Revolution and Counterrevolution

Change and Persistence in Social Structures

Seymour Martin Lipset

Revised Edition
with a New Introduction
by the Author

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To Bob, Paul, and Bob
for origins and encouragement

Introduction to the Transaction Edition

Revolution and Counterrevolution was published in 1968 and revised in 1970. In many ways it is a sequel to two earlier works, *Political Man* and *The First New Nation*.[1] Like these two books, it has a strong comparative emphasis, seeking to explain variations in political outcomes by reference to differences in the history and social structure of nations, both industrialized and less developed. The title, *Revolution and Counterrevolution*, refers to the fact that the United States is the country descendant from the revolution triumphant, while Canada is formed from the parts of British North America in which the revolution failed.

Political Man tended deliberately to emphasize the role of economic and class factors in political development, and political cleavage in democratic states—voting behavior and political participation, for example. In this book, more stress is laid on the role of factors that generally go under the rubric of values. Thus chapters 2 and 3, which bear on aspects of the development process, focus on values, while the equivalent chapters of *Political Man* dealt with political development, emphasized the role of structural factors, largely aspects of the level of economic development.

The shift in emphasis from the specification of the way in which structural factors limit behavior to a concern with the way in which varying historical events determine future political choices by affecting national values, does not represent a rejection of the approach followed in *Political Man*, but rather an effort to highlight the analysis of similar matters from different perspectives. *The First New Nation*, which followed *Political*

Man, sought to point up the way in which the formation of national values affected both the development process in different nations, and the types of political cleavages that evolved within them.

The First New Nation focused on the ways variations in basic national values, particularly those of the United States, are linked to differences in contemporary structures and behaviors. To account for American behavior, I also dealt with the other major predominantly English speaking countries, Australia, Canada and Great Britain. These comparative analyses are elaborated in Parts I and II of *Revolution and Counterrevolution*, which discuss the relationships in the context of comparisons within the Americas, Canada with the United States, and Latin America, including Quebec, with Anglophone North America. The sections also contain an analysis of the Jewish communities in comparative perspective.

Political Man sought to elaborate on the conditions of the democratic order, first by specifying factors relevant to the presence of democracy, and second, through a detailed analysis of the sources of electoral diversity, of the way social cleavages are institutionalized in the support base of democratic parties. It treated at some length social class as a major source of political alignment, but did not seek to generalize on a theoretical level about class analysis in politics and sociology. Part III of this book seeks to remedy that deficiency, first by analyzing in Chapter 5 how the different approaches to social class of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and the sociological functionalists who derived from Emile Durkheim, can be used to account for varying aspects of political behavior; then, in Chapter 6, by looking at the role of class-relevant "interest" factors on a more concrete level, and that of value-generating institutions, particularly religion, in determining the nature of the political participation of different groups.

Parts IV and V, which are more empirical in character, constitute an effort to show how the interplay of factors that can be related to class and religion help to account for various forms of specific political choice or group behavior in different countries. Part IV does this on a comparative level, while Part V contains an analysis of American politics.

The core chapters of this book, those which define the theoretical and methodological orientations, are the first two, which deal with history and sociology and with the United States and Canada. These present the arguments and evidence for the thesis that any effort to understand the contemporary behavior, institutions and values of a country, in particular my own, the United States, requires historical and comparative analysis. Since my graduate student days, I have had a deep interest in Canada. That interest was inspired, however, by questions about the United States, in particular why it is the only highly industrialized democratic country which does not have an electorally viable socialist, social democratic, or labor party. Since Canada has had such a party since the 1930s, one that is now known as the New Democratic Party (NDP), which has been first or second in national election surveys for 1986 to the present (1988), the question I have sought to answer in one book and many articles from the late forties through to today is, why does Canada have a socialist party and, it may also be noted as of the eighties, a far stronger trade union movement?[2]

When the social scientist seeks to explain a particular difference among a limited number of cases—for instance, the prevailing political values in two countries—the problem of "too few cases, too many variables" can be mitigated somewhat by the selection of countries for analysis. That is, by choosing countries for comparison so that the range of variables on which the chosen cases are similar is maximized, the researcher can increase the certainty with which the variation in the phenomenon being studied can be attributed to those variables on which the two cases differ from each other. While obviously not as stringent as laboratory procedures, a careful selection of cases can allow the investigator to control for a large number of variables, and hence greatly enhance the analytic rigor of the research. The set of considerations renders Canada and the United States a promising combination for the purposes of comparative analysis.

