

“A” Level Sociology

A Resource-Based Learning Approach

Power and Politics

Unit P3: Theories of Power (1)

Introduction

As I have tried to indicate, the concept of the State in modern, industrialized, societies is crucial to an understanding of the nature and distribution of power in society, if only because it plays such a large, over-bearing, part in our lives. The State in Britain, for example, impinges on our behaviour, as individuals, in numerous ways:

It regulates social relationships (laws)

It specifies legal forms of contractual relationships (marriage, etc.)

It levies taxes.

It makes education a legal requirement between 5 and 16.

It empowers a range of people (from Civil servants to social workers, Court officials, the police, doctors and so forth) with the ability to legally interfere in the way in which we behave.

It provides a range of services (paid for through taxation), such as hospitals, schools, local services and so forth.

It employs hundreds of thousands of people - both directly (in the form of civil servants, the police, the armed forces, politicians) and indirectly, through the vast range of contracts that it issues...

Although I have referred to the State as "it", it is clear that the State is not a thing, but a set of inter-locking institutional relationships and arrangements - in this sense, it is a concept that can be applied to a form of (structural) social relationships. The State is not simply "the government" or the "monarchy" or the civil service but, on the contrary, it is something created out of the relationship between such institutions in society.

Given that the State does play such an important part in social life, it follows that any group or class (or even, in some instances, an individual) that can control the various agencies of the State is potentially very powerful in political, economic and ideological terms. For this reason, therefore, we have now got to turn towards an understanding of various theories concerning the nature and distribution of power in any society that make particular reference to the role of the State...

Theories of Power

What I propose to do in the following section is offer a broad outline of various theories of power distribution along the following lines:

1. Pluralist theories of power.

In this respect, power is seen to be held by a variety of groups in society (some of which are more powerful than others), who compete with each other. Since no one group or class is able to dominate all other groups (because of checks and balances built into a democratic system of government), a "plurality" of competing interest groups, political parties and so forth is seen to characterize democratic societies.

A variant on this theme ("Elite Pluralism") will also be considered, since this theory attempts to account for the fact that, as noted above, some groups are potentially more powerful than others in society.

2. Elite Theory.

This theory involves the idea that rather than there being a simple plurality of competing groups in society, there are instead a series of competing elites - powerful groups who are able to impose their will upon the rest of society. Two basic forms of elite theory will be considered:

- a. The theory of "circulating elites" (a conservative form of theorizing associated with writers such as Mosca and Pareto).
- b. Power Elite theory (a more radical form of theorizing developed by and associated with, C.Wright Mills).

3. Ruling Class Theory.

This is a Marxist form of theorizing which argues that power is fundamentally lodged with the owners and controllers of economic production (the bourgeoisie). Political power is seen to derive from economic ownership and, in this respect, we can identify a Ruling Class which not only controls the means of production, distribution and exchange in capitalist society but which also dominates and controls the institutions of political power. Again, two main forms of Marxism will be considered:

a. Instrumental Marxism:

Primarily associated with the work of Ralph Milliband ("The State In Capitalist Society"), this form of Marxism attempts to demonstrate empirically the nature of Ruling Class domination in society.

b. "Structuralist" Marxism:

Primarily associated with the work of writers such as Poulantzas ("Classes In Contemporary Capitalism") and Althusser, this variant of Marxism concentrates more upon the structural arrangements of capitalist society, attempting to show how a Ruling Class is able to dominate the rest of society economically, politically and ideologically without the need for its members to personally oversee the workings of the State.

In addition, I will also make reference to the work of Parsons (Functionalist theories of power), Weber (a non-Marxist Conflict theory of power) and Gramsci (a neo-Marxist theory of power).

Summarize the basic differences between Pluralist and Marxist theories of power distribution.

Power and the State.

Pluralist theories.

Pluralist writers (such as Dahl "Who Governs?" 1961), whilst sharing a number of theoretical similarities with functionalists such as Parsons, can generally be differentiated from functionalism on the basis of three main ideas:

1. The nature of power:

Like Weber, pluralist writers tend to theorize power in terms of what is called a "zero-sum" or "constant-sum" capacity. That is, the amount of power in any society is seen to be relatively fixed ("constant"). For any group to accumulate power, it has to do so at the expense of another social group (hence the idea of a "zero-sum" totality of power).

