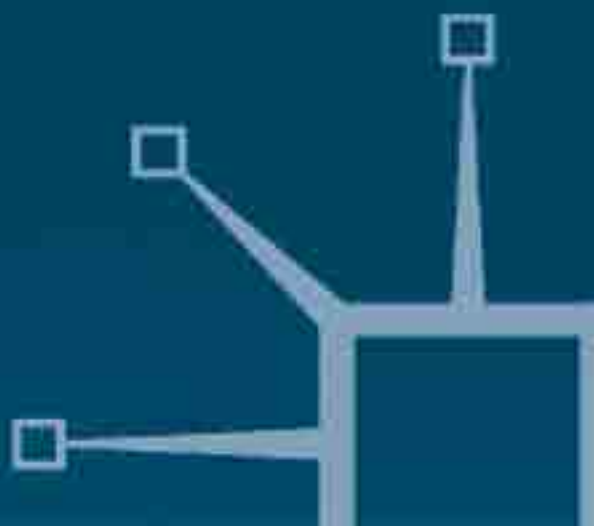


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Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919-39

Systematic Case Studies

Edited by
Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Jeremy Mitchell



Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919–39

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Systematic Case Studies

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Preface

Conditions of democracy, favourable and unfavourable ones, have again come to the centre of attention of increasing numbers of political scientists, but also many practising politicians after the 'Third Wave' of democratization in the wake of the events of 1989–90 and the breakdown of previously totalitarian or authoritarian regimes in many parts of the world (see also Huntington 1991). In contrast, the cases and the period presented in this and the subsequent volume deal with what Huntington has called the 'first reverse wave' of democratization in Europe in the time between the two world wars. A comprehensive and systematic investigation of the conditions of the survival or breakdown of democracy in this period, such as ours, certainly has its own intrinsic merits, in particular because it may help to better understand the fatal consequences of these developments in Italy, Germany and elsewhere with the resulting most dramatic and (still for a long time to come) traumatic events of the Second World War, the holocaust and its aftermath. But it may also serve as an important backdrop for a better assessment of present developments and some of the problems and risks involved concerning the prospects of democratic consolidation (see also Linz and Stepan 1996) or a potential reversal of the last wave in Eastern Europe, the territories of the former Soviet Union and other regions of the world (see, for example, Diamond *et al.* 1997).

The history of our research project and our continuing interests in these matters precede, however, the more recent events by far (for a more detailed account see also the Introduction below). At this place, we only can acknowledge the manifold intellectual and material supports we have received over all the years. While the first are more difficult to attribute in an ever-changing academic environment and are mentioned in the text in greater detail, the latter include funding at various stages by the European Consortium for Political Research, the Christian-Michelsen-Institute at Bergen, the Norwegian Science Foundation, the Nuffield Foundation, the Volkswagen Foundation and a number of universities hosting our meetings to all of which we wish to express our sincere gratitude.

The final stages of production of this volume also benefited greatly from the data collecting and computing skills of Sven Quenter, the painstaking efforts to draw the tables and graphs and adapt the final layout of Achim Schmelzer, and the linguistic and typing skills of our always cheerful and supportive secretary, Karin Sattler.

The second volume of this long-term enterprise which covers the systematic cross-cutting analyses of all the cases presented here, which is also almost completed, will now, hopefully, follow very soon.

Marburg and Oxford

DIRK BERG-SCHLOSSER
JEREMY MITCHELL

Foreword

It is a pleasure and an honour to write a foreword to this work by Dirk Berg-Schlosser and the outstanding group of collaborators he has brought together.

In the 1960s I started teaching a seminar, sometimes with Daniel Bell, on the breakdown of democracies. I planned a meeting at the 1970 Varna Congress of the International Sociological Association for the Committee on Political Sociology, followed by another one in 1973 organized with Alfred Stepan and incorporating Latin American specialists. That resulted in the book we edited jointly *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, including my booklength essay. It is wonderful to see almost twenty years later this even more ambitious intellectual effort to understand some of the most important and tragic events of the twentieth century. It is an example of what Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton (1950) called 'Continuities in social research: the effort to revisit earlier work, expand it in new directions and subject it to critical scrutiny.' The time for such an enterprise was ripe. Since 1978 a great number of original contributions has been published (some by contributors to this volume), the historical-sociological record had been improved, and new methodological tools for the analysis of macropolitical and social processes had been developed. Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Gisèle De Meur, in an essay that deserves to be considered as a classic, have critically reviewed the major hypotheses about the conditions of democracy in interwar Europe, using a Boolean Test. This work represents the culmination of a long-term collaborative effort.

The book which I co-edited covered only the breakdowns in Italy, Germany, Austria and Spain, and Finland as a case of near breakdown. The present work has made the point of including for comparative purposes countries in which democracy survived: Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and others that faced a serious crisis: Finland and France. In addition to the classic cases of breakdown, a number of Eastern European and Balkan countries, plus Portugal, have been brought into the comparative framework. The different outcomes are well defined even in the short titles, like the one on Estonia: 'Crises and "pre-emptive" authoritarianism.' (Perhaps it would have been interesting to have a comparative analysis of the Baltic republics accounting for why Lithuania fell earlier and deeper to authoritarianism.) One of the recurrent themes, even in the titles, is 'compromise': transitions from compromise to conflict and from conflict to compromise and durable compromises as in Sweden. All in all, the history, societies and politics of 18 countries and of 11 breakdowns are analysed. They provide the opportunity to test and expand the theoretical framework laid out in the excellent introductory chapter.

After reading this work (and the literature so well reviewed critically on it) some readers might ask if we have reached closure on this chapter of European social and political history. The answer is yes and no.

There are still unanswered questions. The most difficult is how did the different ideologies come to be taken so seriously, not only by demagogues, party activists and followers of different movements, but also by highly educated and intelligent people?

The political culture of each country and of different sectors of the population might have predisposed to the appeal of the interwar ideologies but the ideological climate that dominated in Europe in those years knew no borders, the intellectual developments leading to it had parallels in most of them, the intellectual and political writings were widely read everywhere.

From the perspective we now have, after the suicide of Hitler in the bunker, the *aggiornamento* in the Catholic Church, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the lowering of the red flag in the Kremlin, we are in a better position to write a sequel to the sociologico-political analysis of the interwar crisis.

We still need to take seriously the content – intellectual and emotional, rational and irrational – that gave meaning to politics in the age of ideology. What moved people to kill and to be killed for the ideas, they would say ideals, that led to so much suffering and left so few achievements?

Why were liberal democratic ideals so weak or on the defensive in those years? We still need to integrate better the history of ideas and ideologies competing in those years with the social history. I mean *all* the ideologies focussing on their interaction – Wechselwirkungen – rather than the appeal of any one of them – fascism, communism, for example – in isolation. Not a small task which will have to build on the foundation provided by this book.

I have a *Wahlverwandschaft* with Berg-Schlosser because I share with him the openness to different theoretical approaches – which some might define as eclecticism – and his strong commitment to empirical testing: the confrontation of theories with the facts. The broader array of methodological tools he is ready to use reflects a generational change.

What more could anyone wish than an effort to present and integrate the main theories and the knowledge of 18 countries by a group of experts. I can only congratulate the authors and the readers for the work they have in their hands.

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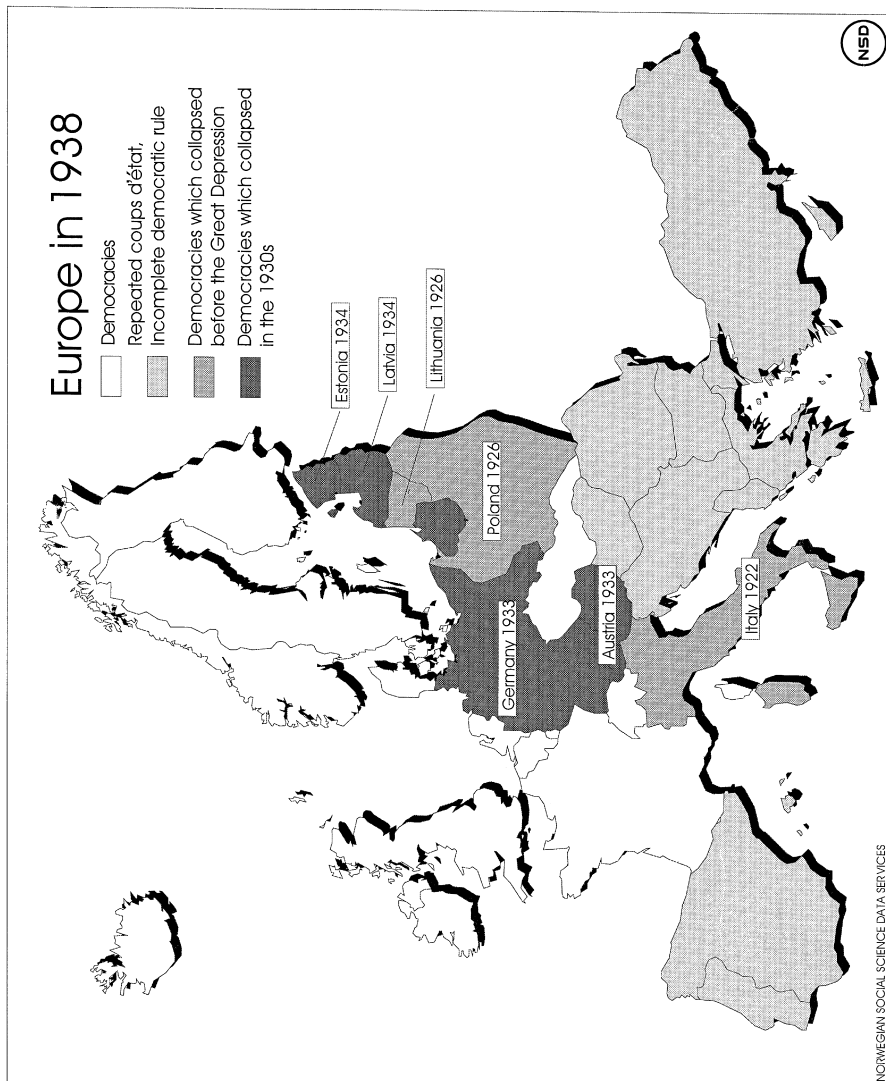
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1

Introduction

Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Jeremy Mitchell

The analysis of conditions for the emergence and maintenance of democratic political systems is one of the central concerns of political science. As one of our well-known predecessors expressed it: 'L'organisation et l'établissement de la démocratie... est le grand problème politique de notre temps' (de Tocqueville 1840). Since de Tocqueville's times and his brilliant analysis this statement has lost none of its relevance. Today, we witness processes of democratization the world over (most dramatically, of course, in what used to be called the 'Second World'), but we have also painfully become aware of the many imminent problems and potential setbacks (more recent major studies include, for example, Lijphart 1984; Sartori 1987; Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1988; Dahl 1989; Vanhanen 1990; Huntington 1991; Hadenius 1992; Sorensen 1993; Held 1993; Schmidt 1995).

