

## Comments and Reviews

### Politics as Rational Action\*

An extended review of Leif Lewin, *Ideologi och strategi: Svensk politik under 100 år* (Ideology and Strategy: Swedish Politics through 100 Years), Stockholm: Norstedt, 1984.

Knut Midgaard, University of Oslo

Professor Leif Lewin's book *Ideologi och strategi: Svensk politik under 100 år* (Ideology and Strategy: Swedish Politics through 100 Years) is the final report from a 10 year research programme, 'Politics As Rational Action' (the PARA programme), undertaken by the Institute of Political Science at Uppsala University under the leadership of Leif Lewin himself, who since 1972 has held the venerable Skytte chair of politics and rhetoric. As made clear by Lewin in the concluding chapter of his book, the project grew out of a concern for rationality in democracy – and a belief in the task of improving it – which was already expressed in his book *Folket och eliterna: En studie i modern demokratisk teori* (The People and the Elites: A Study in Modern Democratic Theory), published in 1970. Confronting elitist tendencies towards basing democratic theory and practice on the assumption of a low degree of rationality and a high degree of apathy on the part of the average citizen, Lewin in his 1970 book argued in favour of an 'interactive' democracy where the average citizen's rationality and political interest would be heightened through a broadening of his possibilities for participation and through educational efforts for which the political elites would have a significant part of the responsibility. In this review, then, one question will be in what ways the output of the 'Politics As Rational Action' programme may contribute to the education of good and rational citizens. A closely related question will be to what extent and

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how the output of the programme may contribute to the emergence of good and rational politicians and to a better understanding of the institutional conditions for rational policy.

## The PARA Programme

At the end of Lewin's *Ideologi och strategi* there is a list of books published – or about to be published – under the PARA programme. It includes 13 titles among which, of course, we find Lewin's concluding study, plus the book by which he – in collaboration with the other contributors – introduced the series, *Det politiska spelet* (The Game of Politics), published in 1979. One of the thirteen books, Axel Hadenius' *Medbestämmandereformen* (The Reform of Workplace Democracy), published in 1983, deals with political decision-making directly related to the institutional framework of democracy, which is also central in Lewin's concluding study. As seems natural, the majority of the publications, authored by Barry Holmström, Roger Henning, Sverker Gustavsson, Weiner Johansson, Lennart Nordfors, Evert Vedung and Axel Hadenius, respectively, elucidate different sectors of Swedish politics – agriculture, industry, housing, health, traffic, nuclear energy and taxation – through the study of central decisions during the seventies and early eighties. The rise and fall of governments have also been studied. In his book *Kärnkraften och regeringen Fälldins fall* (Nuclear Energy and the Fall of the Fälldin Government), from 1979, Evert Vedung has analyzed the consequences of the nuclear energy issue: The unconditional anti-nuclear commitment undertaken by *Centerpartiet* (Agrarians and Environmentalists) during the election campaign of 1976, affected the birth and life of the first government since 1936 having a non-socialist prime minister – a coalition of *Moderata Samlingspartiet* (Conservatives), *Folkpartiet* (Liberals) and *Centerpartiet* – and finally led to its dissolution. Another book, Olof Petersson's *Regeringsbildningen 1978* (The Government Formation of 1978), from 1979, has analyzed how *Folkpartiet* with only nine per cent of the seats in the *Riksdag* (Parliament), managed to form a minority government after the dissolution of the Fälldin government. (39 members of the *Riksdag* – the Liberal themselves – voted for it, 66 against, and 215 abstained, the significant fact being that less than half the *Riksdag* members voted against). A third book, Axel Hadenius' *Spelet om skatten* (The Game of Taxation), from 1981, analyzes the sequence of games related to the problem of reforming the taxation system which unfolded from the establishment of the Fälldin government through the twelve months' period of a Liberal minority government and the second period of the tripartite non-socialist government. It thereby also elucidates the demise of the second tripartite government and the birth of its successor,

a minority government formed by the Liberals and the Centre party; the former government broke down because the Moderates could not accept the agreement concluded between the Liberals and the Centre party on the one hand and the Social Democrats on the other.

It goes without saying that the collection of case-studies emanating from the PARA programme is highly informative of recent and present Swedish politics, and Leif Lewin's concluding work adds a significant historical dimension. So, both Swedish citizens and others who are interested in developing a well-founded understanding of the problems, alternatives and dynamics of Swedish political life – and thereby of political life more generally – are greatly helped by the products of the programme. Lewin's *Det politiska spelet* (The Game of Politics) in addition provides an educational simulation programme which gives students, on different educational levels, the possibility of confronting the same kinds of problems and alternatives as the participants in the instances of real-life decision-making analyzed in the programme.