For example, within the classroom, a teacher has more power than her students. However, if her students decide that they are going to disobey their teacher (shout, scream, run riot and so forth) and the teacher is unable to stop them, then here we have evidence for the idea of a "constant sum" theory of power.

Whilst the teacher controls her class, she has power and they do not. If her class decides that they are going to take control, then they have power and the teacher does not (since the students have effectively taken the power that was once exercised by their teacher).

In this situation, what options does the teacher have in order to take-back the power her students have taken from her?

For example, what other sources of power can a teacher call upon when control of her classroom breaks down?

2. Value consensus:

Again, like Conflict theorists, pluralist writers argue that there does not have to be a value consensus in any society. As societies become larger, they become more-differentiated and such differentiation is expressed in terms of sectional interests - groups of people organized around a set of interests, particular to that group, which they seek to advance at the expense of other sectional interest groups.

Whilst various divisions in society clearly exist along class, age, gender, religious and ethnic lines, no one division is seen to dominate an individual's life. Thus, pluralists tend to reject the Marxist notion that class is the most significant social attribute of the individual, whilst also rejecting the functionalist argument that such sectional conflicts are relatively unimportant in the explanation of the distribution and theorising of power relationships.

3. The State:

For pluralist writers, the State is considered to be a form of "honest broker" between the various sectional interests that exist in society. In this respect, the State is seen to mediate between various interests, promoting compromise between competing groups where possible and generally attempting to take a "long-term" view of social development.

For example, sectional interests (such as road builders) have to be balanced between sectional interests promoting rail and air development and these, in turn, may have to be balanced against sectional interests promoting environmental conservation and so forth.

Before we turn to look at what is usually termed "Classical Pluralist" theory (as opposed to "Elite Pluralism" - not to be confused with the similar-sounding "Elite Theory"), it might be useful to look, by way of comparison, at Talcott Parsons' functionalist theory of power.

Parsonian Functionalism and Power.

There are two main elements to Parsons' view of power:

1. The idea, contrary to Weber and Pluralism generally, that power should be conceived in "variable-sum" terms. That is, the idea that power levels can vary within any society (it can increase or decrease) since, as Parsons argues, power is something "possessed by society as a whole".
2. Power is viewed as a social resource, much like any other resource in society (for example, the number of people available for work, the provision of raw materials for economic production, the numbers of people being born and dying are all, in their different ways, social resources available to a society).

Power, in this sense, represents the capacity to mobilize general resources in society for the attainment of social goals. Thus, societies have general, collective, developmental goals (such as the desire to raise living standards, eradicate poverty and so forth) and the more these goals are realized, the greater the levels of overall power that comes into existence in society.

The United States, for example, is a powerful nation precisely because it has been able, collectively, to realize various goals (such as Territorial Unity, Consensual Government, Ideological Homogeneity (effective value consensus on a wide range of goals and issues), Economic Success).

Power, according to Parsons, is exercised in the general interests of society as a whole and, although some groups will be more powerful than others, this is necessary ("functional") because:

- a. The realization of collective goals requires co-operation.
- b. Co-operation requires organization.
- c. Organization requires command.
- d. The ability to command requires power...

Explain in your own words why functionalist sociologists generally tend to see inequality (of power, access to social resources or whatever) as necessary and function in modern societies.

As with all modern functionalist theory, power differences are functional only for as long as they do not become imbalanced - if power is too one-sided it becomes dysfunctional and powerful groups pursue short-term sectional interests that may not be in the interests of long-term social development. Various "checks and balances" are therefore built-into society (free elections, a Constitution, Freedom of the Press, an independent legal system and so forth) that prevent sectional interests seizing power.

We have come across this idea (the concept of "dysfunction") many times in various sections of the course.

a. Explain what is meant by this idea.

b. Show how the concept can be used as a kind of "catch-all" concept to "explain away" theoretical problems in the functionalist analysis of social systems.

Parsons argues that, precisely because levels of power are not constant, there does not necessarily have to be a struggle for power in society. By co-operating, everyone can gain a share of an expanding level of power. Just as levels of economic resources can expand, so too can power as a social resource. Co-operation, therefore, is not seen as some form of optional extra, but a structural imperative if a society is to develop and expand...

Classical Pluralism.