For a study of the chances and failures of democracy in a comparative perspective, the inter-war period in Europe provides a unique setting: The cases to be considered share many socioeconomic and political-cultural characteristics. Their history is relatively well-researched and documented. The time period is clearly demarcated by common events, the two world wars, which significantly altered the internal and external political landscapes and set it apart from earlier and later developments. All the cases considered here could initially be termed parliamentary democracies – some of them relatively long established, others more recent and more in form than in substance. They were all affected by a common external stimulus – the world economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Some of the parliamentary regimes survived, others turned to more authoritarian rule – in particular, fascism. Prevailing assumptions of modernization and progress, whether of liberal or Marxist varieties, were shattered. In this regard, the German case in particular, where a highly 'developed' country turned to one of the most ruthless and bloody forms of rule in history, defied all simple explanations.

An important group of historians attempted to map out the special route ('*Sonderweg*') Germany had taken in its course toward modernity and listed some of the major factors in this regard, such as the feudalization of the

2 Introduction

bourgeoisie instead of a successful bourgeois revolution, the late national integration under authoritarian auspices, the lack of political participation of broader social strata, and the state-oriented authoritarian ('*obrigkeitsstaatliche*') patterns of thinking and behaviour in general. Among the more prominent earlier authors in this regard are, for example, 'conventional' historians like Friedrich Meinecke (1946), Hajo Holborn (1951) and Helmuth Plessner (1935, 1959), but they include also influential Marxist thinkers such as Ernst Bloch (1935) and Georg Lukács (1955). More recent examinations have been undertaken by both sociologists – such as Ralf Dahrendorf (1965) and Rainer Lepsius (1966) and social historians – like Hans-Ulrich Wehler (1973), Heinrich August Winkler (1972, 1984) and Jürgen Kocka (1977). These have been challenged by others both with regard to some of the major contributing factors, e.g. the special relationship between the bourgeoisie and the State, and the implicit assumption of 'normal' routes being pursued – for example, elsewhere in England or France (see in particular Calleo 1978; Blackbourn and Eley 1980; reactions can be found in Wehler 1981 and Winkler 1981. The importance and some of the major implications of the whole debate are assessed in Grebing 1986). In spite of the intrinsic merits of many of the arguments raised in the debate, the real 'acid test' (Wehler 1981; 487) of a truly comprehensive comparative analysis, at least of similar and comparable cases, has not been conducted so far.

This also applies to the somewhat more general 'theories of fascism', which have been developed to account for the observed phenomena (see, in particular, Nolte 1966, Saage 1974, Laqueur 1979, Mosse 1979, Larsen *et al.* 1980, Wippermann 1983, Kühnl 1990, Griffin 1991). If 'fascism' is accepted as a generic term, which can be applied at least to the most distinct cases of Italy and Germany, but also to a certain extent to 'borderline' cases of system breakdown during this period – as in Austria, Spain or Portugal – and less successful movements with similar characteristics elsewhere, such an analysis must take into account both instances of breakdown (see also Linz and Stepan 1978) and survival and look for the specific constellations of factors responsible for either outcome. Here again, important comparative dimensions are lacking so far. This is also noted by Stanley Payne, for example, in his contribution to one of the major studies on the subject:

Clearer analysis is required of the political, social, economic and national/historical variables involved in those countries where the fascists achieved significant mobilization (e.g. 15 per cent or more of the vote), compared with similar factors in other European countries where this support did not exist. [In particular]...a more exact definition of the unique structural and cultural problems of South and Central European countries in the 1920s and 30s, and their relationship to fascist strength (or its absence), may serve to elucidate to what extent fascism was merely a conjunctural historical phenomenon or whether it is likely to be paralleled or approximated by new forces in the future, whether in Western countries or the new polities of the Third World (Payne 1980: 23–4).

This leads us to a broader perspective from which more general theories of development and system change must be assessed. These include both more specific historical materialist or structural comparative approaches (see, for example, Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979; Rokkan 1975; Tilly 1984), and aspects of a more general theory of crises (cf. Almond, Flanagan and Mundt 1973; Dobry 1986). In this regard we concur with Theda Skocpol when she concludes: 'Ours is an era when no existing macrosociological theory seems adequate, yet when the need for valid knowledge of social structures and transformations has never been greater. Analytic historical sociology allows sociologists to move toward better theories through a full and detailed confrontation with the dynamic variety of history' (1984: 385).

For this purpose the following discussion will briefly look at the broad range of explanatory factors and hypotheses which have been advanced by individual historians or major proponents in the areas of theories of fascism, theories of development and crisis, or empirical democratic theory. These include both approaches based on a single or dominant factor or a specific sequence, and also more comprehensive and complex 'conjunctural' ones. This overview will then serve to provide the background for the conceptual framework of the case-studies in this volume, which will be developed somewhat further below, and the major hypotheses, as far as they seem to be worth retaining, which will be tested systematically in the second volume.

1.1 The state of the art – major approaches and hypotheses

The majority of studies dealing with conditions of democracy, explanations of fascism, and the stability or breakdown of political regimes emphasize a single factor or a particular kind of causal relationship. These include general socio-economic indicators of wealth and development, more specific macro-economic variables such as unemployment or inflation, particular social structural constellations and historical sequences, certain political cultural traditions, intermediary structures such as party systems and interest groups, specific institutional aspects of the central political system, particular policy measures and reactions to the economic crisis, and, finally, external political conditions and influences. All of these factors and studies concerned with them can be discussed here only very briefly. Without claiming a comprehensive coverage in any way, we have at least selected some of the more influential and representative ones.

1.1.1 General socioeconomic indicators

Most studies emphasizing levels of wealth and development and their respective indicators can be grouped under the category of 'modernization theories' (see also Apter 1987). Most prominent among these was Lipset's 'Political Man' (1960), in particular his chapter on 'Economic Development and Democracy'. There, he restated the general hypothesis that 'the more well-to-do a nation, the

greater the chances that it will sustain democracy' (1963 edn: 31). Indeed, among the 'stable European democracies' which he analysed were cases like Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, which all showed high levels of wealth, industrialization, education, and urbanization. Under his (very broad) category of 'unstable democracies and dictatorships' countries like Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain, with lower levels in these regards, could be found. But he also noted that 'Germany is an example of a nation where growing industrialization, urbanization, wealth, and education favored the establishment of a democratic system, but in which a series of adverse historical events prevented democracy from securing legitimacy and thus weakened its ability to withstand crisis' (1963: 28). This also certainly applies for a case like Austria, but the kind of 'adverse historical events' and their specific roots were not pursued further in his analysis. Similarly, the fact that countries like Czechoslovakia, Finland or France, which also had higher levels of development and democratic institutions and which, as far as internal factors were concerned, survived the economic crisis of the 1930s, were grouped in the same 'unstable' category was not very helpful analytically.

One of the major deficiencies of many studies of this kind lies in the fact that they draw conclusions relating to historical developments from data based on a cross-national design. In fact, when Flanagan and Fogelman (1971: 493), for example, analysed longer-term time series for a greater number of countries, they found many cases contradicting such a simple hypothesis and they concluded: 'If we want to know the likelihood that any one country will become more or less democratic, only longitudinal analysis of that country will suffice'. A further limiting assumption lies in the (often) expected nonlinearity of such developments. History is supposed to proceed in rather regular phases or stages (most notably, for example, in Rostow 1960), without taking into account the possibility of economic or political reversals or the more complex international interactions which may severely 'distort' the expected outcomes.

When such assumptions of unilinearity are dropped and the specific historical sequences of each case are more carefully observed and documented, as for example in the study by Tatu Vanhanen (1984), the most comprehensive one so far, a generally better 'fit' between his index of democratization and his major independent variable, the 'index of the distribution of power resources', can be observed. The negative signs he finds for the residuals in almost all instances refer to the 'breakdown' cases in this period indicating, nevertheless, a certain deviation between the level of socioeconomic development and the kind of political regime. This, again, is particularly striking for a case like Germany, but it also applies, to a somewhat lesser extent, to countries like Austria, Italy and Hungary. He, therefore, is forced to conclude: 'The rise of Hitler and his Nazi party is an example of incalculable stochastic processes in politics. There is no way that we can predict or explain such events by the explanatory variable of this study' (1984: 85). He then refers to aspects like 'the exceptional personal qualities of Hitler', 'Hitler's and Goebbels' ability to persuade', 'the superior ability to intimidate and terrorize political opponents', and the 'exceptional and temporary situation [of the economic

depression in the early 1930s] permitting the seizure of power' (ibid.). He concludes that Austria 'was more or less forced to follow the German pattern' (ibid.). All these factors remain rather speculative, however, and we will have to test them separately, as far as possible, in the course of our research.

1.1.2 Specific macroeconomic variables

Apart from broader levels of development a number of specific economic factors have been considered as, at least, triggering the political crisis and eventual system breakdown. Most often, high and rapidly increasing rates of unemployment have been cited as the single major cause for the rise of fascist movements and the collapse of democratic regimes in the wake of the world economic crisis after 1929. Even if the first Fascist takeover – in Italy – cannot be accounted for in this way, at least the German case is often considered to have succumbed primarily for this reason (see, for example, Galenson and Zellner 1957; Kaltefleiter 1968).

However, if we examine the available figures, it is evident that the rate of unemployment in the Netherlands, for example, even exceeded that of Germany (32.7 per cent in 1936 compared to 30.1 per cent in Germany in 1932) and that the peak in Ireland (37.6 per cent in 1935) was higher than in Austria (34.8 per cent in 1933). In any case, it is not so much the effect of any economic factor *per se* which must be analysed, but its specific impact on the respective social and political forces which may lead to an overall change in the equation and, possibly, a system breakdown. In this regard, there seems to be a strong correlation between the rate of unemployment and the vote for the National Socialist Party in Germany (Kaltefleiter 1968: 31; Lepsius 1978: 51). When the effects are analysed more closely, however, by means of ecological regressions on the district level, it turns out that this relationship is much less clear-cut: unemployed 'blue-collar' workers tended to vote for the Communist Party rather than the NSDAP and it was mostly among unemployed 'white collar' employees and the self-employed lower middle classes that the Nazis increasingly could draw their support (Falter *et al.* 1986, esp. 161ff).

If we look at some other macroeconomic variables, the situation in Germany was most pronounced as far as the overall fall in GNP per capita and, more specifically, industrial production is concerned. Per capita income in Germany fell by 42 per cent between 1929 and 1932 and industrial production by 34 per cent. But this would not account for the Austrian case, for example, where the drop in GNP per capita was comparable to the one in France (29 per cent in 1934) or Belgium (27 per cent). Industrial production (indicating which sector was most strongly affected) fell as strongly in Austria as in Germany and much more strongly than in France (28 per cent), but, again, Belgium, which suffered almost as severely in this regard (a decline of 37 per cent), would be a counter-factual example.

A similar claim as a major explanatory factor could be made with regard to monetary stability. Here, Germany, together with Hungary and Poland,

was most strongly affected by deflationary effects, but Austria and Spain, with hardly any changes in the cost of living index, would then be viewed as deviant cases. As this brief discussion shows, at least the more concrete social structural effects of such influences and their respective dynamics will have to be analysed more closely in order to account for the observed variance.