The kind and quality of the understanding provided by the various studies, however, obviously depend upon the kinds of problems raised and the kinds of analysis performed. As suggested by the title of the research programme, 'Politics As Rational Action', its basic theoretical impulse comes from rational choice theory. More specifically, the theory of games of strategy has provided an important part of the theoretical framework. It is not only a figure of speech when the term *game* ('spel') occurs in three of the thirteen book titles. In addition, Social Choice Theory – the Arrowian tradition – and Public Choice Theory – the Tullock-Buchanan tradition – have provided ideas, problems and models of analysis. In short, the economic approach to politics is very much that of the PARA programme. To get a grip on its special character, however, it is necessary to note that formal theory does not exhaust the kinds of theoretical competence on which the Uppsala studies are based. As suggested by the title of Lewin's concluding book, *Ideologi och strategier*, the programme does not only deal with strategy. It also deals with political ideas. As has been argued by contributors to the PARA programme, a firm grip on real-life politics presupposes a good analysis of normative thinking in political life. Now, the analysis of ideas involved in political debates and political decision-making constitutes a strong tradition in Swedish political science – a tradition to which both Leif Lewin and some of his collaborators have made significant contributions. The presence of this tradition is clearly felt in this series of studies. The quality of the strategic analyses made in the various contributions is very much a fruit of the quality of the analyses related to the contents of the political problems, discussions, alternatives, and normative positions involved.

The Uppsala group, then, has dealt with the rationality of Swedish politics within a double approach: that of ideological analysis and that of economic theory, in a broad sense; rationality is conceived of as having two components, that of establishing a preference ordering, and that of strategic actions in accordance with these. A third approach should also be noted: the analysis of the actors' institutional framework with a view to the strategic constraints and possibilities inherent in it. Here, too, the PARA programme draws upon previous Swedish contributions. In particular, Gunnar Sjöblom's *Party Strategies in a Multiparty System*, from 1968, has provided useful tools of analysis. His distinction between the parliamentary arena, the electoral arena, and each party's internal arena has been systematically and fruitfully exploited in the various studies.

Having now indicated the contents and characteristic features of the 'Politics As Rational Action' programme, I shall turn more specifically to Lewin's concluding study.

## Lewin's Analysis of Ideology and Strategy in Swedish Politics

### *The Historical Cases*

I can hardly think of a better way of familiarizing oneself with key phases and issues in the last century of Swedish political history than by reading Lewin's book. Moreover, it is through the medium of his historical cases that Lewin elucidates the general problems and possibilities he wants to discuss. The historical contents of his book should therefore be outlined.

*The Customs Issue and the Voter-Representative Relationship.* Lewin's point of departure is the conflict between free-traders and protectionists in the 1880's. He makes a lucid analysis of the arguments submitted by the two sides, respectively, indicating also the concrete interests behind. What makes this conflict so interesting, however, is first of all the particular constellation of conflicting and common preferences that resulted. The conflict is at the outset combined with a broad agreement among the parliamentarians that the members of the *Riksdag* should not be elected with a view to representing specific views in the electorate; they should make their own mature judgments. There was consequently great hesitancy with regard to making the tariff problem an electoral issue. In the end, however, this barrier was broken and a new era of Swedish political life was thereby introduced. The content of politics was not any more to be a concern merely for trustees; the electorate were now to vote for candidates of their own orientation.

*Universal Suffrage and Proportional Elections.* The second issue studied by Lewin is that of universal suffrage. He again makes a highly interesting analysis of the arguments submitted for and against the opposing views. However, what most fascinates Lewin – and at least this reader, too – is the way in which the Conservative Arvid Lindman, taking over as prime minister after the resignation of the Liberal Karl Staaff in 1906, managed to build up a majority in each of the two chambers of the *Riksdag* for a reform which combined universal suffrage – for years opposed by Conservatives – with proportional elections, as against the majoritarian system – strongly favoured by the Liberals – which under universal suffrage might have proved fatal to Conservative representation. What Lindman did was to build in some more reforms, related to municipal elections, which would serve the interests of a subgroup of Liberal representatives from the periphery in a particular way. This group responded favourably, but added some demands of their own, which Lindman accepted but which met strong resistance among the Conservatives in the first chamber. Lindman overcame this resistance by making it clear that there was no better alternative available. As pointed out by Lewin, the end result was that the Conservative Lindman triumphed while the Liberal Karl Staaff and the Social Democrat Hjalmar Branting, who had both been untiring protagonists of universal suffrage, voted no when universal suffrage was introduced in Sweden.

*Parliamentarism.* The third democratic breakthrough analyzed by Lewin is the victory of parliamentarism in 1917. The king and his protagonists had for long insisted on the principle of a distribution of power between the monarch and parliament, and they had even suggested a stronger position for the king. But in the end the king had to give in as continued resistance might have led to a republic; very much against his preferences he had to appoint a coalition government formed by the Liberals and the Social Democrats under the leadership of the Liberal Nils Edén.

*The Unemployment Issue: The Social Democrats' Reorientation and Their 'Crisis Settlement' with the Agrarians.* So far, Lewin has dealt with issues pertaining to the political institutions themselves. The remaining case-studies deal with issues of economic policy, social policy, and the policy of energy and environment.