As I noted above, the classical pluralist conception of the State sees it as a set of "neutral" social institutions that does not favour any one group or class over any other. The State has no existence outside of the way its various machinery is controlled and exploited. In this respect, the essence of the pluralist case is that, in a democracy, political groups organize themselves to take control of the machinery of the State.

Although the existence of competing political parties means they will each represent a "core" or "fundamental" sectional interest (for example, the Conservative Party appealing to business, the Labour Party representing organized labour), the political system itself involves a number of structural checks and balances over the exercising of power. For example:

- a. Political parties have to have a sufficiently broad appeal to collect enough votes to win an election. In this respect, they have to broaden their appeal to different sectional interests.
- b. Governments subject themselves to re-election after a set period of time and abuses of power can then be punished by the electorate by voting a party out of office.
- c. Governments operate within the confines of some form of Constitutional norms (either written norms, as in the case of America or informal, unwritten, norms in the case of Britain). These norms represent the "basic rules of democratic organization" in society.
- d. An independent, autonomous, judiciary, different Houses of government (the Commons and Lords in Britain, Congress and Senate in America) supply checks to the power of government. In the case of Europe, an additional layer of checks and balances is included through the Treaty of Rome, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and so forth.

In addition, political parties are only one source of power for sectional interests:

Interest groups (or "Pressure groups") may be formed. These groups differ from political parties insofar as they do not seek elected office, but merely to influence the decision-making processes. Interest groups represent explicitly sectional interests ("narrow based" such as the R.S.P.C.A., or relatively "broad based" such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Trades' Union Congress (TUC) and so forth) and compete with each other to influence political policy-making.

For Classical Pluralists, therefore, democracy is characterized by:

1. A plurality of political parties:

These are predisposed towards sectional interests but have to appeal to a broader social grouping (a wide range of sectional interests) in order to gain and retain power.

2. A plurality of interest groups.

These appeal to sectional interests only, and no attempt is made to incorporate other, contradictory, sectional interests.

3. A broad value consensus over the legitimacy of political institutions (but not necessarily a value consensus in society as a whole). There may be conflicts over how political system should be specifically organized - for example the "first past the post" system or "proportional representation" - but fundamental agreement exists over the democratic nature of the political system.

Martin Deutsch has argued that classical pluralism generally consists of two main forms in relation to the way in which the State is theorized:

- a. Conservative Liberals who see the State as passive, only responding to wider social changes that might affect the stability of society.
- b. Social Democrats who see the State as being open to capture for the purpose of intervening in society to bring-about reforms (such as the development of a Welfare State, for example, which can only be brought into being by the over-riding influence and political will organized at the level of the State).

In both cases, the State is seen as being:

- a. Open to capture / influence.
- b. Responsive to social pressures.
- c. Neutral - not favouring one sectional interest over any other.

A good example of Classical Pluralist writing is that of Dahl ("Who Governs", 1961). In his study of local politics in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, Dahl conceptualized power in terms of "decision making".

Stephen Lukes ("Power: A Radical View", 1974) has termed this conceptualization the "first face or dimension of power", and in this respect, this face of power represents "the ability to make decisions". [Lukes argues that there are actually three dimensions to power and we will consider these dimensions in a moment].

Dahl argued, empirically, that the decision-making process in New Haven involved a variety of interest groups, all attempting to influence political decision-making. Some groups were dominant over some issues, whilst others were dominant over other issues. Dahl explicitly rejected the idea that this decision-making process could be characterized as an economically dominant group / class also dominating the political decision-making process.

Along similar lines, Hewitt's study of 24 policy issues in Britain between 1944 and 1964 ("Elites and the Distribution of Power in British Society", 1974) compared Parliamentary decisions, views of interest groups and public opinion (as measured through opinion polls) and found that there was no evidence of a consistent bias towards one section of society over another. Whether this is still the case, after nearly 15 years of the same political party in government is perhaps open to doubt...

Lukes has argued that, whilst this may be the case in relation to decision-making (the first dimension of power), classical pluralist writers have ignored a second dimension to power, namely "non-decision-making".

As Urry and Wakeford note, ("Power In Britain", 1973), pluralists, by concentrating upon power as a "decision-making" process, ignore the fact that powerful groups can prevent issues from ever reaching the point at which a decision is made. In this respect, there may exist a filtering process whereby decisions are only ever taken on "safe matters" - upon issues that do not fundamentally challenge or upset the balance of power. Thus, powerful groups may exercise power in ways that are hidden from public view, through:

Management of particular situations (for example, control of information).