1.1.3 Social structural approaches and historical sequences

The analysis of social structure as a primary explanatory factor for political developments lies within the broad tradition of 'historical-materialist' approaches, which, of course, have been significantly shaped by the works of Karl Marx and his successors (for an outstanding example of empirical application of such an approach to one of our cases see his 'The XVIIIth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', first edition 1852). Today, within this tradition a great variety of authors can be found. These range from (still) quite orthodox Marxist writers, including some from the former GDR and other East European countries, through more diversified and sophisticated (neo-)Marxist thinkers to social-structurally and historically-oriented authors who do not share major epistemological assumptions of Marxist approaches.

Many Marxist writers have been most immediately concerned with the analysis of fascism and, in particular, the rise of Hitler and the NSDAP. For a long time, the orthodox Soviet definition, which was presented by Georgi Dimitroff at the occasion of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in 1935, prevailed in this regard. Dimitroff declared fascism to be 'the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialistic elements of finance capital', and 'fascism that is the power of finance capital itself' (see Pieck, Dimitroff, Togliatti 1957: 87). This definition was shared by authors from the GDR like Gossweiler (1971) and, with certain variations, Opitz (1974), for example. From this perspective, Hitler and his party were mere agents of state monopolistic imperialism. Even though such positions are now criticized by other authors of a similar persuasion like Kühnl (1990: 233 ff.) for their neglect of the mass basis of fascism and certain social psychological factors, he does not leave the realm of general theories of 'state monopolistic capitalism' as the dominant factor. Even if Horkheimer's (1972) dictum that 'who talks about fascism cannot be silent about capitalism' is accepted, a deterministic reductionism of this sort does not seem to be very helpful.

In a more differentiated way, other authors emphasize the particular alliance which was formed between specific but by themselves relatively autonomous social forces. George Hallgarten (1955), for example, pointed out that the Nazi take-over was made possible by the agreement between some parts of the upper classes and Hitler's movement. In particular, the meeting between von Papen and Hitler on 4 January 1933 in the house of the Cologne banker Curt von Schröder, had, in his view, been instrumental in this regard. Similarly, Arthur Schweitzer (1966: 76) argued that 'the Great Depression and the Nazification of the middle class were

necessary – but not sufficient – causes for the rise of the Nazi system'. Three further conditions had enabled the Nazis to come to power:

The first was the unification of the upper class into a single power bloc dedicated to overcoming the depression by promoting a political dictatorship. Of equal importance were the alliance which the generals, big business, and the landowners had used their influence to restore between the two parties, the NSDAP and the DNVP, and the tie-in between these parties and the upper class. Finally, as parliament lost its power because of a Nazi-Communist majority, the subsequent presidential government came under the effective control of the various segments of the upper class. This power bloc had captured the government prior to the rise of the Nazis (*ibid.*).

The unity of the assumed power bloc has, however, been questioned by others (see, for example, Petzina 1967) and further social factors, including the middle classes and the peasantry, have been cited. In this regard, in a 'Bonapartist' tradition, authors like Otto Bauer (1936) considered the state as the overall register of class forces and referred to the special conditions conducive for the fascist takeover in the post-war period. A neo-Marxist author like Nicos Poulantzas (1970) also distinguishes between the 'normal' political expression of developed capitalism, i.e. bourgeois democracy, and the 'exceptional' state, i.e. fascism in its different variants. As with the arguments raised so far, such propositions will have to be analysed and tested more closely. Nevertheless, more often than not, as Richard Saage remarked, when he concluded his review of major theories of fascism, 'according to the specific interest and the respective political preferences they isolate certain elements of German fascism in order to identify the specific particularity, taken out of context, as "the whole"' (1974: 149, our translation).

For this reason, truly comparative and also longer-term historical approaches seem indispensable. Among these, Barrington Moore's (1966) study has been most influential. He outlined three major routes to modernity – the bourgeois-democratic, the authoritarian-reactionary which later culminated in fascism, and the peasant-based communist one. In each case, it was the particular transition from feudalism to modernity during which a specific alliance of class forces emerged, which was to shape later events. Put very broadly, the first route was – as in England, France and the United States, for example – characterized by a domination of the urban and gradually emerging industrial bourgeoisie, a broad commercialization of agriculture, and a gradual incorporation of the working classes into the political system which allowed them to raise their voice and mitigate the social costs of unfettered capitalist development. The second route, in contrast, maintained the domination of the landed aristocracy in a strictly centralized system controlled by the bureaucracy and the military into which the emerging bourgeoisie was integrated ('feudalized'), much at the expense of the lower classes. The authoritarian and later fascist cases of Germany and Japan are Moore's main examples in this regard. The third route, finally, culminated in a

successful peasant revolution, as in Russia and China, which eliminated both feudal and bourgeois elements in society and established a communist regime. This is an intriguing proposition which is based on extensive historical material in the cases Moore analysed. Yet, whether such a pattern can also be observed in other instances remains to be seen and his assertion that 'smaller countries depend economically and politically on big and powerful ones means that the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries' (1966: xiii), which does not leave them any choice or more differentiated developments of their own, does not seem to be really convincing. In any case, Moore's argument should not be taken as an entirely deterministic pattern in which, because of decisive developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Nazi takeover in Germany on 30 January 1933 was inevitable.

Along similar lines, with some distinctive differences, other 'historical sociologists' further developed this kind of argument (for example, Skocpol 1984). In her own study of the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions, Theda Skocpol emphasized not only the weight of different social forces and their respective dynamics, but the specific forms of interaction with the existing state structures, in particular the bureaucracy and the military, together with international factors which had weakened the old regimes and set the stage for a revolutionary breakthrough. In her words, 'the key to successful structural analysis lies in a focus on **state organizations** and their relations both to international environments and to domestic classes and economic conditions' (1979: 291; emphasis in the original). Such a more comprehensive perspective has to be applied not only to situations of genuine social revolutions, but also to other critical instances of system breakdown or survival.

In a somewhat different vein, John Stephens (1989) attempts to extend and differentiate Moore's argument and apply it to many of the cases also considered by us in the pre-Second World War period. He examines the democratizing impact of various social forces and their specific alliances and points out that the bourgeoisie and the middle classes could not always be considered as the major factors in this regard. In line with Therborn's (1977: 1063) argument, in his view the working classes, which were largely neglected by Moore's perspective, also played a major but not of itself sufficient role. Accordingly, it was the respective weights and the potential alliances of the different groups which determined the final outcome 'each group [working] for its own incorporation [into the political system, but being] ambivalent about further extensions of democracy'. Where democratization failed or broke down, this need not necessarily have led to fascism, as Moore postulated, but may have produced some other form of capitalist authoritarianism instead. Stephens thus concludes:

the agrarian class relations and patterns of State-class alliances of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were necessary though not sufficient causes of the breakdown of democracy in interwar Europe. The existence of a large landed class changed the alliance options for other classes in both the

late nineteenth century and in the twenties and thirties and as a consequence changed the political outcomes. It both opened up authoritarian options for the bourgeoisie and, to the extent that the landlord-state-bourgeois alliance affected the politics of the middle class and peasantry, it closed off options for the working class (1989: 1070).

In this way, the outcomes in Germany and Austria can be differentiated, for example, from those in Italy or Spain. It seems that Stephens raises some important points – but these, too, will have to be tested in a more comprehensive framework and, possibly, supplemented somewhat further.

The role of working-class politics and its links with the overall social structure has also been discussed at various points by Seymour Martin Lipset (see, e.g., Lipset 1983). He stresses in particular: ‘first, the nature of the social-class system before industrialization; second, the way in which the economic and political elites responded to the demands of workers for the right to participate in the polity and the economy’ (1). Accordingly, ‘a “post-feudal” background [in much of Europe] was critical in shaping the political consciousness of the working class’ (14–15). Whether this took a more reformist (as in Britain or France) or a more radical orientation (as in Germany, Finland or Russia), depended in this analysis on the reaction of the upper classes and the respective early or late granting of political citizenship and the incorporation into the political system. And he finds that ‘most of the countries in which workers found it difficult to attain economic or political citizenship were the ones in which fascist and communist movements were strong in the interwar period’ (16). This does not yet explain, however, why deep divisions in the workers’ movement occurred in a number of countries and why political outcomes at the system level differed.

In order to account for factors which go beyond broader objectifiable class conflicts, we have to look at some of the subjective perceptions at the political cultural level as well, reflecting in part also religious or regional cleavages, and their concrete manifestations at the level of organized intermediary structures such as the major interest groups and political parties.

1.1.4 Political cultural conditions

The ‘subjective’ dimension of the social bases of politics is even more intractable than their more objectifiable structural side. Even though it is fairly clear that more durable forms of political systems have to be embedded in a more general supportive ‘culture’, its more precise elements often defy clearer specification and, even more so, quantification. A precondition for any kind of polity is a sense of identification with its very existence, both in terms of its geographical ‘national’ extension and its ‘legitimate’ quality. Where either of these elements is lacking or undergoing fundamental changes (as, for example, from more ‘traditional’ to more ‘rational-legal’ types of legitimacy; for the use of these terms, see Weber 1922), this can, to a certain extent and temporarily, be replaced by mere force or repression, but at least in the longer run significant aspects of political structure and political culture have to be brought in line (see also Eckstein 1966).

For democratic political systems this means a general respect for the dignity of each human being and its individual rights, a certain level of mutual tolerance and trust in society, and more widespread acceptance of democratic 'rules of the game' (for a review of such aspects see, for example, Pennock 1979: esp. 236 ff, Dahl 1971, 1989). In contrast, non-democratic regimes exhibit a variety of authoritarian features such as a statist subject ('*obrigkeitsstaatliche*') orientation in Imperial Germany (see, for example, Stern 1972; for a more comprehensive account, Berg-Schlosser and Rytlewski 1993).

Below the overall societal level often important 'sub-cultures' can be identified which may relate either to significant class structures or to other – for example ethnic or religious – major social cleavages. Often, such sub-cultures harden into specific 'milieus' (for this notion see, e.g. Lepsius 1966) which are characterized and maintained by an intensive and largely exclusive network of intermediate organizations pertaining to many spheres of daily life (in the extreme 'from cradle to grave', so to speak). Some sub-cultures may be excluded from overall political life or severely hampered in their involvement (as, for example, the Catholic and the Social Democratic sub-cultures during much of the Bismarck era in Germany) or, in particular when they are based on 'communalistic' cleavages, they may be accommodated in an overall 'consociational' framework (for this notion see Lijphart 1977), as, for example, the 'verzuiling' in the Netherlands i.e. a broad elite consensus bridging the 'millions' of Dutch society (see Chapter 13 below).

