

Paul V. Warwick: *Culture, Structure, or Choice? Essays in the Interpretations of the British Experience*. New York: Agathon Press, 1990, 251 pp.

This book focuses on a major discussion in social sciences over an important theme; the way in which social, economic, and political phenomena are to be explained. Three theoretical traditions are systematically compared; the 'culturalist', the 'rational-choice' and the 'structuralist' (essentially Marxist) traditions. Paul Warwick confronts these perspectives with issues concerning important changes in British economic and political history, and France provides an implicit, and often explicit, point of comparison.

The book comprises three parts; the first part contains two chapters on the three theoretical traditions but it also includes some empirical discussions and comparisons. The first chapter sets out to define culturalism and to elucidate some basic dilemmas of this approach. The essence of the culturalist approach is, according to the author, the assumption that shared values, norms, and orientations are widespread, deeply internalized and relative enduring features of human collectives, and, at least partially, independent causes of human behaviour. Values and cultural traits are ends in themselves, having become ends through a process of internalization, and have an autonomous role for explaining political phenomena.

Taking a well-known culturalist interpretation of differences between Britain and France – the conceptualization of British and French political cultures as characterized by 'pragmatism' and 'ideologism', respectively – as a point of departure, Warwick concludes the chapter by a negative evaluation of some existing culturalist interpretations. He admits that they often tend towards vagueness, tautology and contradiction and that the way it is argued that cultural variables are deemed to have independent explanatory power in relation to social and political structure, is not a satisfactory solution to the problem of explaining social and political phenomena.

In the next chapter the alternatives to culturalism are presented and the question of how the various traditions relate to each other is discussed. In essence, the author conceptualizes the differences between the approaches as one of the causal roles given to norms, values and culture in explaining social phenomena. Both the structural (Marxist) and rational-choice interpretations refute the principal argument of the culturalist approach that values, norms and culture play any significant role in explaining social change and persistence.

The essence of the structural Marxist perspective is that cultural and ideological traits exist mainly because it is in the interests of some class to create and propagate these goals, and that their existence continues to be tied to the particular social structure that produced them.

The relationship between the culturalist approach and the rational-choice approach is to some extent the same. According to the latter approach, norms and values are considered to exist because it is in the interests of individuals and groups to propagate and maintain them. Cultural traits and ideas are at some point of time useful in achieving particular goals, but their standing as independent forces is essentially nil. In the rational-choice approach, values and norms often play a significant role, but they should, according to the principles of this mode of theorizing, only be used as explanatory factors if they are related to 'rational' interests. Rational-choice theory should therefore be judged 'not by whether their works provide complete explanations without resort to cultural traits, but by whether the framework has been employed consistently to generate explanations, including ones for the existence of cultural traits' (p. 51).

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The chapter also provides a framework for the rest of the book because the three 'historical' issues that are taken up in the second part of the book are briefly outlined in connection with the presentation of the alternative traditions. The three issues are the rise of modern capitalism in the western world and Britain's role in particular, the British economic decline from the late 19th century, and the bases of political support in the British polity.

In part two of the book, these issues are discussed in separate chapters (chs 3–5), which together comprise the most substantial part of the book.

Warwick's strategy is to discuss each of these issues by reviewing how some pivotal figures for each mode of theorizing have dealt with them, to address the various authors' premises as regards their causal explanations and to consider the empirical evidence in some detail by using historical 'secondary analysis'. Warwick's careful discussion of the empirical evidence and the proposed explanations are clearly in favour of the culturalist explanation, although he reaches somewhat different conclusions for the three issues.

As regards the rise of modern capitalism, Weber's famous thesis on the role of Protestant ethic is contrasted with the rational-choice theory of Douglass C. North (in *Structure and Change in Economic History*), and several Marxist writers (Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson, Michael Wallerstein). Warwick examines these and some other theories from a comparative and methodological perspective and pays particular attention to the explanatory models in these contributions.

Warwick discusses Douglass C. North's view about the decisive role of property rights and taxation systems, and Michael Wallerstein's theory of the creation of a capitalist 'world-economy' in particular, and finds the causal arguments of these authors less convincing. North's 'new economic history' approach implies that differences in property rights are important for explaining the marked differences in economic growth between England and France, while Wallerstein underscores (among other things) the different emphases placed by England and France on overseas commercial expansion, and clearly has difficulty in incorporating these differences into his framework of the nascent capitalist world economy. These theories consequently have weaknesses from either a methodological or a comparative perspective.

