



Introduction to Political Science

POLS 2000

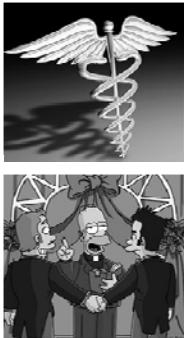
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Cross-Cutting Cleavages

- Another benefit of conflicts within a group is cross-cutting cleavages.
- When no conflict is allowed in a group, the little things that cause irritation and frustration build up.
- When that conflict erupts, it will be intense and centered around a single divide.
- If conflict is allowed, cleavages that appear within the group will not be as intense.
- The more cleavages, the more likely that any two people will be able to find some disputed issue on which they can agree, despite their other disagreements.



Cross-Cutting Cleavages



- Cross-cutting cleavages help keep the society from being divided over a single issue and keep disagreements less intense.
- They also provide a foundation for developing compromises.
- The more issues there are the more chance for trade offs—especially with lower intensity.
- Conflicts also tend to facilitate the resolution of the underlying cause of disagreement; the resolution of small issues can keep them from growing into large ones.

Conflict as a Source of Legitimacy

- Intra-group conflict can lead to the legitimacy of the group; it can enhance its structure and its leadership.
- Resolving a conflict within the group, within the structures of the group, enhances the public's confidence in the group.
- It tends to enhance the willingness to voluntarily accept the group and its structures and enhance the legitimacy of the group and its leaders.
- Some leaders might even create conflict so that the government can resolve it and establish or increase legitimacy.

Government and the Economy



- Money may not make the world go round, but it is an important political concern.
- Some may even argue that economics is the reason humans created government in the first place.
- Government is intimately tied to economics because people need to attain collective security to engage in economic enterprises.
- The relationship between politics and government seems simple.
- People tend to hold the government responsible for maintaining and improving the economy.
- In reality, it is a rich, dynamic relationship filled with subtlety, which many do not understand.

Tragedy of the Commons

- The tragedy of the commons demonstrates that when sharing a common resource, an individual's choices are intertwined with those of others using the resource.
- Even if people realize that everyone would benefit from preserving the shared resource (enlightened self interest), individuals will overexploit the commons if they believe others will cheat or take advantage of the group.
- Exploitation becomes the *rational choice*.
- The solutions for the tragedy of the commons all involve collective actions.
- To attain universal compliance, someone must police those exploiting the commons.
- Government is all about collective action; a group forms to pursue goals that cannot be attained spontaneously and would be impossible for any one individual to realize.
- The most fundamental of these goals is the collective pursuit of security.



Tragedy of the Commons



- Once a group establishes a government, it makes sense to use its mechanisms to pursue other collective goals.
- One goal is the preservation of common resources.
- It makes sense for the individuals to protect the commons if they believe that all others will do so as well.
- Government, through policing and the enforcement of laws, can make it rational for everyone to participate.
- The potential costs of defecting from the collective effort are raised.
- Since people believe that no one else will defect, they are less motivated to cheat.
- This is makes it possible to escape the tragedy of the commons.

Tragedy of the Commons

- The need to regulate the use of the commons is a basic and continuing economic role of government.
- Society uses government to control some of the means of production, the mechanisms for transforming labor into wealth, and to escape the tragedy of the commons.
- Implicit in the tragedy of the commons and in the possible solutions to it are the dynamics of capitalism and socialism.
- At a basic level, capitalism and socialism are two perspectives on who should control the means of production: individuals or society.



Karl Marx: Student of Capitalism?



"Sell a man a fish, he eats for a day, teach a man how to fish, you ruin a wonderful business opportunity." – Karl Marx

- Almost every political scientist identifies Marx as one of the most influential human political theorists.
- He focused on economics as the primary element of politics.
- Many still view Marx as a lurking threat to the capitalist society that they treasure.
- A century of intense international and domestic politics has created a mythology around Marx.
- He is deified by one side, demonized by the other, and distorted by both.
- Even when he was alive Marx was quick to announce, "I am not a Marxist."
- Among the many labels that could be applied to Marx is humanist.
- A humanist is an idealist who is interested in and motivated by concerns about the broader human condition and the quality of people's lives.

The Adolescence of Capitalism

- Marx witnessed a critical historical period in the transformation of the global economy from a peasant or feudal system to the early forms of industrial capitalism.
- Under feudalism, most production occurred within a peasant/landowner context.
- The landowner controlled and owned the land, while the peasants were little more than subsistence farmers.
- The peasants raised crops and livestock within the landlord's estate.
- They were obligated to give a substantial percentage of their production to the landlord.
- The landlord then converted it to wealth by selling or exchanging that modest surplus with others.



The Adolescence of Capitalism



"If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right." -- Henry Ford

- One key aspect of the feudal relationship was that both the landlord and the peasant needed each other.
- The result of the mutual dependency was something of a contract.
- Sometimes it was codified, while other times it was just a matter of tradition.
- Although exploitative, it was always understood that the landlord and peasant needed each other and had responsibilities.
- Under capitalism things were different.
- Capitalists used factories as the means of production, i.e., to transform labor into wealth.
- Industrial capitalism can be understood with the example of the assembly line.
- With an assembly line, complex tasks that used to take a great deal of skill are broken down into a series of small steps that were so simple that anyone could perform them.