In other instances, a certain cultural dominance or 'hegemony' (to use Gramsci's term, see, e.g., Gramsci 1980) of one group or class over another can be found which may also harden into a particular, but in itself inegalitarian milieu. Feudal or quasi-feudal relationships between a class of large-scale landowners and their dependent labourers (as in the East Elbian parts of Prussia, but also Southern Italy, parts of Spain, and elsewhere) are cases in point. Even under formally democratic conditions such a hegemony can often be maintained (see, for example, the strength of the vote for the ultra-conservative DNVP in the 'Junker' areas of Prussia which went far beyond the size of this class; for the more precise geographical distribution, see Falter *et al.* 1986: 228 f.).

At the individual level, finally, certain personality patterns are enhanced by the overall political culture. Thus, the dominant aspects of German political culture during much of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century were clearly a fertile breeding-ground for 'authoritarian personality' patterns (for this notion and its application to politics, see also Adorno *et al.* 1950). But many of the 'macho' aspects of Southern European cultures also seem to contribute to more authoritarian forms of behaviour and, to a certain extent, politics. The receptiveness of the broader public towards presumably 'charismatic' leaders and their particular style and rhetoric also is a case in point (for the effects of a Hitler or a Mussolini in this regard, see, for example, Fest 1973 or de Felice 1966).

Even though it is difficult to compare such aspects more systematically, particularly in the absence of survey data for our period which allow at least a certain

quantification at the 'micro'-level, these features clearly must be kept in mind and checked against contending propositions in our further analysis.

1.1.5 Intermediary structures

Class structures and sub-cultural milieus often spill over in the more directly political sphere. The party systems, in particular, reflect such cleavages, but by no means uniformly in all countries (how this was spelled out in the 'conceptual map of Europe' – see Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In some cases, as for example in Scandinavia, the conservative and bourgeois camps were fragmented, in others, as in France, Germany, etc. a severe split occurred in the party organization of the working classes. Yet in others, strong Catholic milieu parties, as in Belgium and Italy, or ethnic/regional organizations, as in Spain or Czechoslovakia, were formed.

The overall degree of (high) fractionalization of a party system is considered by some authors as a major source of government instability and eventually even system breakdown (cf., e.g., Taylor and Herman 1971, who look at the post Second World War period, and, in a somewhat extreme way, Hermens 1941, who, however, considers the electoral system of proportional representation to be the prime cause in this regard). Sani and Sartori (1985) emphasize the degree of polarization between parties as the major factor leading to instability, not so much fragmentation as such.

In more specific ways, other authors look at the strength of pro- or anti-system parties and the 'political space' available for newly emerging extremist groups (e.g. Linz 1980). Similarly, the particular alliances formed to fend off an extremist challenge, as for example the 'red-green' coalitions in some Scandinavian countries (see, e.g., Karvonen and Lindström 1988) or, conversely, the particular agreements, which installed a fascist regime (cf., e.g., Jasper 1986) are at the centre of attention of some writers.

Gregory Luebbert (1987) sees the division of the liberal democratic forces and the successful organization of the rural proletariat by socialist parties which prevented a cross-cutting alliance with moderate land-owning groups as the decisive factor for a fascist takeover. In his words, 'the preconditions of fascist success were a divided liberal community and a working-class movement engaged in a defence of the rural proletariat' (477). Thus, in cases

where the rural proletariat was available – as in Spain, Italy, Finland, and Germany – it presented socialists with a reservoir of potential support too appealing to ignore. In these cases the logic of democratic competition and the lure of immediate power undermined the socialists' ability to acquire long-term power because the acquisition of a constituency among the rural proletariat invariably required commitments that alienated the middle peasants (463).

Whether this proposition holds true in all cases considered by us will have to be seen.

Among the intermediary structures other kinds of organizations which have a bearing on the political sphere must also be considered. These include the usual range of interest groups – in particular occupational ones such as unions, farmers' and employers' associations, etc. – which usually are related more or less directly to one of the major political camps.

In addition, in a number of countries particular 'movements' have sprung up which in some cases were linked to specific communalistic cleavages, as the Flemish movement in Belgium, and which in others attempted to cut across more conventional forms of organization, as, characteristically, the Fascist movements and their specific variations in a considerable number of countries. The latter type of organization also attempted to mobilize some of their members in uniformed groups – where the legal and political system allowed it or could not prevent it – and in some cases even went to the extent of forming their own armed militias. These, then, not rarely became very instrumental in direct violent confrontations with other forces and, eventually, in attempted political takeovers (see also Merkl 1980).

Occasionally, even the regular armed forces took part directly in the political struggles, turning from an 'output' to an 'input' structure, so to speak. Thus, one of the major differences between the eventual breakdown of the political system in Italy and Spain was the direct involvement of the military in the latter case.

1.1.6 Institutional and constitutional aspects

At the level of the central political system a number of legal and constitutional points have been raised referring to the instability and eventual breakdown of the system as such. For some authors, the continuity provided by an overarching constitutional monarchy – such as in the United Kingdom, the Benelux countries and parts of Scandinavia – was considered as a major element for the survival of parliamentary institutions. Nevertheless a case like Italy would be a counterfactual example.

Conversely, a split executive between a popularly elected president and a prime minister who is dependent on a parliamentary majority, as in Weimar or the Third French Republic, was seen to contribute to the instability and possible breakdown. Such division was held to be particularly decisive when the president had important prerogatives in the nomination of the prime minister, the dissolution of parliament, or the extensive use of emergency powers (for this point see, e.g., Bracher 1955, in particular Chapter 2).

A particular institutional feature regulating the relationship between the overall social forces and the extent of their parliamentary representation is the electoral system. In this regard, Ferdinand Hermens (1941), in particular, has held the system of proportional representation responsible for the high degree of party fractionalization, resulting government instability and eventual system breakdown. Conversely, the Anglo-Saxon 'first-past-the-post'-rule of a plurality in the individual constituencies with its, under certain conditions, tendencies towards a two-party system was seen as the major remedy. Again, there are a

number of counterfactual examples which show that the plurality method does not necessarily lead to a two-party system as, for example, in countries with strong ethnic/regional cleavages – and that a multi-party system can be concomitant with a high degree of government stability as in the Netherlands. But even where cabinet instability is high, a considerable level of continuity may be found as far as the particular parties and even personalities who take part in the formation of government coalitions are concerned, e.g. in Belgium, which precluded the danger of a definite breakdown.

1.1.7 Policy measures

On the output side of the political system specific policies, particularly in the economic realm, have been considered as at least contributing to the downfall or, possibly, the survival of a political system. The Great Depression had led, with varying forms and intensities, to a downturn in industrial production, high levels of unemployment and foreign exchange problems in practically all of our cases (see also section 1.1.2 above). Most governments took some deflationary measures to cope with budget deficits and declining exports, which, in fact, tended to further aggravate the employment situation. These measures were particularly severe in a case like Germany, where the hyperinflation of the early 1920s had left a severe shock both in large parts of the general public and among government officials. The severe cuts imposed by Chancellor Brüning and the president of the Central Bank, Luther, amounted to a deflationary ‘overkill’ or what others have termed ‘hyperdeflationary’ policies (Borchardt 1985). This particular background was also referred to by a writer like Stefan Zweig when he observed: ‘Nothing has made the German people so bitter, so full of hatred, and so ripe for Hitler than the inflation’ (1947). Nevertheless, again, this only remains a partial explanation and cannot account for the other cases of breakdown or survival (see discussion in Berg-Schlosser 1988).

With the advantage of hindsight it is certainly in vain to speculate whether more ‘Keynesian’ policies could have saved some regimes or could have averted the most severe effects of the crisis altogether (the reactions to the less severe world economic crisis of the 1970s do not give cause for too much optimism in this regard, see, e.g., Schmidt 1987). In fact, some governments turned to certain anti-cyclical public employment policies, including Brüning in 1932, but this could not turn the course of events any more (ironically, even the latter-day saint of ‘free market’ economists, Ludwig Erhard, advocated some pre-Keynesian anti-cyclical measures at the time (Erhard 1931), but to little avail).

Other measures were concerned with alleviating the domestic situation by abandoning the gold standard (as in the UK in 1931), devaluing the currency (for example, in Belgium 1935, France 1936), or imposing exchange controls (Germany 1931, Italy 1934). These measures probably contributed to the eventual economic recovery in some cases (see also Eichengreen and Sachs 1985; Gourevitch 1986), but by themselves, again, they cannot really account for the political fates of these countries. Thus, Ekkehart Zimmermann, for example, who has approached this subject from various angles, is forced to conclude:

economic policies had little direct effect on the survivability of democratic political systems in the 1930s. Neither the economic crisis alone nor the economic measures taken suffice to explain the different political outcomes, in particular the victory of national socialism in Germany and Austria as opposed to the maintenance of liberal democracies in Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium (1988: 306).

1.1.8 *External factors*

The external dimension contributed to the breakdown of some systems as well as to the survival of others. To specify the exact degree, however, in which factors outside the systems influenced the course of internal events is almost impossible. It is even more impossible to single out one or more exogenous factors as the only principal factors determining the survival of democratic political systems or the downfall of systems and their move to authoritarian or even fascist regimes. Therefore it is highly problematical in most cases to attribute the breakdown of regimes, for example, *exclusively* to the legacy of the First World War, to the patronizing cultural-political-ideological influence of a major state or to the onslaught of the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s.

In the past, then, external factors were mostly *added* to the explanation of why a political system broke down or survived the crisis period. In this context almost all historians writing studies on the course of events in the countries under consideration more or less referred to the following aspects: (i) the consequences of the First World War which not only changed the map of Europe considerably by drawing new frontiers, but also the structure of the international system itself by the ascendance of the United States and increasingly the Soviet Union to Great Power status; (ii) the cleavages in the European states system between revisionist and status quo powers in relation to the Paris peace treaties leading to a rather fragile overall security structure in Europe; (iii) the global economic crisis from 1929 onwards put a lot of 'stress' upon the political systems and resulting in an impressive reduction in international economic linkages; (iv) the influence of cultural and intellectual factors representing a kind of model or example for other countries; and (v) more general demonstration and international learning effects initiated by core international or regional actors.

Two studies can be cited as dealing more generally with the impact of the external dimension upon internal events. Though not dealing with the inter-war period in particular, the work of Richard Rosecrance (1987) addresses this problem. He relies on classical liberal assumptions of the interconnectedness between trade and democracy and assumes a kind of learning mechanism provided by the course of history itself. According to his analysis, the historical development points towards an international system consisting of what he terms trading states, i.e. liberal-democratic political systems favouring the peaceful integration into an open world economy. The socioeconomic and political advantages of becoming a trading state leaving behind the increasingly anachronistic form of the politico-military state, in his view, will in the long run trickle down to all states in the global arena. His assumption of what can be termed the 'suction effect' of the trading state applies, for example, to cases like the United

Kingdom and the Netherlands. However, his theory cannot explain why certain states decide to make a step towards the pole of the trading state or even backwards to the pole of the politico-military state at a *specific time* in history. Therefore Rosecrance's theory of the trading state does not account much for regime stability or regime change in the inter-war period.