In the first of these studies Lewin illustrates how, in the inter-war period, two beliefs fettered for a long time political-economic thinking on the economic crises, more specifically the unemployment problem: the Liberal belief in free-market harmony and the Marxist 'belief in destiny' (ödestron). He then describes how the Social Democrats managed to liberate themselves from economic determinism, turning to the piecemeal policy of a planned economy where the means of production were left mainly in private

hands. Within the frame of Lewin's book this liberation gains a particular meaning: rationality was set free, politics as rational action was made possible.

The leading man behind the Social Democrats' new approach was Ernst Wigforss. Per Albin Hansson, however, prime minister from 1932 to 1946 (with only a three months' interruption in 1936), was the one to create the parliamentary basis for their expansive policy. From the outset he aimed at a policy of consensus. As unanimity proved impossible, however, cooperation was – at the end of a difficult process – established with the Agrarian Party ('Bondeförbundet', later 'Centerpartiet'). A piece of log-rolling or horse-trading ('kohandel') took place: the Agrarians accepted the idea of full-salaried public work and related state interventions to meet the unemployment problem, while the Social Democrats accepted strong protectionist measures in the agricultural sector. Within Swedish political culture this seems to have been an innovation – by many considered a startling one; issues were supposed to be voted over separately, and each vote should reflect nothing but one's preferences related to the issue in question. This kind of sincerity in voting would have given a majority to free-trade and the traditional unemployment policy, respectively. The prime minister asserted that such a result would have aggravated the crisis of parliamentarism, and he indignantly dismissed the accusations of blameworthy manipulations.

I shall later turn to Lewin's discussion of the general questions involved in the agreement concluded between the Agrarians and the Social Democrats, the so-called crisis settlement. Suffice it here to indicate that Per Albin Hansson's political attitude and competence, like Arvid Lindman's, rank very high in his judgment.

*The Planned Economy.* At the end of the Second World War, the Social Democrats adopted an ambitious programme where the idea of a planned economy was elaborated. It was emphasized here that in order to prevent the kind of crises characteristic of liberal economy and in order to promote efficiency the state had to go actively into the process of rationalization and restructuring in economic life. This programme triggered a heated debate during the first years after the war. In particular a proposal aimed at establishing a permanent council with coordinating powers for each branch of industry ('branschråd') was strongly opposed. The strategy adopted by industry and the non-socialist parties had several components. There were threats of placing investments abroad. At the same time measures of rationalization and restructuring were taken with a view to preempt political initiatives to this effect. Finally, there was a large-scale campaign based on arguments. One line of arguments dealt with the question of economic efficiency. Another dealt with fundamental rights. Strong fears were voiced

that the planned economy would interfere not only with property rights but also with democracy and in the end with freedom of thought. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* was translated and made a deep impression. Among the central debaters was Herbert Tingsten – formerly professor of political science in Stockholm, now chief editor of the daily *Dagens Nyheter* – who had converted from Social Democracy to Liberalism.

The confrontation culminated in the elections of 1948. The non-socialists gained 10 mandates in the second chamber of the *Riksdag* but this was not enough to topple the balance. Shortly after, reconciliation took place. The Social Democrats dropped the controversial parts of its programme, and the climate of political debates swiftly improved. Moreover, a pattern of cooperation between the government and industry, so characteristic of the years to come, now developed.

*The Issue of 'Job Pensions'*. In the peaceful years that followed, the Liberals and the Conservatives ('Högern', later to be renamed 'Moderata Samlingspartiet') experienced a double frustration: The Social Democrats remained in power, in spite of electoral setbacks, as they were able to form a coalition government with the Agrarians, and thereby the Liberals and the Conservatives remained outside the cooperation between business and government. Encouraged by electoral progress, however, the two parties looked for an opportunity to gain governmental power. Disagreement on how to build social security beyond 'bottom protection' ('bottenskyddet') seemed to offer a chance. Polls indicated that there was no enthusiasm for the socialist proposal of introducing an obligatory pension linked to one's job ('tjänstepension') in addition to the common pension ('folkpensionen'). The Liberals and the Conservatives, who favoured a different line – based on voluntary arrangements – with a view to stopping the expansion of state power, proposed a consultative referendum. The Agrarian Party, who had submitted their own proposal, agreed, and the Social Democrats, in spite of their strong scepticism with regard to the use of referendum within a parliamentary system, had to give in. The parties in government availed themselves of the right to formulate the alternatives to be voted on.

Although the Social Democrats' proposal obtained a higher vote than had been expected, it did not obtain a majority in the referendum, held in October 1957. As the government was split it resigned. The Agrarians, however, were not willing to immediately change sides, so the Liberals and the Conservatives had to give up their attempt to form a government. Instead, the Social Democrats formed a minority government. After some fruitless sounding out regarding the pension issue, the prime minister, Tage Erlander, requested the second chamber to be dissolved and new elections to be held. As Erlander expected, the socialist side gained by the elections. Nevertheless, they did not obtain a majority; the non-socialists obtained



an equal number of seats. The majority position, however, was given the socialists in the end as one Liberal representative decided to abstain. The alternative which at the outset had seemed a likely loser thereby ended up as the winner.