The power to define certain situations (the difference between "terrorism" and "freedom fighting", for example)

For example, the Thatcher governments in Britain during the 1980's:

1. Repeatedly changed the basis upon which unemployment figures were calculated (resulting in a net decrease in "unemployment" - people were still without jobs, they simply didn't appear in the statistics).
2. Failed to collect statistics about the extent of poverty in Britain, the distribution of wealth, social class differences in terms of medicine, education, housing, taxation and so forth.
3. Pursued a campaign against Trade Union organizations (through a "friendly" mass media) that characterized them as "anti-democratic" organizations opposed to the basic interests of the majority of people in Britain...

Lukes' third dimension of power is also relevant in this context, insofar as it involves the ability to "shape desires". The argument here is that pluralists over-emphasize the distinction between:

- a. Decision-making,
- b. Public opinion and
- c. Power,

(in the sense that decision-making is held to be a reflection of public opinion).

Lukes argues that ideas about the social world do not arise in a social vacuum - people's opinions are based upon numerous sources of information (many of which can be controlled by the powerful - mass media, education and so forth). In this respect, public opinion (whatever the term may actually mean - little attempt is ever made to realistically measure it), can be shaped by the exercise of power to conform to the desires of the powerful.

In the above respect, the three dimensions of power outlined by Lukes can be summarized as:

1. The ability to make decisions.
2. The ability to manipulate the debate over the kinds of decisions that actually reach the stage of "being made".
3. The ability to shape public opinion so that it reflects the interests of the powerful.

Westergaard and Resler ("Class in Capitalist Society", 1976) argue, from a Marxist perspective, that in addition to the above, the over-concentration upon a narrow definition of power, politics and decision-making (such as that held by pluralist writers generally), hides the reality of power. For example, there may well be a separation between political decisions and the reasons for their being made:

Thus, the decision by the Major government to pump money into the NHS immediately prior to the 1992 election may have been the result of a desire to head-off protests in a pre-election period, rather than a desire to genuinely see an improvement in health care...

Elite Pluralism

This development in pluralist thinking arose as a response to criticisms that not all interest groups in a society have:

- a. Equal levels of power.
- b. Equal access to power.

In this respect, the concept of elite groups was developed, whereby elites were seen as the main participants in a decision-making process. Such elites might include:

Business organizations,
Government administration,
Political parties,
Trade Unions,
Cultural elites
and so forth.

Democracy, therefore, became characterized as a system of competing elites which over-lapped in terms of influence, membership and so forth.

In this sense, elite groups are seen in terms of strategic forms of power. For example, a strategic elite in Britain might be the Conservative Party as the party of government.

A strategic elite, therefore, is one of a number of competing groups whose power waxes and wanes at various times and over various issues - an idea that can be expressed as a system of countervailing power (that is, power never becomes concentrated in the hands of a small, unrepresentative, minority group).

For elite pluralism, power is:

- a. Situational - different groups have power in different social situations.
- b. Non-cumulative - power is effectively compartmentalized, such that power in one area (for example, economic power) is not necessarily translated into power in another area of society.

If we use the example of the Conservative Party, we can understand the idea of Structural and Strategic levels of power in the following way:

1. Structural Level:

As a political party, it competes with other parties for power. In this respect, the party presents a set of policies to the electorate that both differentiates them from other parties and, most importantly, attempts to appeal to a wide range of sectional interests. In government, this party has the power to make decisions, but these decisions are made in the light of influences from various sectional interests (Business, labour, environmental, etc.).

2. Strategic Level:

Within the party, different sectional interests are in evidence (for example, the Thatcherite radical right, the Heathite liberal conservatives and so forth). Additionally, sectional interest groups may arise in the party over specific issues (Europe, Capital Punishment, etc.).

Thus, there is seen to be competition at both the structural and strategic levels amongst various sectional interests.

Elite pluralism stresses the idea that representation is secured by the organization of sectional interests into elite groups who then compete with other elite groups for power. Richardson and Jordan ("Governing Under Pressure", 1979) argue that there are two basic forms of elite groups:

1. Insider groups: These elites are accepted by governments as legitimate representatives of particular interests in society and are regularly consulted.
2. Outsider groups: Such groups are not seen as legitimate, they lack governmental recognition and are not regularly / routinely consulted.