The second study is Ronald Rogowski's work on the interrelationship between the world market and the internal political situation of states (1987, 1989). By looking at the factor endowments and at the land-labour ratio of advanced economies on the one hand and backward economies on the other, that is, by analysing the specific relationship between land, capital and labour, in times of expanding and declining exposures to trade he shows plausibly that exogenously induced changes in the costs and the risks of a state's foreign trade affect domestic political alignments by stimulating conflicts between owners of locally scarce and locally abundant factors. These changes strengthen or weaken the position of social groups belonging to land, labour or capital within the political system. Thus they have a certain overall impact on the development of this system and on the political direction in which this system moves, but Rogowski rightly refrains from labelling them as the sole, principal factors in the persistence or the breakdown of political systems.

What then can be said concerning the influence of external factors is that they had a certain impact, but that the concrete form of these impacts emerged through the specific response of internal actors to these external influences. This is to say that forces and events influencing political systems from outside were differently interpreted and thus reacted to in different countries. They underwent some kind of domestic filter. This implies too that some exogenous factors were relevant in some cases, but irrelevant in others where some other influence from outside might have been important or even no external impact at all. Therefore it is appropriate first to assess for the influence of aspects from the external dimension in a case-by-case manner.

Some examples might be cited to illustrate this point. In the British and Dutch cases their thorough integration into the world market contributed to managing the crisis by reformist steps within the system. In Ireland, the course of events towards a crisis management within the system was related to overwhelming British influence, whereas events in countries like Poland, Austria, Hungary and Romania were to a considerable extent shaped by the international environment, especially by the steps taken by the National Socialist government in Germany.

1.1.9 *Comprehensive requisites*

Thus far we have tested and discussed some of the major hypotheses which relate to particular aspects of a political system or a specific theoretical approach. While few authors actually consider their approach monocausal and universal, they all have at least emphasized one particular domain. It is not by accident that among the more empirically oriented approaches those concerned with certain aspects of socioeconomic development have prevailed. As Robert Dahl (1971: 206) observed:

No doubt one reason why so much attention has been given to the relationship between regime and socioeconomic level is simply that reasonably acceptable (if by no means wholly satisfactory) 'hard' data are available from which to construct indicators. This is a perfect example of how the availability of data may bias the emphasis of theory.

Only a few writers have attempted to give a more comprehensive account of the general bases and conditions of democracy. The most prominent, of course, is Dahl himself. In both his seminal works, *Polyarchy* and *Democracy and Its Critics*, he lists and discusses a wide range of factors which favour democracy or 'polyarchy' in his somewhat restricted use of the latter term. In *Polyarchy* (1971: 203) he enumerates seven major areas in which conditions conducive to the emergence of more democratic regimes can be grouped: specific historical sequences (when the establishment of competitive procedures precedes the more general inclusiveness of political participation); a more pluralist socioeconomic order where access to the means of violence and to economic resources is dispersed; a generally high level of socioeconomic development; a high level of social equality in both an objective and a subjective sense; a low level of subcultural pluralism or at least some 'consociational' arrangements; the absence of domination by a foreign power; and democratic beliefs and the acceptance of the rules of the game by political activists, including trust, cooperation, and the willingness to compromise. In *Democracy and Its Critics* (1989: 264) he further summarizes these conditions to include five major requisites: the neutralization or dispersion of means of violent coercion; a 'modern, dynamic, pluralist' society; cultural homogeneity or no segmentation into strong subcultures or, where segmentation occurs, a consociational elite arrangement; a democratic political culture, particularly among political activists; and no intervention by a foreign power hostile to polyarchy. Dahl himself does not attempt to operationalize these requisites, and he realizes that, especially as far as subjective and political cultural aspects are concerned, information may be very poor and fragmentary for many countries. An attempt to measure polyarchies has been made by Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke (1991), for example. Similar efforts include the studies by Bollen (1980) or Hadenius (1992), for a comprehensive review see also Inkeles (1991).

1.1.10 Dynamic and actor-related aspects

Among the authors who have contributed to the debate over the dynamic aspects of the processes leading to the breakdown of democratic regimes in the interwar period, the writings of Juan Linz are certainly the most notable. As he states in the introduction to a major study on the subject:

In recent years social scientists have devoted considerable attention to the study of prerequisites for political stability, particularly in democracies. Analyses, however, have tended to be static, with more emphasis on the social, economic and cultural correlates of stable regimes in a given moment of time than on the dynamic processes of crisis, breakdown, and reequilibration of existing regimes or the consolidation of new ones (1978: 3).

He then goes on to discuss a number of factors which may play a major role in such situations:

Our main focus will be on the incumbents and their actions, ... their way of defining problems and their capacity to solve them, the ability of the pro-regime forces to maintain sufficient cohesion to govern, ... the rejection of the temptation to turn to a democratic political mechanisms ... , [or conversely] the willingness to coopt or to enter coalitions with the disloyal opposition rather than turn to the defense of the regime, the narrowing of the political arena after the loss of power and the onset of a power vacuum, as well as inadequate responses to the crisis atmosphere as badly timed elections and inadequate use of the coercive resources of the state (*ibid.*: 40).

On another occasion, Linz (1980: 158) speaks of the 'political space' necessary for antidemocratic forces to develop and some of the factors which contributed to the dynamic situation in the post-First World War period. Among these factors he lists the impact and social aftermath of the war itself, revolutionary attempts by radical leftists, a heightened sense of nationalism, and unresolved subcultural minority conflicts. Furthermore, he contends that a more general crisis of the state and its loss of the monopoly of violence significantly contributed to the eventual outcome (1978: 165).

A broad and dynamic view of political crises and system change is also developed in the volume edited by Gabriel Almond, Scott Flanagan and Robert Mundt (1973). There, two chapters – by Dennis Kavanagh and Volker Rittberger – deal explicitly with the crisis conditions, reactions and outcomes in the interwar period in Great Britain and Germany, respectively. Their analysis is based on a broader assessment of the major social and political actors, their respective distance, the development of their resources over time and the actual and potential coalitions formed and choices made. This approximates also a more explicit 'rational choice' perspective as developed, for example, by Lewin (1988), Elster (1989) or Tsebelis (1990), which also account for the constraints and the 'opportunity set' in any given situation. The 'fluidity' of political crises and the dynamics of 'multi-sectoral mobilization' are also particularly emphasized by Michel Dobry (1986).

1.1.11 Overall evaluation

In view of this almost overwhelming range of possible approaches and hypotheses we decided to test a number of those which seemed to us to be more plausible and which lent themselves to a more direct empirical operationalization in a systematic comparative way making use of a recently developed technique 'Qualitative, Comparative Analysis' (QCA; Ragin 1987, 1994). The results, which in greater detail have been reported elsewhere (Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 1994), are presented below:

Table 1.1 Confirmation and rejection of hypotheses

	Lipset	Vanhänen	Moore	Luebbert	Hermens	Sartori	Dahl	Lin2	Lin2	Lin2	mixed	contradictions	confirmations
											results		
Austria	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	2
Belgium	+	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	6	0	3
Czechoslovakia	+	#	0	0	#	0	0	#	0	#	5	3	1
Estonia	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	1
Finland	0	#	0	#	0	0	0	#	0	#	6	3	0
France	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	#	0	#	7	1	1
Germany	#	#	-	0	-	0	0	-	-	-	2	2	5
Greece	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	1
Hungary	0	-	-	0	#	#	0	0	0	0	5	2	2
Ireland	0	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	0
Italy	-	-	0	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	2	0	7
Poland	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	0	4
Portugal	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	4
Romania	-	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	7	0	2
Spain	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	3	0	6
Sweden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	7	0	2
The Netherlands	+	0	0	+	#	0	+	0	0	0	5	1	3
United Kingdom	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	2	0	7
Sum of Cases:													
positive confirmations	5	0	1	3	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	2
negative confirmations	5	6	5	3	3	3	2	4	5	5	5	3	1
mixed results	7	8	12	11	11	13	14	9	11	11	11	9	11
contradictions	1	4	0	1	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	3	0
overall confirmations	10	6	6	6	4	4	4	6	7	7	7	6	7

Note:

+ = positive confirmation of hypothesis

- = negative confirmation of hypothesis

o = mixed result

= the outcome contradicts the hypothesis.

It can be seen that, among the cases analysed, countries like Italy, Spain, and Germany in a 'negative' and Great Britain in a 'positive' sense have most often corresponded to the hypotheses of the respective authors. This result is not surprising in view of their magnitude and historical importance. But it can also be seen that countries like Finland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Estonia, Ireland and even France are hardly in line with the expectations of any of the theorists and in several instances provide direct counterfactual examples. This result points to the often rather limited perspective in theory-building of some of these authors as far as geographical distribution and historical depth are concerned.

If we look at the actual 'scores' for the different authors, it becomes apparent that the factors emphasized by authors like Hermens and Sartori (electoral system and party polarization) fare rather poorly, whereas the broader socio-economic conditions put forward by Lipset and the actor-related arguments advanced by Linz have a much better record. Yet even in these instances, a considerable number of contradictions and inadequately covered cases remain. The score for Dahl, who has provided the most comprehensive list of factors, must in all fairness be considered somewhat separately. While a 'pure' form of confirmation of his hypothesis rarely occurs, none of the findings directly contradicts his ideas, and we come up with mostly mixed results.

In our view, it is necessary to go beyond the analysis of simple and very few factors and to attempt to incorporate a broader range of elements in an increasingly specific manner. For this purpose, the substantive aspects of a number of the conducted QCA tests with their greatly reductive power provide some interesting insights. For example, when a wider range of factors is analysed simultaneously, as was the case with Dahl – and to a certain extent Linz, the more sweeping background conditions emphasized by authors like Lipset, Vanhanen and Moore and some of the specific arguments raised by Luebbert, Hermens and Sartori tend to 'disappear'. Instead, some basic factors like democratic legitimacy and the political role of the military (as with Dahl) together with some actor-related aspects like interventions by members of the upper class (for Linz) come to the foreground.

At this stage, such findings only provide pointers to certain directions in our research and appropriate refinements of such hypotheses. They have been integrated in the overall conceptualization and analytic framework of the project (see below), the data set collected for each case and the outline of each of the more elaborate case-studies in this volume. More comprehensive comparative analyses are then reported in the second volume. In this way, we may eventually come closer to what Arthur Stinchcombe (1978: 124) suggested in a similar context: 'Great theorists descend to the level of ... detailed analysis in the course of their work. Further, they become greater theorists down there among the details, for it is the details that theories in history have to grasp if they are to be any good'.

1.2 History and outline of the project

Our research differs from previous and related projects in a number of critical respects. Most importantly, we consider the interwar European crises to have

been political in nature. They certainly had their economic and social ‘causes’ but what links these varying inputs to the ‘crisis outcomes’ are essentially political decisions and political factors related to both institutional and cultural patterns of the polities in question, and to their political actors. The impact of political variables depends upon a complex interaction of structures, cultures and pre-conditions both at any one point in time and in terms of the development sequence that gave rise to such configurations. These general factors are all linked to specific outcomes through the actions of elites and the mediating role of political culture. Such political and social differentiations also suggest a new emphasis on intermediary associations in aggregating political inputs and linking different levels of the political system both on their own and within the process of coalition formation as decisive factors for the final outcome.