*Nuclear Energy.* The third post-war issue dealt with by Lewin is the issue of nuclear energy, which we have already touched upon. In Lewin's view the Social Democrats were probably right when they, after the elections of 1976, maintained that the unconditional commitment made by the Centre party (previously Agrarian Party) to not contributing to further expansion of the nuclear energy production, and to initiating immediate action with a view to liquidating what had already been built up, was decisive in bringing about a non-Socialist majority in the *Riksdag* (which from 1971 had only one chamber).

As soon as the Centre leader Thorbjörn Fälldin, in the capacity of prime minister, had to make compromises, Social Democrats, led by Olof Palme, hurled at him the accusation of perfidy ('Ett svek!'). It was suggested that Fälldin had in fact yielded to the pressure from his partners in government. This criticism influenced the bargaining situation within the government. In the end, the Centre party committed itself to a position which could not be accepted by its partners, and the government had to resign, in October 1978.

*'The Wage-Earners' Funds' (Löntagarfonderna).* In 1976 the Swedish Federation of Labour proposed a radical reform whereby a strong element of collective ownership over the means of production would be built up over time; this element was called 'The wage-earners' fund' (Löntagerfonden). The non-socialist parties reacted strongly against the proposal and even the Social Democratic party was rather reserved. Olof Palme, who resumed the position as prime minister in 1982, pointed out the complexity of the matter and emphasized the need for constructive discussions across party divisions with a view to arriving at a consensual solution to the underlying problems. This attitude was in line with the now traditional Swedish approach. Too much distrust, however, had developed, so even a watered-down proposal could not give rise to the kind of talks Palme wanted. The proposal was therefore put to the vote and adopted by the socialist majority in the *Riksdag* in December 1983. Thereafter, Lewin remarks, the Social Democrats were relieved to return to a consistent welfare policy of the traditional social democratic kind.

#### *The Historical Cases in a Game-Theory Perspective*

For each of the eight historical cases dealt with by Lewin, a special section is devoted to the question of how the decision – or one of the central

decisions in question – should be explained. The explanations are given in rationalistic terms – more specifically, in game-theoretical terms; in one case social choice theory provides a basis for the game-theory analysis. Lewin generally limits his use of game-theory models to games in normal form, more specifically games which in extensive form would be characterized by binary choices and one move for each player, the moves being simultaneous; in one case, however, he suggests that the moves can equally well be described as sequential. Both simple, symmetrical structures of familiar kinds – the Prisoner's Dilemma, the Assurance Game, Chicken and the Battle of the Sexes – and more complex games, characterized by asymmetries and to some extent imperfect information, are identified.

Lewin's analyses are interesting for several reasons. First, he succeeds in distilling significant aspects of the situations and processes in question. Second, he thereby contributes very usefully to the discussion of ways in which game theory can be fruitfully applied in empirical analyses. Third, by his combination of rich and lucid historical presentations and game-theoretic analyses he gives the reader a rare opportunity for independent reflections on ways in which to analyze the historical cases in question – and thereby on the application of game theory, more generally. I shall here avail myself of this opportunity, at the same time as trying to convey some of the central points in Lewin's analyses. The question of simultaneous versus sequential moves will be my point of departure.

As already mentioned, in one case Lewin suggests both structures, *viz.* in the job pension issue of 1957, and especially in the analysis of the process that ended in a referendum (chapter 7). Lewin first analyzes the situation as a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  game where the players have to choose between recommending and rejecting a referendum. He concludes, on the basis of thorough inquiries, that the former strategy was (weakly) dominant for the Liberals and Conservatives and for the Agrarians (indifference obtaining for the case where the two other players chose their second strategy), whilst the Social Democrats preferred to recommend a referendum only in the case where the two other players did so, too. Having made this analysis he suggests that the opposition parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, in fact had the first move.

I find Lewin's discussion interesting. In my opinion, however, it would have been even more illuminating if the sequential move alternative had been taken fully care of, as a game in extensive form. Similarly, such an additional analysis would in my view have been illuminating in one of the other historical cases, *viz.* that of the planned economy issue in the 1940's (chapter 6). To me it seems not unreasonable to assign the first move after the *Riksdag* elections of 1948 to the Social Democrats. The Social Democrats had to face the following questions: Should they still insist on the controversial parts of their programme for a planned economy, or

should they drop them? If they dropped them, should particular steps be taken with a view to making reconciliation and cooperation possible? For each alternative the question had to be asked, and answered, how industry and the non-socialists would respond.

Lewin in his analysis assumes simultaneous moves, and he concludes that for each player the hard strategy would be preferable only in the case where the other player also chose his hard strategy, while the joint choice of a moderate, conciliatory strategy would be optimal to both. The situation was, in other words, an instance of the Assurance Game. (Lewin uses Jon Elster's term 'Solidarity Game'. Personally, I find the term 'Moderate Self-Assertion' to be descriptive of a wide class of games of this type.)