It is important to note that any effort to specify the values, ethos, or national character of nations confronts the problem that such statements are necessarily made in a comparative context. Thus the assertions that the United States is a materialistic nation, that it is egalitarian, that its family system is unstable, obviously do not refer to these characteristics in any absolute sense. The statement that a national value system is egalitarian clearly does not imply the absence of severe differences in power, income, wealth or status. Generally this means that from a comparative perspective, nations classified as egalitarian tend to place more emphasis on universalistic criteria in judging others, and tend to de-emphasize the institutionalization of hierarchical differences.

The key words here are "tend," "more than" and "comparative." No one suggests that any given complex social structure is in fact egalitarian in any absolute sense. Macroscopic sociology employs polarity concepts when it compares core aspects of societies—*Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft*, organized solidarity-mechanical solidarity, inner directed-other directed, diffuseness-specificity, achievement-ascription, traditional-modern, and this approach purposely exaggerates such differences for analytic purposes.

Related to this point is a second one concerning the frame of reference within which specific comparisons are made. It may seem a truism, but is nonetheless worth stating, that what appear as significant differences when viewed through one lens may seem to be minor variations seen through another. The issue of whether a given difference is great or not may be exemplified by reference to comparative analyses of Canada and the United States.

CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Analysts of the continent-spanning North American democracies have differed with respect to whether they stress the similarities or differences between them. For example, an American political scientist, Louis Hartz, has emphasized the comparabilities, arguing that Canada, the United States and other countries settled by groups emigrating from Europe are all "fragment cultures" formed by the middle class, since the upper and lower strata did not move. Hence, for Hartz the American Revolution is not, and cannot be seen as, a watershed event signalling a radical distinction between the value system developing in post-revolutionary America and that emerging in counter-revolutionary Canada.[3] The minor differences between the two are of far less significance than the traits they share in common, which sharply set them off from European societies.[4] By contrast, the perspective that I have emphasized in Chapter 2 of this book and other writings on the two nations sees a greater degree of continuity between the communitarian and elitist aspects of Imperial Britain and the character of Canadian value orientations than Hartz assumes. My analysis indicates that the survival of these attitudes in Canada and their relative absence in the United States is an important distinction between the two countries that has led to many important variations, resulting initially from the success of the Revolution south of the border and its rejection to the north.

One aspect of this distinction is a greater conservatism in Canada—in the European sense of the word—than in the United States, where eighteenth century *laissez-faire* liberalism became the national tradition. The content of Canadian conservatism, its emphasis on the values of *noblesse oblige* and state responsibility, has meant, ironically, that Canada has provided a more favorable political and social climate for the development of welfare state policies than is found south of the border. The values inherent in a monarchically rooted conservatism such as those which developed in Canada and much of Europe have given rise in the modern world to support for social democratic redistributive and welfare policies. Conversely a dominant *laissez-faire* Lockean tradition which has been characteristic of the United States for much of its history is antithetical to such programs. Hence, it may be argued the greater strength of socialism and trade unions in Canada as compared to the U.S. is to a considerable degree a function of the fact that the counterrevolution triumphed north of the border, resulting in among other things a legitimation there of Tory statist values and policies, while the success of the American Revolution made the United States the prototypical classically liberal anti-statist bourgeois society. Northrop Frye, Canada's leading literary critic, called attention to this alliance of opposites when he stated in 1952: "The Canadian point of view is at once more conservative and more radical than Whiggery [the liberal ideology of the American Revolution], closer both to aristocracy and to democracy [equality]. . . ."[5] Canada's greatest novelist, Robertson Davies, a committed Tory (a political point of view defined by Harold Macmillan as "paternalistic socialism"), points up the continuing impact of the Tory tradition in Canada. "When you visit us, you may not immediately sense that you are in a socialist country. . . . But . . . we are a people firmly set in the socialist pattern. . . ."[6]