In doing so, we attempt to steer clear from the pitfalls of a premature and overgeneralizing historical materialist determinism on the one hand and the overly personalizing (‘men make history’) and individualizing (‘not true in my country’) approach of many conventional historians on the other. The superficiality of many ‘macro-quantitative’ comparative studies which attempt to isolate a few factors by means of regression analyses, etc. without being able to establish their true causality and patterns of interaction also does not seem to be very promising. Instead, we look at both the broader structural level (the ‘dikes’ during a time of crisis in a metaphorical sense) and the level of intermediate organizations and individual actors (i.e. groups and persons who ‘man’ the dikes) in order to determine their more complex pattern of interactions, their longer-term dynamics, but also their particular ‘moves’, and the eventual (but distinct!) outcomes of the crises considered.

In this sense, our research strategy is ‘case-oriented’ (as opposed to ‘variable-oriented’) and historical (as opposed to abstractly causal, to use Ragin’s (1987) terms). The cases dealt with comprise Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In this way all the major ‘breakdown’ cases and their various patterns and the major ‘survivors’, including some of the smaller countries which often tend to be overlooked, are considered.

These are grouped on the one hand, according to particular commonalities (making them ‘most similar’, to a certain extent) which have to be specified in each case, but which nevertheless resulted in different regime outcomes (i.e. democratic survival, fascist or authoritarian takeover). On the other hand, cases with common regime outcomes have been selected on the basis of specific differences in many of the more important variables, i.e. making them ‘most different’, to allude again to Przeworski and Teune’s (1970) terminology (for further details see Part V of volume II)

Such a vast enterprise can successfully be tackled only by a combination of interests and skills (e.g. profound historical knowledge of each case, including the use of indigenous sources and languages, elaborate social scientific concepts, sophisticated comparative research techniques, etc.) which go far beyond

the capabilities of any individual researcher. The composition of our group thus resembles what Stein Rokkan (1970: 650) called the 'peak' of international scientific cooperation, namely an attempt to coordinate research internationally in all its major phases and aspects – that is, in terms of its design, data-gathering, analysis and interpretation. Our multicultural composition and our intensive dialogues may also help to avoid the many pitfalls of purely nationalist and other ethnocentric interpretations of history and politics which opens the way for not necessarily 'value-free' but potentially more universal perspectives.

The research (and the research group) represented in this volume had its origins at the 1985 annual meeting of the European Consortium for Political Research and grew out of a concern with the use of models in comparative politics, and with the further structuring and dynamics of European politics in the second quarter of this century. In both areas it took as its starting point the earlier work of the late Stein Rokkan drawing on his elaboration of the processes of nation building and mass mobilisation in Europe from the later eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, and his emphasis on strict comparison within a limited number of case studies.

The original intention of the proposed research was to extend his study of the conditions for fascist success in Europe (Hagtvet/Rokkan, 1980) to a more general and inclusive analysis of the interwar European political system and its reaction to the world economic crisis at the end of the 1920s. Some systems had seen the emergence of fascist or authoritarian regimes but others had not. Much scholarly analysis had been devoted to the rise of fascism but we were concerned too with the conditions for the survival of democracy. Underlying the research was an attempt to understand the possible consequences of any developing economic crisis on the (then) emerging democracies of Southern, and later Eastern Europe.

The original research design was very 'Rokkanian' – it was based on a 2x2 typology of European political systems with the comparison of two case studies within each of the four distinct types that were generated by the two dichotomies. Those originally associated with the study – Frank Aarebrot (Bergen), Dirk Berg-Schlosser (Marburg), Bernt Hagtvet (then at the Christian Michelsen Institute, Bergen; now at Oslo), Jeremy Mitchell (Open University) and Ekkart Zimmermann (now at Dresden) – had the necessary expertise to cover most of the cases included but decided to 'recruit' other scholars where there was a gap. It was this original small group of researchers who developed a large scale research proposal for funding by an external agency.

However as the group started the research and refined its proposals, two inter-related developments occurred concerning the organisation and scope of the project. It became clear that the project would require extensive international cooperation between individual scholars. At the same time (in the mid-1980s) it proved very difficult to obtain the project funding which could have made such cooperation easier; in fact large scale funding for the project as a whole was never obtained. However the members of the group were able to obtain funding

for their individual research within the overall group project. This made some form of research coordination essential, a factor which became more important as the group – and the research – expanded to incorporate further case studies and more individual researchers. So as the research progressed its ‘centre’ increasingly became located at the Institute für Politikwissenschaft, at Marburg, with Dirk Berg-Schlosser acting as research coordinator and director.

1.3 The analytical framework

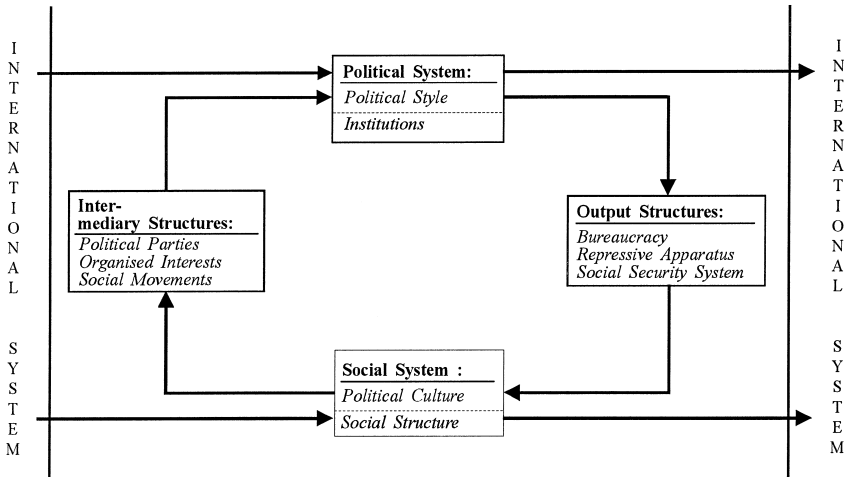
An historically-oriented comparative analysis at the macro-level of political systems such as ours involves, as Charles Tilly (1984) has noted, ‘big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons’. This awesome task can only (tentatively) be tackled if its different aspects and procedures are broken down in a systematic and theoretically guided manner in order to make the different bits and pieces more manageable and (intellectually) digestible. Even if the dependent variable of the analysis – the breakdown or survival of democratic regimes in a period of severe economic and political crises – can be clearly defined, the range of potential independent variables affecting the eventual outcome remains enormous.

For purposes of conducting such a macro-analysis with a (necessarily) limited number of cases it, therefore, seems imperative to begin any single case study in a configurative (‘individualizing’ in Tilly’s terms) manner in order not to leave out *a priori* any potentially fruitful aspects. Thus, even if the final *explanation* should be as parsimonious as possible, the model to start from must be comprehensive. For this purpose we use a formal ‘systems’ model, but one which is ‘filled’ at each stage with an explicitly ‘structural comparative’ framework. In this way, we are able to narrow down rapidly some of the potentially strategic variables. These can then be tested, first, in systematic ‘paired’ and, then, in more comprehensive multi-case comparisons. Such a procedure may not lead to comprehensive single-factor (‘universalizing’) explanations which are equally valid for all cases considered, but it may involve more complex multi-factor (‘encompassing’) ones and it at least leaves open the possibility of arriving at several distinct causal patterns or historical ‘paths’ (‘variation-finding’; Tilly 1984: 80 ff.).

Our (simplified) systems model is derived from the well-known works by Deutsch (1961), Easton (1965), Almond and Powell (1978) and others, but it is used only in a pre-theoretical classificatory sense in order to locate the different elements and possible interactions more closely without implying necessarily distinct causal relationships, such as the effectiveness of certain links and feedbacks or the stability of the system as such. A first outline of this model is provided in Figure 1.1.

On the basis of this model it is possible to distinguish and locate the more general social system, the intermediary structures on the input side, the central political system itself and the output structures together with the respective international environment. Furthermore, with regard to each sub-system, an ‘objective’ dimension (relating to the internal structures, institutions and more durable and ‘tangible’ aspects of the sub-system) and a ‘subjective’ dimension (reflecting the

Figure 1.1 Simplified system model



respective perceptions and actual behaviour of the individuals and groups concerned) can be distinguished (for a fuller exposition of a model of this type, see Berg-Schlösser/Siegler 1990 and Berg-Schlösser/Stammen 1992).

1.3.1 Social structures

Within this framework we can now fill in the respective categories more concretely in a manner guided by both conceptual considerations and more distinct historical aspects for the cases and the period concerned. To start with the bottom square, the *social structure* of each case first has to be determined. Again, two dimensions have to be distinguished – a ‘horizontal’ one referring to social groups existing ‘side by side’ and a ‘vertical’ one which reflects the ‘superimposition’ of groups according to certain criteria. In the horizontal sense, such groups are often formed on an ethnic/linguistic, religious, regional or similar basis, with their own dominant areas of settlement, but with further internal ‘vertical’ distinctions (see, for example, Young 1976; Horowitz 1985). Vertically, groups characterized by inequalities with regard to criteria like wealth, income, level of education, social status and similar ones can be distinguished (see, for example, Lenski 1966; Blau 1975).

Historically, in the European context and following Stein Rokkan’s conceptualizations (see, for example, Rokkan 1975; Flora 1981) in this regard, four characteristic social cleavages have been formed, the specific distribution of which influences the social structure of our cases in a particular way. The first is a centre–periphery, dominant vs. subject culture cleavage which also affected the ethno-linguistic composition of the emerging states. The second refers to the *State–Church* relationship and the religious cleavages brought about by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, but, implicitly, also the earlier schism

between Roman Catholicism and the orthodox churches in the East. The third cleavage is an early product of the transition from feudalism and the industrial revolution emphasizing the conflicts of interest between the landed upper class and the *urban* bourgeoisie. The fourth, finally, concerns the one between *capital* and *labour* in a more advanced industrial society. This has resulted in Rokkan's 'Conceptual Map of Europe' in which our cases and their social structures can be located (see Figure 1.2).

For a differentiated analysis of 'objective' social interests the vertical dimension of the resulting pattern has to be refined even further. In this regard, we follow some distinctions proposed by Theodor Geiger (1932) in his seminal study of the German social structure of the period concerned. He proposes, in addition to the Marxian classes of capitalists and proletarians, to look separately at the 'old' middle class – owner-entrepreneurs of smaller enterprises and middle-level craftsmen and traders – and the 'new' middle class – middle-level employees with some decision-making authority of their own, including those in the public sector. Furthermore, those self-employed persons who do not possess any sizeable means of production and who are 'workers' on their own account' constitute a particularly hybrid, and under certain conditions, a politically relevant group: objectively, being mostly dependent on their own labour, their life-chances can be compared to the proletariat proper, for which reason Geiger termed this group 'proletaroids'. Subjectively, however, as self-employed persons, they may tend to identify themselves with the propertied classes. Finally, there is a 'sub-proletariat' of persons without any permanent employment or source of income may come about, particularly in times of economic crises, but also as more permanently marginalized groups. These distinctions, taking into account the major divisions between the agricultural and non-agricultural and the private and public sectors as well, result in the scheme (shown in Figure 1.3).