Recently, for example, we have seen the way in which environmentalist groups have been transformed from outsider to insider groups, whereby such groups are now routinely consulted for their views on environmental issues in a way that they were not consulted in the past.

In terms of Lukes' view of power, elite pluralism examines the first and second dimensions of power (the power to make decisions and the power to keep issues off the political agenda), but still fails to address the third dimension, namely the ability to shape people's desires.

Additional unresolved problems with elite pluralism include:

1. Even in a democracy, there are clear, widespread, disparities of power (even amongst well-organized elite groups). The extent to which power is actually widely-spread in society is not clear.
2. The lack of a third dimension of power means that elite pluralists fail to analyse the way in which elite groups can monopolize power to:
 - a. Use power in their own, sectional, interests.
 - b. Shape the desires of the "general public" so that public opinion simply reflects the interests of powerful groups at the expense of other groups in society.
 - c. Translate power in one area to power in another area. for example, the extent to which elites overlap is significant, insofar as economic power clearly appears to translate into political and ideological power.

In this respect, because elite pluralists tend to concentrate upon the strategic level of power, they pay little attention to the structural level, whereby the "rules of the power game" can be determined by a minority of very powerful interest groups.

Elite Theory (1)

This form of theory concerning the nature and distribution of power was originally developed by:

- a. Pareto ("The Mind and Society", 1916)
- b. Mosca ("The Ruling Class")

at the beginning of the 20th century. Elite theory should not be confused with elite pluralism.

Both Mosca and Pareto saw rule by elite groups as inevitable (even in supposedly democratic societies) and, as such, considered this state of affairs to be desirable - it was, effectively, "right and proper" that elite groups should dominate the political decision-making process.

What arguments, for and against, can you outline in relation to the view that rule by elites might / might not be "right and proper"?

Whilst Pareto saw political power in terms of a "continuous circulation of elite groups" who rule because of their members superior intelligence, education, cunning and so forth (that is, their superior personal qualities), Mosca argued that elite groups ruled politically because of their superior organizational ability.

In this latter respect, elites came to power because of their superior internal organization - they took power in the face of the disorganization of other elites, the general mass of the population and so forth.

Both writers saw the general (politically disorganized) mass of the population as being controlled through manipulation, propaganda and the like to serve the interests of powerful elites.

Summary of Pareto's arguments:

Following the ideas of Machiavelli, he distinguished two main types of elite group:

- a. "Lion elites" who were able to rule by force (for example, military regimes).
- b. "Fox elites" who were able to rule by manipulation (for example, liberal democratic regimes).

Given that Pareto's view of political power was pretty-much all-encompassing, he attempted to resolve the problem of political change (how, if an elite was effectively all-powerful, could it be replaced by another elite?) by reference to the idea that elites, after they achieve power, have a relatively limited life-span. That is, they grow decadent, decay, lose their vigour and so forth and, in turn, come to be replaced by other, more-vigorous, elite groups.

In this respect, we can see the theory of "circulating elites": powerful groups arise in society, take power, lose their political vitality over time and are replaced.

A contemporary example might be the Conservative party 1970 - 1990. Within this party, various elite groupings existed that rose to prominence, took power within the party and, after a few years, began to decay (Heath, through Thatcher, to Major...).

There are, however, numerous problems with this form of analysis:

1. Pareto, for example, simply assumes that elite groups are somehow superior to all other groups in society. He gives little real idea about how and why they are supposedly superior.
2. The distinction between types of elite is simplistic and does not recognize the fact that, in democratic societies, the politically powerful may rule through a combination of economic, military, political and ideological power.
3. His explanation for the replacement of elites is over-simplistic, insofar as he provides no real explanation as to why elites should necessarily become decadent or decay.
4. For Pareto, there appears to be little basic difference between democratic societies and totalitarian societies.

Summary of Mosca's arguments:

Although Mosca shared with Pareto the idea that elite groups had superior qualities to "the masses" (who were effectively born to be lead / controlled), he emphasized the social background of elites rather than their "personal qualities". In this respect, elites ruled because of their superior internal organizational abilities (some elites were better equipped than others to take power) and Mosca recognized that the organizational qualities needed to assume power varied from society to society.