The attitudes and values characteristic of a people do not exist in a vacuum. It is important to recognize that one of the major factors explaining the persistence of particular orientations is that they become embodied in institutions which help perpetuate them. An illustration of this interaction between values and institutions can be found by comparing religious institutions and attitudes in Canada and the United States, which have consistently differed.[7] The American tradition and law have placed much more emphasis on separation of church and state than has the Canadian. A large majority of Americans have adhered to the Protestant sects, mainly the Methodists and Baptists, which had formed in opposition to the established state Church in England. These largely have a congregational structure and foster the idea of an individual relationship with God. The smaller Protestant sects, many of them founded in the United States, have proportionately many fewer adherents in Canada. Most Canadians belong to either the Roman Catholic or the Anglican churches, both of which have been hierarchically organized state religions in Britain and Europe. While efforts to sustain church establishment ultimately failed in Canada, state support of religious institutions, particularly schools, has continued into the present. Hence religious institutions have both reflected and contributed to anti-elitist, individualist, and anti-statist orientations in the United States and countered them in Canada.

It should be noted that a great deal of debate has been generated over the question of the relative significance of Canadian-American value differences. The argument essentially has been between those like myself, who emphasize the distinctiveness of the *values* of the two countries and the ways these in turn affect behavior, beliefs and institutional arrangements, and those who place primary importance on various *structural* differences, particularly geographic, economic, and political factors. It should be stressed, however, that a concern with the influence of economic, ecological, or value elements in determining given national developments or traits is not a matter of dealing with alternative mutually exclusive hypotheses. Rather, as in the case of Max Weber's discussion of the relative contribution of economic and value factors in the rise of capitalism, one may conclude that different variables are each necessary but not sufficient to produce the results sometimes credited to one of them alone.

And, in fact, when the arguments of those identified as adhering to one or the other approach to the sources of Canadian-American differences (values or structure) are carefully examined, it becomes apparent that most of the distinctions really are ones of emphasis. For example, my own analysis takes into account that the two nations do vary in their ecology, demography and economy, and that these differences have exerted an important influence on the development of values and attitudes on both sides of the border. Canada controls an area which, while larger than her southern neighbor's, is much less hospitable to human habitation in terms of climate and resources. Her geographical extent and weaker population base have contributed to an emphasis on direct government involvement in the economy to provide various services, for which sufficient private capital or a profitable market has not been available.[8] South of the border, the anti-statist emphasis subsumed in the revolutionary ideology was not challenged by the need to call upon the state to intervene economically to protect the nation's independence against a powerful neighbor.[9]

In a similar way, those whose analyses emphasize the significance of structural factors also acknowledge the role that values play in affecting the development of political and economic differences across the border. A good example can be found in the writing of Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of the most influential structural approach of all. He was one of the first analysts to contend that Canada's economic backwardness compared to the United States is primarily a function of her value system. Following a visit to both countries in 1888, he wrote in deprecating terms concerning Canadian economic development as compared to American, and argued that these differences demonstrated "how necessary the *feverish speculative spirit* of the Americans is for the rapid development of a new country" and looked forward to the abolition of "this ridiculous boundary line" separating the two countries.[10] More recently, Harold Innis, Canada's preeminent economic historian, who has strongly emphasized structural factors, such as the "hard" character of the Canadian frontier, in affecting national orientations, has also noted the importance of "the essentially counter-revolutionary traditions, represented by the United Empire Loyalists and by the Church in French Canada, which escaped the influences of the French Revolution"[11] For more on these themes, I would refer the reader to Chapter 2, as well as my more recent analyses, cited earlier.

OLD AND NEW POLITICAL CLEAVAGES

Parts III and IV of *Revolution and Counterrevolution* are concerned with the topic of political conflict. The connection between social class analysis and the study of political cleavages is clear. In *Political Man* I summarized it thusly: "The most important single fact about political party support is that in virtually every economically developed country the lower income groups vote mainly for the parties of the Left, while the higher income groups vote mainly for the parties of the Right."[12] This conclusion was congruent with the basic anticipation of Karl Marx, who emphasized that economic development under capitalism would result in a situation in which employed workers would form a majority of the labor force and that as a result of economic constraints and industrial environments workers would organize economically (unions) and politically (a revolutionary socialist party). They would give the organizations majority support, enabling them to take power and create a socialist society.