The relations between these groups need not necessarily be antagonistic ones; symbiotic-complementary relations (as, for example, between capitalists and managers) or autonomous ones (such as for agrarian proletaroids and the subproletariat) may also exist. Furthermore, in reality often an overlapping of categories (for example, through a mixture of forms of ownership and employment or through family ties) can be found. A concrete interaction of horizontal and vertical aspects of social stratification can also be particularly significant for the formation of political conflict groups. Thus, whichever class structure we look at must be brought in relation with racial, ethnic, and confessional patterns. It is very seldom a question of ethnic or religious conflict *per se*, as these usually concern economic or political matters. The vertical and horizontal aspects of social structure may reinforce each other when ethnic or religious groups find themselves to a large extent in a particular economic or political position – as for example in Northern Ireland – or may be cross-cutting and more evenly distributed which usually tends to mitigate the level of conflict between them (for such notions, see also Dahrendorf 1959; Melson and Wolpe 1970). In some cases also particular 'consociational' arrangements may be agreed upon

Figure 1.2 A 'conceptual map' of 16th–18th century Western Europe

The 'State-Economy' Dimension, West-East Axis

Territorial centres City networks	Seaward empire-nations		City-state Europe		Landward empire-nations		Landward buffers
	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Close to city belt	Distant from city belt	
Conditions of Consolidation	Distant from city belt	Integrated in larger system	Consociational formation	Fragmented until 19th century	Close to city belt	Distant from city belt	
Protestant Church	Iceland Scotland Wales	Norway England	Denmark	Hanse Germany	Sweden Prussia	Finland	
Mixed Territories			Netherlands Switzerland	Rhineland	Bohemia		Baltic territories
National Catholic Church	Ireland Brittany	France	'Lotharingia' Burgundy Arclatum		Bavaria	Poland	
Counter-Reformation		Spain Portugal	Belgium Catalonia	Italy	Austria	Hungary	

Source: Rokkan (1975).

The 'State-Church' Dimension: South-North Axis

Figure 1.3 Class structure according to Theodor Geiger, 1932

		Relationship to means of production			
		Agricultural sector	Non-agricultural sector	Private sector	Public sector
Dominant source of income	Capital	Large-scale farmers	Capitalists	Final authority: managers	State class
	Capital and labour	Agrarian petite bourgeoisie	Non-agrarian petite bourgeoisie	Intermediate: salariat	
	Labour	Agrarian proletoaroids	Nonagrarian proletoaroids	None: proletariat	
	No permanent source of income	Subproletoariat			

between representatives of the major ‘pillars’ in a society in order to contain ‘horizontal’ group conflicts (see Lijphart 1977).

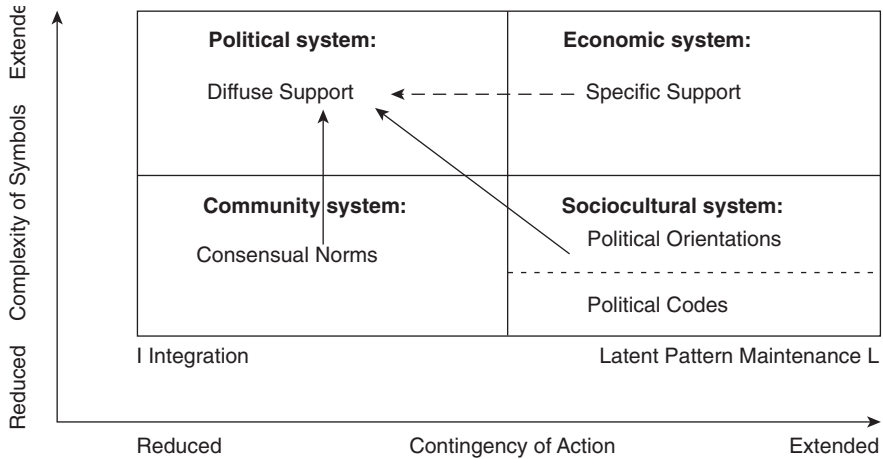
1.3.2 Political culture

The ‘objective’ conditions of social structure are also reflected in their ‘subjective’ perceptions and interpretations. This was emphasized by Geiger when he talked of the ‘stratum-specific mentalities’ in his analysis of the emerging National Socialism (1932: 109 ff.). Today, this dimension, in its most general sense, is usually referred to as *political culture*. This can be defined, as Glenda Patrick (1984: 729) put it in a comprehensive discussion of the term, as ‘the set of fundamental beliefs, values and attitudes, that characterize the nature of the political system and regulate the political interactions among its members’. This pattern of systematic interactions can be elaborated somewhat further by distinguishing four main sub-systems based on some modifications of Talcott Parsons’ AGIL-model (see also Münch 1982; Pappi 1986). In this way, the relationships between the four major social sub-systems (politics, economics, community and social-cultural system) can be specified more explicitly (see Figure 1.4). The general taxonomic scheme shown here has to be filled with a more differentiated pattern of variables which, according to the cases analysed, may vary in time and space.

Thus, with regard to the *community system* the boundaries of each case have to be determined. Here, the extent and degree of a sense of identity with a person’s political community is the most relevant aspect. This ‘national’ identity tends to become a social ‘skin’ for the individuals concerned which, after a certain age, can no longer be shed. In many cases, the political community is not a homogeneous one and various sub-national ethnic/linguistic, regional, religious or socioeconomic identities persist.

The actual formation of political conflict-groups, based on such a pattern, depends, however, on a variety of factors. First, the sheer number and relative size of these groups can differ considerably. Second, the geographical con-

Figure 1.4 Components of political culture in a system framework



Note: Adapted from Pappi (1986: 283).

centration or dispersion of members of these groups affects their conflict potential. Third, the fact whether these cleavages reinforce or cross-cut each other in certain individuals and groups plays an important role. Fourth, the actual level of consciousness of each cleavage – and it is once again the ‘subjective’ dimension we are most interested in at this point – may vary considerably and may be articulated only in specific situations.

In certain instances, different aspects of objective group differentiations can be combined in a ‘social milieu’ with a common sub-culture. Thus Lepsius (1966), for example, distinguished a rural-catholic, a Protestant-bourgeois, and a workers’ milieu, each with its specific regional concentrations, in Imperial Germany. These milieus can develop quite extensive internal structures and organizations (e.g. in the fields of education, common social and cultural activities, the media and economic and political organizations) and become largely autonomous from the wider community. In more extreme cases, these milieus can ossify into certain ‘Lager’, which view each other as hostile camps and which, at best, cooperate only in a ‘consociational’ manner at the elite level. More often multiple identifications, which need not necessarily be in conflict with each other, can be found within the larger community. Thus, a person can be a local, regional, national, and supra-national ‘patriot’ at the same time, the kind and intensity of his attachment depending on the concrete circumstances. At the overall community level, certain often unconscious consensual norms are at work which accept and support the social system as such, even though individuals and groups may act mostly in a conflicting manner within it.

The *social-cultural system* reflects the basic values of each society and gives meaning to its existence. In traditional societies, the interpretation and internalization of these values was closely linked to a transcendental sphere which

legitimized the existing social and political order. In modern societies, a general secularization and rationalization of values has taken place. But even there, common rituals and symbols can be observed which give meaning to political life by referring to constitutive historical events in the light of some universally claimed values and their particular evolution in a certain society (e.g., Bellah and Hammond 1980, see also Gebhardt in Berg-Schlosser and Schissler 1987). Such values justify the place of individuals and groups in the society (e.g. in a more egalitarian or more hierarchical sense, but also as to differentiations of age and sex, etc.), determine their scope of action (e.g. in a more dependent or more participatory way), and define the respective realms of solidarity, in particular when claims running counter to egotistically perceived or other more immediate material interests have to be made. These values also define the extent of the political sphere proper (in a more pervasive or more limited sense), in which authoritative common decisions have to be made. They include, basically, the rules for the resolution of conflicts in society (e.g. in a more consensual or more antagonistic way) and of decision-making (e.g. in an authoritarian or more democratic manner) in the political system. In this regard, they closely interact with the bases of legitimacy of the political system proper (see also Rohe 1987).

Cultural values are transmitted through the usual socializing agents of each society (such as families, other group relations, the educational system and the media), and are more or less internalized by each member. They are, in turn, shaped by collective historical experiences (in particular, traumatic ones such as wars, intensive political or economic crises, or assassinations of political leaders) and form the 'collective memory' of each society. The strength and durability of this memory varies culturally, too, depending to a certain extent on the more specific orientation of each society towards its past and future. In many communities, the interpretation of basic values has been the particular domain of 'priests' and similar specialists. In modern societies this role has increasingly been taken up by secular intellectuals and scientists. They reflect and justify such values in a discursive manner at a higher level of abstraction. In this sense they contribute to a cultural meta-system (a so-called 'culture of culture'). Their role, however, is not limited to legitimizing the existing political order in a passive way; on the contrary, they may critically point to existing insufficiencies in the realization of certain values and inconsistencies and contradictions between them. The political discourse of such intellectuals is often coded in its own particular way – for example, by labelling certain notions and forms of behaviour as 'conservative' or 'progressive' (cf., e.g., Luhmann 1974).

The *economic system* constitutes the material basis for the existence and development of each society. Again, it is not so much its 'objective' side (i.e. the different modes of production, the concrete allocation of resources, the effects on social structure and their dynamics over time) with which we are concerned here, but its 'subjective', political-cultural implications. To a certain extent, these subjective aspects are conditioned by interactions with the general social-cultural sphere. They relate to individualistic vs. more collective orientations, attitudes towards work, property, the accumulation of wealth, patterns of consumption, certain

lifestyles, and similar ones. On the other hand, this sub-system is determined by its own logic of instrumental-rational (in Weber's term, *zweckrational*) behaviour. The interactions with the political sub-system consist of certain regulatory needs (with which we need not deal here – for a further discussion see, for example, Münch 1982: 134 ff.) and concrete demands towards the public sphere. Their satisfaction may create 'specific supports' for the political authorities in Easton's sense and may contribute in the longer run towards a 'diffuse support' for the political system as a whole (Easton 1965).

The 'core' of political culture can be found in the sources and the extent of *legitimacy* of the political system, the 'diffuse support' it enjoys in the political community. Whereas this support is always based to a certain extent on the customary acceptance of certain rules and institutions, if they have existed over a longer period of time, its value-base also has to be justified in terms of the more general discourse of the social-cultural system. Again, in more traditional communities, this base is grounded in the transcendental sphere – for example, the believed divine origin or 'gift of grace' of certain dynasties or the consecration of political rulers by religious authorities. In modern societies, the major source of legitimacy is a 'rational-legal' one in Weber's sense (1922: 122 ff.), based on a critical reflection of the institutionalized rules of political recruitment and decision-making ('legitimization by procedure' in Luhmann's terms). Open and fair elections involving the widespread participation of the population at large have become the major instrument in this regard. The decisive test of legitimacy of a democratic political culture in this sense is the acceptance of a political decision with which a person or group does not agree.