Unlike Pareto, Mosca did attempt to distinguish between democratic and totalitarian societies, insofar as, in the former, the masses could have some input into the political process. However, his basic position was that democracy could never be anything more than a manipulative, legitimating, process whereby elites consolidated their power by co-opting the masses to support the interests of the powerful (rather than by truly representing the interests of the masses).

Briefly summarize the main differences between Mosca and Pareto's "elites theory"

Elite Theory (2)

A more-radical and theoretically well-developed form of elite theory was proposed by C. Wright Mills. Whilst Mills concentrates upon the way elite groups organize and take power in democratic societies, he argued this process - far from being right, proper and inevitable (as argued by Mosca and Pareto) - was neither inevitable nor necessarily beneficial to society as a whole. In this respect, Mills elaborated a form of non-Marxist Conflict theory concerning elites in democratic societies.

Mills' analysis stems from the idea that certain elite groups arose to control various institutions in society. Since some institutions were more-powerful than others (an economic elite, for example, was likely to be more powerful than an educational or religious elite), it followed that the elite groups who controlled such institutions would hold the balance of power in society as a whole - they would dominate politically on the structural level of power.

In his analysis of American society in the 1950's, Mills identified three major institutions (or "power blocs") within the State that he considered to be of primary significance in terms of the potential for wielding power in society:

- a. Major Corporations.
- b. The Military.
- c. Federal Government.

Each of these institutions formed a power bloc in its own right (since each has a set of specific interests) and each was dominated by an internal elite (the leaders of the most-powerful corporations, the upper echelons of the armed forces, the leaders of the political party in government). Although such elites were powerful in their own right, in any society there exists a necessary degree of overlap and co-operation between these power blocs:

- The Military requires political co-operation (identification of legitimate enemies, for example) and economic co-operation.
- Major Corporations require co-operation from government, defence contracts etc.
- Federal government requires the support of the Military, a strong corporate sphere and so forth.

Thus, Mills argued that the degree of necessary co-operation between elites within these power blocs effectively meant that they formed a "power elite" within society. Their overlapping general interests meant that, whilst they may have differing specific interests, these are subjugated to the wider interest of maintaining elite status, power and rule. The social cohesiveness of the power elite was seen to be strengthened by such things as:

- a. The centralization and concentration of economic power amongst a minority of powerful groups / individuals.
- b. The centralization and concentration of political power amongst a minority of powerful groups / individuals.
- c. The shared social backgrounds (and hence values) of the members of each elite.

Thus, for Mills, the members of different elites frequently inter-changed, such that certain powerful individuals could be members of more than one elite at any given time (for example, military leaders could take-up political appointments, become directors of major corporations. Major business leaders could take-up political appointments in government and politicians could sit on the boards of major corporations).

In this respect, political power becomes increasingly concentrated and enormous political decisions (about investment, whether or not to go to war, civil rights and so forth) were effectively taken by a small elite minority. In this respect, politics declined into a manipulation of debate - Mills characterized it as a necessary exercise where political choice is limited because political parties who wanted power could only achieve it on the basis of co-operation from economic and military elites.

In America, for example, in order to fund an election campaign, aspiring politicians require money from businesses, the rich and so forth and, in return, are encouraged to pursue policies that are favourable to this power bloc. Politics, according to Mills, becomes thoroughly permeated by a business / military ideology - there may be different parties and different politicians, but they will pursue the same basic policies because they are effectively tied-into the military / industrial complex of power.

If we apply this form of analysis to Britain over the past 20 years, it becomes evident that the Labour Party, for example, has been forced to progressively jettison any pretence it may have had to being a "radical", "socialist" party that will carry-through wide-ranging changes in the balance of economic power. whilst the Conservative and Labour parties differ in relation to specific policies (over "safe decisions"), a basic, underlying, consensus exists about the overall nature of society and its political / economic institutions (over "non-safe" decisions).

Again, a power elite in Britain might be identified, its various leaders being characterized by similar social backgrounds and values. In this respect, political power resembles a "self-perpetuating oligarchy", whereby the faces may change, but basic political policies remain much the same...

Communist societies also seem to be a clear example of power elite societies and, in this respect, may display more theoretically coherent forms of elite co-operation. Budge, McKay and Marsh ("The New British Political System", 1983) attempt to refine Mills' basic argument by noting that, in democracies, a form of fragmented elites tends to exist - a large number of competing elites exist, each of which may have internal and external divisions.