in an environment which is highly unpredictable for an outsider. Thus, while only the most advanced sectors of the Indian economy have managed to compete globally according to the formal rules of the game, the intermediate classes have profited from the growth of the informal sector in the liberalisation era. They have maintained their power through various lobby associations and by bribing officials or co-opting positions in the public sector through family members and relatives. This type of politics is not to be seen as concerted class politics. Rather, it is a particularistic, reactive and opportunistic type of politics which aims to protect various vested interests (Harriss-White 2003: 52). Other groups in the Indian society have responded to such claims by pursuing their interests in a similar informal and particularistic manner. As a result, political claims-making activities are rarely harmonious with the formal rules of the game and often involve violence and corruption. Elections tend to revolve around the distribution of jobs and state resources to particular groups (Witsoe 2009: 65–66). Thus, instead of pursuing structural reforms and policy programmes, politicians have often employed a strategy of rewarding supporters with government employment or other public resources. Where politics have assumed this character, state governments tend to neglect pressing infrastructural, social and equity issues, thus failing to protect marginalised citizens (Jeffrey 2010: 1017–1018).

The failures of Indian public-sector organisations to provide social security and services to large numbers of poor people, in combination with considerable land acquisitions on the part of mining companies, have contributed to strengthening the armed Maoist rebels, also called the Naxalites, in North Eastern India. The history of the Naxalite Movement of India extends back to 1967 but it draws on a longer history of violent conflict between peasants and landlords. While this dimension of conflict is less prominent today, the Naxalites are primarily mobilising against 'imperialism' in the form of the consequences of the globalisation of India's economy. The Naxalite movement, which is seen as one the most serious challenges that the Indian government has ever faced, has sought to align itself with tribal peoples whose livelihood is threatened as land, forests and water are acquired for mining or power-generation projects. In order to strike down on the insurgency, the Indian government created a special police force called the 'Greyhounds' which is not bound by law, and which operates on the same terms as the Naxalites. In other words, the Indian army and police have engaged the Naxalites using the same tactics and means, thus violating the formal legal order they are to represent. Atrocities carried out by government forces and privately funded militias have frequently given people further reasons to support the Maoists, leading to a downward spiral of violence (Harriss 2010).

Unlike areas such as North-Western Europe where the preconditions for governance have been relatively favourable in that large sections of the populations are capable of reaping the benefits of global market integration, the responses to globalisation have been much more contradictory and conflict-ridden in India, since most political and economic interactions occur outside of the formal institutional order. In the absence of domain consensus and goal consensus, both public and private actors have engaged in various forms of competitive claims-making, giving rise to a social dilemma type of situation in parts of the country.

Conclusion

On the basis of the concepts used in this paper, we have distinguished three basic forms of political interaction: governance, stalemate and social dilemma. Governance denotes the coordination and conciliation of interdependent activities, and is founded on domain consensus as well as the attainment of goal consensus through processes of deliberation. Stalemate refers to political interactions taking place within institutionalised decision-making fora that does not result in governance. Finally, social dilemma refers to forms of political interaction in which actors and groups have failed to establish a shared institutional order and engage in competitive claims-making by any means at hand, including violence, leading to outcomes that leave all members of the polity worse off than feasible alternatives. A basic predicament, which philosophers

like Hobbes and Schmitt have addressed in different ways, concerns the problem of establishing domain consensus and what to do in case a group of actors systematically threaten the common order by making competitive claims through the use of violence. While Schmitt held that the sovereign must rise above the rule of law in the name of the common good in such cases, a basic and unfortunately quite common problem may well remain; if the police and the army engage in competitive claims-making on the same terms as their rivals, rather than sticking to enforcing the existing institutional order by the legal means at hand, they violate the very social contract they seek to defend. In such situations, the social order risks breaking down and the social landscape is vulnerable to chaos.

Having defined politics in its widest sense as collective claims-making through various means, this paper has shown how contradictory notions of politics commonly used by social scientists can be integrated into a coherent analytical framework. In this view, violent conflict may indeed be seen as a continuation of politics by other means, but also as a complete failure of governance, while politics according to the classical conception takes place within an institutional order on which domain consensus has been reached.

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