One reason for considering simultaneity to be a plausible description is the fact that the strategic possibilities of the non-socialists were not necessarily limited to *responding* to moves made by the Social Democrats; they might, for example, have reasons for continuing their attacks irrespective of moves made by the party in power. On the other hand, the likelihood that the non-socialists would first of all *respond* to the Social Democrats, whose offensive had in the first place caused the confrontation, suggests that the sequential move alternative would be worth elaborating and analyzing.

There is one case in which I particularly miss a game tree analysis, *viz.* the universal suffrage issue (chapter 3). To me it seems that the most interesting aspects of the interaction, which is brilliantly described and analyzed by Lewin in his historical account, are not taken care of in a  $2 \times 2$  game between the Conservative and the Liberal party, as suggested by Lewin. Instead, a game tree might bring out the central strategic possibilities and considerations, more specifically a game-tree where the 'potential loser' (to use Lewin's phrase), Premier Arvid Lindman, has, *inter alia*, the first move and where his target group within the Liberal party and the reluctant members of Lindman's party have their moves, too.

So much about the question of simultaneous versus sequential moves. Let us now have a closer look at Lewin's matrix game analyses.

The historical cases treated in Lewin's book exemplify an interesting range of strategic situations and types of processes. The reconciliation between Social Democrats and non-socialists after the elections of 1948 demonstrates how peace can replace war in domestic politics. The emergence of an agreement between the Social Democrats and the Agrarians in the early 1930's exemplifies the establishment of cooperation, in the form of a coalition government, as a result of innovative thinking. On the other hand, the dissolution of the Fälldin government in 1978 illustrates how pre-commitment and a divergence of interests and prospects may bring such a cooperation to an end. The customs issue in the 1880's similarly demonstrates how a tacit agreement can break down as conflicting interests gain sufficient weight. Finally, the wage-earners' funds issue exemplifies

how conflict can prevail where attempts are made to establish cooperation, because trust is deficient.

To analyze these various situations and processes Lewin – as already suggested – introduces a number of well-known game structures: the Prisoner's Dilemma, the Assurance Game, etc. In addition some more complex game structures are inferred from his material.

The central part of Lewin's analysis of the formation of a coalition between Social Democrats and Agrarians in the early 1930's (chapter 5) is not game-theoretical but pertains to social choice theory, i.e. the theory of preference aggregation. This analysis is a very instructive piece of work. Lewin substantiates that there was no Condorcet winner over the pairs of positions related to the unemployment issue and the tariff issue; therefore a fundamental instability arose as soon as the norm of dealing with each issue in isolation was not considered binding. (Lewin's assertion, however, that through the piece of logrolling in question the two parties' preferences were changed so as to make the outcome a Condorcet winner and stable, is problematic; it is hardly consistent with the idea of logrolling, as distinct from the idea of parties being convinced by arguments.) In the game-theoretic part of his discussion Lewin refers to the Battle of the Sexes. I think an argument can be made for rather using Chicken as a model or, more specifically, to use a bargaining model of the Zeuthen-Harsanyi type, which for each stage of the process exhibits a Chicken structure.

Chicken is used – with success, I think – in the analysis of the processes that preceded and led to the dissolution of the first Fälldin government, in 1978 (chapter 8). The introduction of the Assurance Game and the Prisoner's Dilemma in the analysis of the customs issue in the 1880's is also interesting (chapter 2). In Lewin's analysis the tacit agreement breaks down as the Assurance Game is transformed to a Prisoner's Dilemma game. It seems to me that this analysis could be enriched by taking some more possibilities into consideration, specifically by bringing in an Assurance Game of incomplete information characterized by at least one player nourishing fear that the other player's preferences have become those of the Prisoner's Dilemma.

In his analysis of the unsuccessful attempts by prime minister Olof Palme to establish cooperation with the non-socialists in the wage-earners' funds issue, Lewin himself introduces incomplete information as a decisive factor (chapter 9). He finds that accommodation, as against confrontation, was the dominant strategy of the Social Democrats, while the non-socialists preferred confrontation to accommodation in the case where a confrontation policy was chosen by the Social Democrats, at the same time as they found joint accommodation to be the optimal outcome. Had this structure been known, and known to be known, mutual accommodation would have taken place. The Social Democrats, however, thought that the

non-socialists considered the joint choice of confrontation better than mutual accommodation and, more importantly, the non-socialists thought the Social Democrats had a Chicken preference structure, preferring not to be accommodative in the case where the non-socialists were so. Consequently, the mutual trust necessary for mutual accommodation was not present.