As regards the role of Protestantism, Warwick emphasizes to some extent the general congruence of Protestantism with the centres of economic development in the 17th century, as well as the fact that not all Protestant, or even Calvinist, lands partook of these developments (e.g. Scotland). In Warwick's view the decisive differences between 'early starters' and 'latecomers' were not religious ones. In his comparison between England and France, both social, economic and cultural differences were important, and he agrees to some of the central arguments of the most prominent authors of the various modes of theorizing. England's tradition is characterized by a centralized political organization with high aristocratic solidarity and considerable authority for the ruler. France had to some degree the opposite circumstances: a proliferation of competing feudal jurisdictions which provided peasants with a powerful bargaining weapon vis-à-vis their lords. For this reason, the French nobility needed a strong royal authority to fulfil the surplus-extraction function. These factors were decisive for explaining why the Industrial Revolution took place in England and not in France, but the main underlying cause was more profound, according to Warwick: France and Britain before the Industrial Revolution were markedly distinct societal types (or 'followed divergent trajectories' as Warwick phrases it) with essential differences in structure, values and norms over most significant areas of social life.

Warwick then is not satisfied with either structural, rational or cultural explanations, and with regard to the various interpretations, the findings are inconclusive. The author concludes by admitting that it has not been established on firm ground that cultural aspects possess any degree of autonomy from the more concrete circumstances that gave birth to the French and British models of society, or to the structural features that sustained them.

In the chapter on Britain's economic decline, the main issue is what were the causes of the economic decline; purely economic explanations or explanations which also incorporate 'attitudinal' factors like 'a withering away of the "industrial spirit" or some kindred cultural or attitudinal deficiencies in late Victorian Britain' (p. 96). Warwick reviews the various explanations, and pays particular attention to economic and structural models of explanation. The chapter discusses (among other interpretations) Martin Weiner's cultural theory of Britain's decline (in *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*), Mancor Olsson's rational-choice thesis on Britain's decline (in *The Rise and Decline of Nations*), and several Marxist contributions.

After reviewing the evidence, Warwick finds most of the economic, structural and rational-choice explanations unsatisfactory. Rational-choice theory has problems with the fact that by stigmatizing industrial values and avoiding and abandoning industrial pursuits, the English middle class cannot be said to have acted rationally, economically speaking.

For an important school of British Marxist historians, Britain's decline also has posed a problem (Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn). This school emphasizes that the bourgeoisie never gained hegemonic status for its class and values, but that the alliance between the landowners and the bourgeoisie for several reasons led to a reinvigoration of the former group as regards values and standing in society during the latter part of the 19th century: Warwick finds their position difficult to maintain: How could industrialism (and democracy) in Britain have been invented and have prospered for so long within a disdainful climate of gentlemanly capitalism?

Warwick here finds the cultural explanations the only acceptable ones. During the 19th century an important change in economic, social and political values took place among the British middle and upper classes, which in a causal sense was important for explaining Britain's economic decline. The change in *economic values* meant, for example, the turning away from entrepreneurial activities, the reliance on safe overseas investments, and the preference for small family firms rather than dynamic, expanding enterprises; the change in *social values* meant a tendency for disconnection between social status and 'trade', the importance of class distinction by underscoring differences in education and accents, the prestige associated with public (especially imperial) services, and the proliferation of honours, military orders and titles. This transformation had very little to do with rational-choice calculations of the bourgeoisie's self-interest, and the evidence suggests that certain values may have an appeal that extends beyond their utility in maximizing personal material interests.

The last issue Warwick discusses is the apparently high political support or legitimacy in Britain. Warwick reviews various perspectives on British political culture (Eckstein, Almond and Verba and others) and criticizes the political culture approach for not having a unified approach as regard how the central values underlying the high level of support should be defined and measured, what causes values to change over time, and whether they have any autonomous causal role to play in the explanation of political performance or political support. He also discusses Ronald Rogowski's rational-choice theory and various Marxist theories

which explain the deferential aspect of British political culture as reflected in the acceptance of the dominant value system by the subordinate classes. The rational-choice theory of Rogowski is criticized mainly on empirical grounds, and Warwick shows that the Marxist theories do not agree on the fundamental nature of the social structure at the time when the deferential or directive political culture was consolidated in Britain, or on the mechanism by which deferential (or acquiescent) political attitudes became prevalent within the working class. Warwick then presents his own theory which attaches a greater causal role to the appeal of certain values. It was aristocratic prestige and the appeal of certain values traditionally associated with the landed elite such as social authority, organic unity, paternalism, as well as the appeal of deference and obedience which were the decisive explanations for what became the standard cultural model of British politics. These values were of course the results of the ability to use institutional resources effectively to propagate and reinforce those values, but the key reason was the appeal these values represented at all levels of society.