The Adolescence of Capitalism

- Marx recognized the efficiencies of the factory.
- He also explained that removing the need for skilled and knowledgeable laborers, capitalism altered the relationship between owners of the means of production and laborers.
- Laborers became easily replicable cogs in the productive machinery.

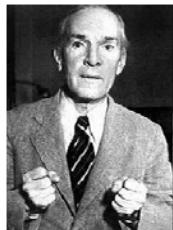


"The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about people." -- Cesar Chavez

Competition as the Driving Force in Capitalism

- The driving force in capitalism is the competition between capitalists.
- Competition is also the source of capitalism's greatest value: its efficiency.
- Capitalists that can make more with less can undersell the competition and survive.
- Inefficient factories lose money and inefficient capitalists go bankrupt.
- Constant competition drives an endless quest for greater and greater efficiency.
- Unchecked and constant competition between capitalists pushes capitalists to continually demand more from workers.
- Most true in purely capitalist or *laissez faire* capitalist systems.
- Marx argued that this drive had dire consequences that made the collapse of capitalism inevitable.

Competition as the Driving Force in Capitalism



"Fascism is capitalism plus murder." – Upton Sinclair

- Competition among capitalists affects all four elements of price: profits, materials, overhead, and wages.
- If any of these factors can be reduced, the capitalist can sell the product for less than the competition.
- In extreme cases the more efficient producer can drive other factories out of business.
- Surviving capitalists must respond by cost cutting to match or exceed cost reductions.
- Marx noted the benefits of an economic system driven by specialization and competition, i.e., gains in efficiency and productivity.
- He also argued that ruthless competition would inevitably destroy the political, economic, and social system.
- Competition promoted unsafe working conditions.
- Factory owners pushed wages below what was needed for survival and efficient machines replaced people, who were left without jobs.

The Pool of Labor as a Common Resource

- Marx saw the massive overexploitation of workers as the fatal flaw of capitalism.
- The dynamics of the tragedy of the commons are applicable, if one thinks of the pool of laborers as a commons, a shared resource that capitalists exploit for economic gain.
- Competition drives capitalists to overexploit workers.
- Capitalism provides no way for individual capitalists to end the overexploitation; generous capitalists would be overtaken by market forces.



The Pool of Labor as a Common Resource



- The tragedy of the commons—the overexploitation of the workers in the pool of labor—is a fatal flaw in the very concept of pure capitalism as an economic system.
- Marx argued that the constant push to lower salaries would create a circumstance where workers could not afford to buy products.
- The result would be a fatal reduction in demand for products.
- Marx also pointed out that people have the capability of acting collectively.
- He believed workers would become so desperate that they would see no alternative to destroying the system.
- They would find a way to overcome atomization, peer policing, and preference falsification, and they would revolt.

I Thought You Said There'd be a Revolution?

- When it came to predicting the future, Marx was not quite as successful as he was at critiquing capitalism.
- Many Marxist theorists since Marx have tried to explain why there was no collapse of the capitalist system.
- Perhaps the best explanation is collective action.
- As worker dissatisfaction and unrest threatened to grow into revolt, capitalists turned to government.
- At first force was used, but there is a limit to the effectiveness of force.
- Governments gradually adopted policies that gave the workers some of what they demanded, including limitations on the exploitation of labor.



Socialism



"There are no absolute rules of conduct, either in peace or war. Everything depends on circumstances." – Leon Trotsky

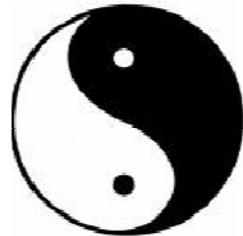
- Marx categorized political-economic systems according to who controlled the means of production.
- The means of production are the things necessary to transform labor into wealth.
- Under the feudal system land was the primary means of production, and the church, along with a hereditary elite, controlled the land.
- In a capitalist system, individuals control the means of production.
- Socialism is an economic system where society controls the means of production.

Socialism

- Pure socialism, just like pure capitalism, cannot work in practice.
- In fact, it has never even been tried on a large scale.
- Socialism is very good at distributing goods, but very inefficient at producing those goods.
- In his descriptions of socialism and the communist utopia Marx overestimated people's industriousness.
- Socialism is very inefficient because it is hard to motivate people to work and even harder to motivate people to seek efficiencies or get them to excel at their craft.



The Yin and Yang of Socialism and Capitalism



- When government regulates and polices the exploitation of labor, it uses principles of socialism to save capitalism.
- Think of the things government does to regulate the marketplace.
- All of today's functioning capitalist systems are mixtures of capitalism and socialism.
- They mix private and societal control of the means of production.
- The real question is not capitalism versus socialism, but what balance between the two systems is best.

Conclusion



Questions? Concerns? Angry Rants?