#### *Decision-Rules Invoked by Potential Losers*

Lewin emphasizes that his book is primarily written from the point of view of the 'potential loser', i.e. the actor who expects or fears to be defeated in the case of a simple majority decision (or a sequence of isolated majority decisions), where 'the winner takes all'. A central question in each of the historical cases therefore is what strategy the potential loser chooses in order to improve the expected outcome. Now, one element of such a strategy normally consists in arguing as convincingly as possible for one's own position. Another element may consist in trying to influence the way in which established preferences are transformed into a collective decision. (As appears from the historical cases, there may be other important elements, too.) The theoretical study of preference aggregation belongs to social choice theory. Lewin makes it clear that he has not set himself the task of systematically studying and evaluating the possible methods of preference aggregation. He restricts himself to identifying and commenting upon the methods recommended or invoked by the potential losers in the various cases. He does not limit himself to a historical inquiry, however. In his concluding chapter he exploits his historical material in an evaluation of different ways to conduct politics in a democratic society.

In studying Lewin's eight cases I have found it fruitful to make some distinctions which are not explicitly made in Lewin's analyses. In the first place, rules for transforming individual preferences into collective decisions may vary in two respects: they may vary with regard to the set of individuals to be considered relevant; and they may vary with regard to the way in which the given set of individual preferences is aggregated.

In the second place, as evidenced in Lewin's historical cases, a decision rule invoked by a potential loser may have different functions: First, it may constitute (part of) one of the alternatives to be voted on, cf. the universal suffrage issue of 1906, and Lindman's proposal for proportional elections (chapter 3). Second, it may constitute an alternative to the given decision-rule, cf. the much discussed piece of logrolling in 1932 (chapter 5). Third, it can constitute a supplementary rule, cf. the use of a consultative referendum in 1957 (chapter 7). It is important to note that some rules are formalized, e.g. strictly procedural rules, while others have the state of informal norms, like that of considering each issue in isolation.

The question regarding whose preferences should count as relevant was clearly focused upon in at least two of Lewin's historical cases. It was done in the customs issue of the 1880's (chapter 2) where the potential losers increasingly emphasized the necessity of making the issue an electoral one; the question of a *mandat impératif* was opened. A similar question arose in the job pension issue of the 1950's; *viz.* the question whether the preferences of the Swedish people, as against its representatives, i.e. the political parties, should be decisive (chapter 7). In a third case, that of the wage-earners' funds in the 1970's and 80's, there may have been a majority in the *Riksdag* even against the watered-down version of the proposal, but what counted for the Social Democrats was the fact that there was a majority for the proposal within the socialist majority (chapter 9).

As regards the question of how the preferences of the relevant set of individuals, or actors, are to be transformed into a collective decision, it should be noted that the content of a collective decision can be of various kinds; it may have to do with the election of representatives, or of government, or it may have to do with the adoption of laws, policies or budgets. These distinctions make it easier for us to see what is – and what is not – in Lewin's material. Lewin mentions no examples of potential losers proposing that the parties should be proportionally represented in the government (the Swiss system) or a system whereby each party is assigned governmental power for a period of time corresponding to the size of its parliamentary representation ('time democracy').<sup>1</sup> Neither do any of his potential losers propose formal rules whereby each party will win a number of votes corresponding to its size (cf. the idea of 'vote funds').<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, however, the Conservative prime minister Arvid Lindman in 1906 ensured a parliamentary future for the Conservatives by manoeuvring so as to obtain a majority for proportional elections when universal suffrage was adopted (chapter 3). Similarly, the Social Democratic prime minister Per Albin Hansson in 1932 ensured a basis for a more active unemployment policy, and indirectly for strong long-term influence on Swedish policy generally, by trading votes with the Agrarians, thereby transcending the convention of voting for one's top alternative in each separate case (chapter 5).

In one of the historical cases, that of the nuclear energy issue and the dissolution of the first Fälldin government in 1978, Lewin points out that the party in minority, the Centre party (formerly Agrarians), invoked preference intensities, as distinct from preference orders only, as a basis for collective decision-making (chapter 8). As far as I can see, however, this cannot without any ado be contrasted with simple majority decisions. As the context was intra-governmental negotiations the basic decision rule was probably unanimity, which makes it only natural that preference

intensities were invoked. In his discussion of the planned economy controversy after 1945 Lewin, finally, illustrates the possibility of influencing collective decisions by invoking the idea of fundamental rights, or by adopting provisions for basic rights which will set a limit to majority decisions (chapter 6).

The historical cases analyzed by Lewin not only exhibit a wide range of strategic situations, as pointed out in the previous section. They also exemplify a wide range of decision-rules invoked, or adopted. This is one of the reasons why Lewin's book is highly interesting and valuable. The contents and implications of different decision-rules are made more concrete, and their merits and demerits more easy to grasp. Moreover, the cases make us aware that decision rules may have different strategic functions. I shall return to this topic below.

### *Lewin's View of Strategy*

The eight historical cases analyzed by Lewin exhibit different examples of strategic behaviour. In some cases the potential loser manages to have the issue in question transferred to a more advantageous decision forum; in others, issues are coupled and positions modified in order to obtain a good although not ideal outcome, etc. The strategy of strong commitment is also exemplified. On the background of these varying instances, Lewin in his concluding chapter raises the question whether such behaviour is a morally acceptable means to obtaining political objectives.