The era immediately following World War II seemingly validated a major element of Marxist analysis in that left parties held office in most of the advanced industrial states of northern and central Europe and Australasia. But even then, the contradictions between political realities and Marxist predictions were much greater than the agreements. The most industrialized and pure bourgeois society, the United States, has never had an electorally viable socialist or labor party and continues to exhibit one of the lowest correlations between class position and party choice, facts which explicitly negate the Marxist dictum in *Capital* that "the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future."[13] In any case, in the highly developed countries in which social democrats then held office, Scandinavia, Australasia, Britain, Austria, etc., the parties were not revolutionary, sought to make a multi-class appeal, and clearly had no intention of trying to eliminate capitalism. A comparative study of party platforms from 1910 to 1960 (later extended to 1970) by John Thomas indicated that the differences between the platforms of bourgeois and socialist parties had narrowed over time.[14] Ironically, revolutionary movements still had strength in the then less industrialized European countries in the Latin and southern tier, Spain, France and Italy, as well as in Finland. But, whatever the form or intensity, class conflict was a reality everywhere and it was reflected in election contests which I described in *Political Man* as the "democratic class struggle."

An emphasis on class as the only important determinant of political cleavage past, present and future is, of course, wrong. However class is defined, it has never accounted for more than part of the causal mechanisms involved in political differentiation. Recognizing this, Stein Rokkan and I tried to systematize the structural factors underlying the diverse character of European party systems. In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, we analyzed modern political cleavages as the outgrowth of two revolutions, the National Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.[15]

These transformations produced various social cleavages which became linked to party divisions and voting behavior. The first political revolution resulted in a *center–periphery* conflict between the national culture and assorted subordinate ones, for example, ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups often located in the peripheries, the outlying regions, and *church–state* tension between the state, which sought to dominate, and the church, which tried to maintain its historic corporate rights. The economic revolution gave rise to *land–industry* cleavage between the landed elite and the growing bourgeois class. This was followed by the cleavage Marx focused on, that between *capitalist and workers.*

These four sources of cleavage, each of which has continued to some extent into the contemporary world, have provided a framework for the party systems of the democratic polities. But as Rokkan and I noted, class became the most salient source of conflict and voting, particularly after the extension of the suffrage to all adult males. The partisan expressions of the four cleavage models obviously have varied greatly internationally. They have been most fully expressed in multi-party systems and condensed into broad coalitions in two-party ones like those of the United States or Australia. Given all the transformations in western society over the first half of the twentieth century, it is noteworthy how little the formal party systems changed.[16] Essentially the cleavages had become industrialized, and the party systems of the 1960s closely resembled those of pre World War I Europe. The main changes related to the rise and disappearance of fascist movements, and to the division of the working-class parties into two major ones in some countries. The latter parties, of course, were much stronger in the post World War II political arenas than earlier, attesting to the increased salience of class.

Some critics of the four cleavage model have argued that it assumes too much rigidity, and largely derives party systems from structure. But as a discussion by Russell Dalton, Scott Flanagan and Paul Beck notes,

> Although the Lipset-Rokkan model emphasized the institutionalization and freezing of cleavage alignments, the model also has dynamic properties. It views social alignments as emerging from the historical process of social and economic developments. New alignments develop in response to major social transformations such as the National and Industrial revolutions. While the structure of cleavages is considered to be relatively fixed, the political salience of the various cleavages and patterns of party coalitions may fluctuate in reaction to contemporary events.[17]

The western world appears to have entered a new political phase which roughly dates from the mid 1960s with the rise of so-called "post-materialistic issues, a clean environment, use of nuclear power, a better culture, equal status for women and minorities, the quality of education, international relations, greater democratization, and a more permissive morality, particularly as affecting familial and sexual issues."[18] These have been perceived by some social analysts as the social consequences of an emerging third "revolution," the Post-Industrial, which is introducing new bases of social and political cleavage. The underlying economic analysis has been associated with the work of Daniel Bell,[19] while the emphasis on the emergence of new political cleavages is linked to the work of Ronald Inglehart.[20] Essentially Bell and others have sought to document the effects on the culture of structural shifts which have sharply increased the importance of occupations linked to high-tech, informational, knowledge and public service industries, and require greater reliance on universities and research and development centers, while the production focused positions—farm and manual work—have been declining.[21] Inglehart and others have pointed to new lines of cleavage between the adherents of the industrial society's emphasis on production and of conservative positions on social issues, and those who espouse the post-industrial stress on the quality of life and liberal social views when dealing with ecology, feminism, and nuclear energy.[22] Life concerns are difficult to formulate as party issues, but groups such as the Green parties and the New Left or New Politics educated middle class tendencies within the traditional left parties have sought to foster them.