Warwick's central arguments in this respect, which are outlined in more detail in the third part of the book, are that human beings are motivated to seek not only material advantage but also social distinction. This motivational dichotomy finds expression in a differentiation between societies organized according to hierarchical principles and societies organized according to the pursuit of material goods through the markets, with associated cultural value systems. Although market societies have usually been more successful economically, the direct and personal forms of social coordination employed in hierarchical societies possess a greater appeal under certain circumstances. The appeal of direct social coordination, stable expectations, and reciprocity explains not only why individuals often endorse hierarchical value systems and social structures even when they themselves stand little chance of exercising authority, but also why hierarchical values have proven to be so enduring, as for example in 19th- and 20th-century Britain.

Warwick's book then is a support to the cultural interpretation of historical sociology and political sciences. His main perspective can be summed up in the following arguments: cultural traits often do serve material purposes, and certain kinds of structures often imply ideational and value construct, but once created, these constructs often gain a life of their own, sustained not by material self-interest or concrete structural circumstances, but by their appeal to more fundamental human needs and expectations. Culturalism is given its autonomy by linking societal types and their associated value complexes with basic human motivations.

Warwick is, however, critical of many of the existing culturalist theories. He argues for a very different culturalist interpretation, but his elaboration of the persistence of hierarchical values ends up with an explanation of why people often endorse these values. This is not a convincing position. It is difficult to see how a culturalist position escapes the traditional culturalist premise that values and norms reflect socialization experiences, and that persistence at the mass level is explained by transmittance of values between generations. The micro-level processes are not satisfactorily dealt with in Warwick's approach, something which is a major objection since the internalization of values and norms plays a central role in his approach.

An objection to the book which this reviewer will put forward is that Warwick discusses too many authors and positions from various modes of theorizing. The often brief presentation sometimes becomes too brief, and one wonders whether the presentations and cited passages are representative of these authors' lines of reasoning. Some theoretical positions are dismissed by very simple arguments. For example, the theory of the disadvantage of an early start in the process of

industrialization is dismissed because there is no evidence to show that in general great success at one level of technology does invariably induce tardiness in developing and adapting at the next level (p. 98) without any further reasoning or reservation.

Warwick's own position could also have been elaborated on in more detail, and the last chapter could preferably have been more theoretical in the sense that the theoretical framework of the culturalist position should have been made even more explicit. This chapter was somewhat disappointing because it became too repetitive and did not present a thorough theoretical framework for Warwick's own position.

However, Warwick has written an important book which challenges many principal premises in both rational-choice and structuralist positions in historical sociology and political science.

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Michele Micheletti: *The Swedish Farmers' Movement and Government Agricultural Policy*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990, 215 pp.

Agricultural policy-making as a subject has fascinated political scientists for many decades. The clear-cut profile of well-organized interests, the dynamic force of rapid change and modernization in farming, and the way the state has been influenced by agricultural interests in the policy-making process can explain this attraction.

The traditionally national importance of domestic food production has resulted in a blurring of the difference between private and public interests. This collective aspect of private production also explains why the farming community has enjoyed high levels of state subsidies and regulated borders preventing the importing of cheap food.

A large amount of literature has already emerged to explain the political success of the farmers. Most contributions have stressed the influence of effective farm interest organizations and the importance of the farm vote. The approach of the book by Michele Micheletti is mainly historic and corporatist, trying to make use of pressure group theory in the context of an adaptive leadership and political symbolism. It analyses the role of the Swedish farmers' organizations in detail from the start up until today. The relationship between farm organization and government is described fully. Fewer pages are devoted to party political aspects of farm influence.

The first part of the book is called 'Every Nation's Heartland'. It is argued that use of 'the rural myth' by the farm unions is an important part of their strategy to rally sympathy and support among the general public and politicians. This argument is considered in historical, organizational and political contexts.

The tensions between safeguarding the 'backbone of the nation' and how to adapt to internal and external demands for lower prices and more efficient production, have possibly made agriculture the most organized, regulated and state-protected of any sector. This 'exceptionalism' has led to the paradox that the more agriculture has declined, the more powerful it has become.

In a changing world what is at first glance an advantageous position of close connection to the state and preferential treatment has turned out to be a problem: the sector is extremely vulnerable to shifts in state agricultural policy.