World literature, he notes, is full of condemnations of strategic political behaviour; and in Sweden, specifically in the wake of Fällidin's nuclear energy policy, denunciations have been numerous in mass media – and not least among politicians themselves.

Lewin attacks the problem in several steps. He first reminds the reader that hardly anybody is a consistent believer in a predetermined course of events which leaves no freedom of choice to man. On the contrary, man is a rational, calculating actor who distinguishes himself from other beings by his ability to pursue indirect strategies. The fact that this is true of everybody makes for strategic interaction.

In political systems like that of modern Sweden, rules and institutions significantly limit the space of types of political action and interaction. This does not mean an end to strategy, however. Lewin points to the implications of Kenneth Arrow's impossibility theorem. More specifically he emphasizes the limits or 'defects' of the majority rule.

Lewin does not defend every kind of strategy. Thus, he joins Sissela Bok in maintaining – as a guiding principle – that truth should be spoken and promises be kept in public life. He finds, however, that much of the criticism of strategic political behaviour is based on misconceptions. There is room for strategy even if such norms are adhered to.

I permit myself, on this point, to add some comments essentially inspired by Lewin's rich presentations.

It has been shown that there exists no deterministic non-dictatorial method of preference aggregation which is strategy-proof. For all aggregation methods there exists at least one constellation of individual preferences which is such that somebody may gain from voting 'insincerely'. This is one reason why we can never attain a strategy-free democratic world. As clearly demonstrated by Lewin's material, however, this is not the only reason. Another reason is that rules, or methods of collective decision-making, differ with regard to their combinations of merits and demerits. Different interests or convictions can lead to different trade-offs, which again make for different kinds of strategies – and constellations of strategies – aimed at influencing the method of preference aggregation. Moreover, there may be disagreement, generally or in individual cases, as to whose preferences ought to count in the preference aggregation. It should finally be kept in mind that there is a phase before the final preference aggregation, *viz.* a phase where preferences are shaped and influenced through arguments, commitments and other kinds of moves. This phase is often rich in strategic possibilities, even where the norms of sincerity and fidelity are adhered to.

As indicated above, part of Lewin's argument refers to Arrow's impossibility theorem. At the same time as exploiting Arrow's decisive insight, however, he raises the question whether Arrow's way of putting the problem – if not supplemented – tends to make it difficult to give political leadership its due. There is, Lewin argues, a need for active political leadership which goes beyond transmitting the preferences of the citizen. We must make room, in our thinking, for a type of leadership which is characterized by the 'ethics of responsibility' (*Verantwortungsethik*) described by Weber, and for some of the independence on the part of representatives and leaders which was argued for by Burke.

Lewin submits some of his historical cases as illustrations of the problems and possibilities to be considered.

In modern democracy there is a strong tendency – not the least furthered by mass-media journalism – towards favouring a type of political behaviour characterized by an 'ethics of conviction' (Weber's *Gesinnungsethik*) rather than an 'ethics of responsibility', and a kind of leadership characterized by a *mandat impératif* rather than by relative independence. Lewin puts the Centre leader Thorbjørn Fälldin into this category. Fälldin went by his conscience and his programme – and committed himself *vis-à-vis* his voters – in such a way that almost no room was left for an independent assessment of situations and consequences. (Of course, he may thereby have made an attempt to compel the two other non-socialist parties to yield in the nuclear energy issue.) If the experience of such a combination of the ethics of



conviction and a *mandat impératif* may serve as a warning, two of the other historical cases analyzed may illustrate a positive role for political leadership, characterized by an ethics of responsibility and relative independence *vis-à-vis* the voters: Arvid Lindman made a perfect analysis of the strategic possibilities and prospects inherent in his situation when dealing with the universal suffrage issue; and he obtained the best possible result because he both possessed the sufficient amount of freedom and was determined to go for what was essential. Per Albin Hansson, in the early thirties, similarly had a political position, and a conception of leadership, which made it possible for him to make considerable concessions on one central point in order to obtain results where it really mattered.

It is neither possible nor desirable, Lewin maintains, to return to the Burkean conception of representation. He finds, nevertheless, that the political elites should be given a freer position than either the Arrowian model, if not supplemented, or modern journalism make for. At the same time the political engagement of citizens at large should be further stimulated so as to make everyone a practitioner of the ethics of responsibility. Just as political representation should not only consist in mirroring views but also in influencing or framing them, democracy should not only mean the right of vote but also an education whereby everybody experiences the *problématique* of decision-making. Pointing to his idea of a democracy of interaction presented in his 1970 book (on the people and the elites), Lewin emphasizes that only within such a democracy can a freer position safely be granted to political leaders.

If the voters' respect for the independent judgment of decision-makers is restored, however, Weber's conception of politics as a profession and a calling can be restored. Lewin concludes his book as follows: 'The profession of a politician is not that of the delegate who without a concern for the consequences faithfully votes as instructed to him by his mandators, but a trustee who in interaction with the desiderata of the voters argues for his conviction, hoping to convince, at the same time as he reserves himself the right to take the likely consequences of the various courses of action into consideration before making his final decision.'