Issues and cleavages derivative from those of industrial society, however, remain a more important source of policy division and electoral choice, since the more materialistically oriented workers and self-employed constitute much larger strata than the intelligentsia. The perceived failure of the social democratic welfare state to solve key issues has, however, resulted in a renewal of the appeal of classic liberal (free market) approaches, sometimes presented in the context of solutions to quality of life concerns as well.

The effects of the recent changes, whether they deserve the term "revolution" or not, may be seen in the reduction of the correlation between class and voting which has occurred in many countries, in the decline in commitment to traditional parties, a phenomenon which often presages alignment or the rise of new parties, and in the increased volatility among the electorate from one election to another. It is too early to anticipate whether these recent developments will produce a new party system. But as Rokkan and I stressed, it is difficult to break the attachments to the established parties. What is more likely is a reorganization of their programs and social base.

THE END OF IDEOLOGY

Another concept dealt with in *Political Man*, which is further explicated in Chapter 8 of this book, is the "end of ideology." This concept describes the results of a situation in which the intensity of political conflict among citizens of industrialized countries has declined, resulting in the cross-party agreement in a broad range of ideas and policies documented by Thomas. This approach has been subjected to severe criticisms, particularly by left oriented scholars who identify it with a preference for consensus rather than conflict in the polity.[23]

Without going into further detail on the subject, I would note that I have replied in depth to much of that criticism in a more recent work, particularly to critics who see in the proliferation from the mid sixties of mass single issue movements and the emergence of assorted New Lefts evidence that ideology is far from dead.[24] But as I have noted, neither I nor others who wrote on the subject in the 1950s and early sixties assumed that ideology or political conflict was over in any sense. Raymond Aron, Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, and myself had anticipated that political protest would continue and that it would largely be supported by the very strata so involved in the New Left revolt of the 1960s; students, excluded minorities and the intelligentsia. We never forecast the end of ideological orientations, protest or social reform efforts, but rather stated that there was and would continue to be a decline in the appeal of total ideologies for those segments of society integrated into the system, increasingly including the working class. Thus in my original discussion I specifically excluded "ethnic, racial, or religious groups, like American blacks or Ulster Catholics, who are still deprived in citizenship terms," from the groups for whom total ideologies would have less appeal. The continuing and inherently adversarial relationship of American intellectuals to their society was the theme of Chapter 10 in the 1960 edition of *Political Man*. The history and development of the concept is analyzed in depth in *Conflict and Consensus* and I will not, therefore, go into further detail here.

SOME LARGE SCALE GENERALIZATIONS

Finally, I would note one of the reviewers of the first edition, Robert L. Heilbroner, did me the rare courtesy of summarizing my work in this book in terms of a number of "large-scale generalizations," which strike me at least as accurate. They are as follows:

> *The essential building blocks of political stability are social rather than economic.*
>
> This does not deny the enormous moving force of economic change. Rather it implies that economic changes operate through social motivations. Thus poverty in itself does not lead to social restlessness any more than affluence alone leads to social harmony. The existence, or the narrowing, of economic gaps does not necessarily offset motivations born of status, tradition, ethnicity, etc. Hence the search for the causes of social stability or change must always include matters of status and value as well as questions of economics: "The prolonged intensity of class conflict in many continental nations," Lipset writes, "was owing to the overlap of economic class conflict with 'moral' issues of religion, aristocracy, and status. Because moral issues involve basic concepts of right and wrong, they are more likely than economic matters to result in civil war or at least class cleavage."
>
> *The basic movement of Western society is toward industrial bureaucratic societies in which traditional class conflicts are lessened.*
>
> Social unrest, as Lipset sees it, is primarily a product of social change. Hence we must expect to find it in its most exacerbated form when change is most acute as in the case of the Third World or in the West, in those nations and eras when the industrial transformation was most rapid. Conversely, the gradual surmounting of the dislocation of industrialization opens the way for the emergence of a pragmatic rather than polarized politics.