## Conclusion

What can we learn from Lewin's book? The answer of course depends upon one's background and interests. From the point of view of political history – more specifically Swedish political history – it is a fascinating and highly instructive book. The reason for this is suggested in the title: *Ideology and Strategy*. The book in a superb way blends the presentation and analysis of, on the one hand, ideological content and, on the other hand, important

elements of the dynamics of politics – including both the force of arguments and the interaction of strategies (beyond the choice of arguments). From the point of view of normative theory and the history of ideas the present reviewer has learned much from Lewin's presentation and analysis of substantive positions on the one hand and the various positions with regard to decision rules on the other (where the two do not coalesce). With regard to strategic analysis, the focus on the strategic possibilities characteristic of parliamentary politics – more specifically the focus on the strategic significance of rules of collective decision-making, both as a frame and as a weapon – yields new insights; and Lewin's game-theoretic analyses in my view are very stimulating. They constitute a valuable contribution to the experimentation with this kind of analysis, which is highly needed.

In what ways, then, can it contribute to the task of improving the rationality of democracy?

Like the other publications under the PARA programme, Lewin's book makes possible a better understanding of issues, positions and interactions in Swedish politics and the way in which the various elements of Swedish political institutions function. For Swedish citizens and politicians, the book can therefore quite directly contribute to the basis of rational, i.e. well justified political conduct. More specifically this book, because of its combination of a historical dimension and an analytic approach, may contribute to freeing citizens and politicians alike from the ubiquitous tendency to be caught, in thoughts and action, by quite recent patterns; it makes it possible to rethink, for instance, the question of political leadership and interactive democracy in the light of forms of leadership to be found in the not too distant past.

Now, what is written about political institutions and political life in one country may certainly contribute to the political thinking of persons who are citizens of other countries. So, what has been said about the ways in which Lewin's book might contribute to political rationality in Sweden also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the rest of us. I think in particular that the way Lewin has raised the problem of political leadership and interactive democracy – on the background of both social choice theory, game theory and classical political theory – is thought-provoking, and it may be useful in the planning of political research related to our own countries.

Does Lewin suggest specific reforms, beyond that of rethinking the role of political leadership and interactive democracy? As far as I can see he does not. One might interpret his positive evaluation of the 'crisis agreement' between the Social Democrats and the Agrarians as a recommendation to discontinue the practice of voting on each issue in isolation. This is not a necessary interpretation, however. A rule may be a good one in the general case although there are specific cases where another rule would do better; and it may take political leadership to see where the rule has to be

transcended. In my view it is important, when trying to identify the message – or messages – inherent in Lewin's book, to keep in mind its basic philosophical tenet, which is freedom. This is a book where significant possibilities are described and analyzed. It is up to the reader to judge for himself and to make a choice.

What about the significance of the other contributions to the PARA programme?

These contributions all concentrate on recent issues. They therefore give us – in greater detail and breadth – descriptions and analyses which are directly relevant to the understanding of Swedish political institutions and life today. I have only had the opportunity to make a careful study of four of the books: Axel Hadenius' book on the game of taxation reforms, Evert Vedung's on the nuclear issue and the fall of the first Fälldin government, Olof Petersson's on the shaping of the Liberal minority government in 1978, and Lennart Nordfors' book on power, health, and profit (*Makten, Hälsan, och Vinsten* 1985). To judge from these books, however, the series of publications have a considerable educational potential. They contribute to a better grasp of the *problématique* of decision-making; hazy images and distortions – to which both mass media and politicians themselves may contribute – can be corrected, and individual instances of political behaviour, interaction and decision-making can be seen in a wider perspective. It should in particular be pointed out that the responsibility of politicians – *vis-à-vis* their voters – to work efficiently for the best possible outcome where the ideal is beyond reach is asserted not only by Lewin but also by some of his colleagues. Lewin quotes two passages where the necessity of strategic thinking is emphasized.

It ought to be clear from what has been written above that Lewin's book, in the opinion of the present reviewer, definitely deserves a wider circle of readers than the Nordic ones, and I am glad to learn that an edition in English is under preparation. (In my view some revisions would be advisable in the sections which deal with games and decision-rules.) Lewin's book, however, although it concludes the series of PARA publications, was not designed to summarize the whole programme. I wonder whether some kind of publication – or publications – in English could do this. To me it seems that there is so much of general interest in what has come out of the Politics As Rational Action programme, that possible ways to communicate more of it to an international audience ought to be seriously considered.

#### NOTES

1. Cf. Luisa Aall Baricelli, 'Considerations on a Time-Democratic Electoral System', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 13 (1985), pp. 379–386.
2. Björn S. Stefánsson, 'Public Choice through Vote Funds: A Model for Transactions', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 9 (1974), pp. 51–74.