In modern societies, characteristic tensions between their major sub-systems and their dominant values prevail. Even if this is a very abstract – and for many purposes over-simplified – pattern, it is evident that certain antinomies between the values of, for example, individual liberty and social equality or a general rationalism and specific political decision-making, exist. The degree of interpenetration of sub-systems, their congruence, and the kind of actual compromises found between their antinomies, therefore, becomes an important condition for their survival.

1.3.3 *Intermediary structures*

The *intermediary structures* at the input side of the political system aggregate the objective interests and subjective perceptions and orientations. Among the successfully organized interest groups in modern industrial societies, the major economic interests of capital and labour and their respective organizations of employers and unions tend to prevail. The actual pattern of aggregating such interests may vary considerably, however, and on the union side, for example, separate organizations according to specific occupation, industrial branch or political persuasion and party affiliation may be found. Furthermore, other strong economic interests – such as those of the petty bourgeoisie or farmers – are usually well-represented. By contrast, economically and socially weaker groups, such as the rural proletariat or the sub-proletariat, may be much more

difficult to organize and the expression of their conflict potential remains much below their numerical strength (cf. Olson 1965; Offe 1969).

The more directly political organization of the large variety of social groups can also be crystallized in many ways. The actual party landscapes in Europe, as Lipset and Rokkan (1967) have pointed out, are dominated by the four major cleavages already discussed. To these a fifth reflecting the split on the left-hand side of the political spectrum after the Bolshevik revolution between socialist and communist parties and their respective international orientations and alignments (see also Flora 1981; von Beyme 1982) must be added. The actual fragmentation of party systems and their changes over time vary considerably from case to case given their specific historical, but also institutional conditions. With regard to the latter the specific electoral systems (proportional vs. majoritarian forms of representation), the extent of the suffrage, and their feedbacks on the political landscape all have to be taken into account (see, for example, discussion in Grofman and Lijphart 1984).

In transitory periods and in times of crisis in general, less formally organized and more spontaneous groupings may also emerge which articulate some specific needs or objectives which had been neglected by the more 'established' interest groups and parties. The 'political space' (Linz 1980) available to them in a given situation can be an important condition for their eventual success. Such groups also display more 'unconventional' forms of political participation and behaviour in general, sometimes including illegal and violent means (cf. Barnes and Kaase 1979). Some political groups or parties which reject the existing political system may also attempt to organize their own armed militias and to combat the regime or opposing groups in violent ways.

1.3.4 The central political system

The institutional aspects of the *central political system* concern the basic constitutional set-up such as republican or monarchical forms of rule for the cases concerned, the kind and extent of a separation of power between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, a possible division of authority between a more representative head of state and the actual head of the executive, for example, in the form of a separately elected prime minister, the horizontal separation of power between the central state and regional and local authorities, the regulation of special emergency powers and similar features. With regard to all these aspects, the longer-term historical experiences in each case – for example, a more gradual or a sudden change from the preceding more authoritarian or absolutist form of rule, the specific influence of external forces, such as the results of wars and peace treaties or other forms of interference from the outside – also play a major role. For the actual formation of governments their respective composition, the party coalitions involved, their relative strength and durability, including continuities at the personal level, have to be taken into account. Furthermore, the actual power structure within the formal institutional setup may diverge considerably from the constitutional provisions. Again, the 'subjective' dimension of this part of the political system,

such as the prevalent political style, the influence of personalities, the existence of clientelist relationships between major actors and groups, including extra-legal and illegal forms of nepotism and corruption, have to be considered (cf., for example, Eisenstadt and Lemarchand 1981).

1.3.5 *Output structure*

On the *output* side the extent and internal organization of the state apparatus, its pattern of recruitment, funding, the formal and informal rules governing its behaviour, and similar aspects are among the major factors. Within this overall bureaucratic framework the kind and extent of the security apparatus – both with regard to its external and internal sides – often plays a special role. Thus, the military may become an important internal political factor of its own, the demands but also the repressive resources of which have to be considered. Similarly, the judicial and police apparatus, often involving special external and internal ‘secret’ security and intelligence services as well, is of special importance. The entire political ‘climate’ of a country, as recent East European experiences have shown as well, may depend on the existence and form of intervention of such forces.

Still on the output side, in modern industrial societies the state’s welfare functions play a significant role. In addition to the implementation of ‘law and order’ substantive services concerning basic human and social rights have been increasingly claimed and, to a varying degree, granted. This pertains to the maintenance of public systems of general education and healthcare, unemployment and minimal social welfare provisions, old age and pension schemes, and many more detailed provisions and services. The actual organizations of such services varies to a great extent as well and usually involves a broad spectrum of public, church, and other private nongovernmental institutions and a varying division of labour between them (see also Flora 1983).

1.3.6 *External factors*

Outside this system framework and its more concrete features the *external factors* shaping a country’s destiny have to be taken into account. In addition to the position in the general geopolitical landscape, as, for example, assessed by Rokkan (see above), for our period the legacy of the First World War was of particular importance. Thus, the fact whether one had been on the winning or the losing side or remained neutral continued to be a significant factor. For many countries the aftermath of the War had also brought about important changes such as the creation of new formally independent states, the fall of a number of authoritarian regimes, the extension of the suffrage, or some revived territorial conflicts. Furthermore, the conditions of the peace treaties imposed a number of continuing obligations on some countries, both in economic and political terms, and strongly affected their internal developments and political reactions. The overall security situation was characterized by a number of pacts and alliances, but remained relatively volatile. Economically, a relatively high level of indebtedness towards foreign creditors could be found in a number of cases (including both winners and

losers of the War). Certain cultural and intellectual links and influences also remained strong contributing to certain political orientations. In addition, a special external feature was the possession of extensive overseas colonies or the loss (because of the war) or the lack of them.

1.3.7 *Dynamic aspects*

All these factors and aspects constantly interact within the overall political system and contribute to the 'fulfillment of demands' and 'reinforcement of supports' in Easton's sense, or the lack of it. Even though the usual flow of information and activities may conform to the direction indicated by the arrows in Figure 1.2, less regular flows and interventions – e.g. a single or dominant political party acting as an output structure, the military becoming an important institution on the input side of the political system or within the central system itself, 'withinputs' among institutions and actors of the central political system – may often contribute to specific events and outcomes. In this sense, some of the system stabilizing effects of feedback functions certainly cannot be taken for granted.

Against this broad systemic and historical background the specific events, *reactions* and *consequences* of the crisis years have to be assessed. In this regard, we are interested in the specific triggering factors, the major social reactions (including mass demonstrations, strikes and acts of violence), and the specific electoral and other political consequences. Conceptually, we follow here in broad lines the 'process model of crisis and change' as put forward by Almond and Flanagan (see in particular chapters 1 and 2 in Almond *et al.* 1973) and further developed and elaborated by Dobry (1986: esp. 121ff.). There, different phases of this process are distinguished taking into account the specific resources of the principal groups and actors in the major '*arenas*' of the sociopolitical system and the actual or potential alternative coalitions formed at the time of the climax of the crisis in terms of the successful or attempted 'breakthrough' towards the establishment of a different system type. In this regard, we find Dobry's observation particularly pertinent that during these conjunctural moments of tension the usually sectorially divided arenas may interact more clearly and that, in fact, within certain limits the situation may become more '*fluid*' widening the space of manoeuvre for the actors and opening up potential alternatives and special '*moves*'. In this way both 'structural' and 'actor-oriented' approaches can be accommodated in a more complex research design.

The considerations outlined so far have guided us in establishing the comparative framework for each individual case-study and the overall cross-cutting problem areas which are dealt with in one part of our comparative work. At the same time, we have scrutinized much of the relevant literature and the factors and hypotheses discussed there and checked them against the variables in our data set (see also Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 1991). In this way we arrived at a fairly comprehensive but still manageable conceptualization of our cases. The particular variables selected can, of course, still be modified or supplemented to a certain extent. Our next step will be to make some multi-case comparisons involving the commonalities of 'most similar' systems, in Przeworski and

Teune's (1970) terminology, and their respective democratic, authoritarian or fascist outcomes, and the specificities of 'most different' systems with a common fate (see also Berg-Schlosser 1990). Furthermore, some overall comparisons will be conducted, employing a variety of qualitative and statistical techniques. For this purpose, we had to operationalize as much as possible the various aspects and factors discussed so far.

1.3.8 Operationalizing the selected variables

Following Przeworski and Teune's admonition that 'explanation in comparative research is possible if and only if particular social systems observed in time and space are not viewed as finite conjunctions of constituent elements, but rather as residua of theoretical variables' and that 'the role of comparative research in the process of theory-building and theory-testing consists of replacing proper names of social systems by the relevant variables' (1970: 30), we have attempted to make this process as transparent as possible, outlining both the conceptual considerations and their concrete operationalizations.

In doing so, however, we are inevitably faced with a number of difficulties and constraints. One lies in the fact that for 'big structures and huge comparisons' such as ours, to paraphrase Charles Tilly again, many of the concepts discussed so far, even if they can be located in a more comprehensive systematic framework, remain rather broad or, in a number of instances, controversial. This is the case, for example, for notions like social 'class', the extent of legitimacy of a regime, or in analysis of other aspects of political culture or political styles. On the other hand, many available data are rather narrow and much more specific than the broader meaning conveyed by such notions (e.g. data on income or education to be used for class analysis or electoral results for an assessment of political legitimacy). In these instances we had to make a number of conscious choices which, by necessity, will remain controversial to a certain extent, but again we have attempted to make our decisions as transparent as possible.

The very availability of data is another major constraint. Most information has been collected for other purposes and we only can employ it in a secondary way. There is always a certain danger that the mere availability and preconceived operationalization of certain data may distort one's own perception. This resembles the proverbial drunkard who searches for his lost key near the streetlight instead of going to the place where he actually may have dropped it! To avoid this predicament, we were in the fortunate position to rely, in addition to the valuable available international statistics and handbooks mentioned above, on the work of the individual contributors to our case-studies and their specific linguistic skills, historical knowledge and access to particular sources. The latter include, for example, national census data, special archives and similar sources, but also important secondary accounts not readily accessible for outside research and non-native speakers.

In the absence of any general survey data for this period a number of the 'softer' aspects of our outline – in particular in the area of political culture and other subjective factors – could be covered by the expert judgements of our collaborators.

By necessity, again, some of these assessments had to remain rather broad, but we found it important to consider them nevertheless, even if some of those remain open to (always welcome!) criticism and further refinements. Similar judgemental problems also arise in establishing certain ordinal categories or thresholds for dichotomized versions of our variables. These also were made with regard to the available sources and in light of some of the prevailing concepts and hypotheses concerning our cases. As far as particular authors were concerned we attempted to stick to the original operationalizations as closely as possible – for example, with regard to Vanhanen’s (1984) indices.

1.3.9 *Definitions of central notions*

For the purpose of our research and to facilitate communication among the members of the group we also supplied a number of common definitions of central notions derived from the major sources in the literature. These include, in particular, definitions of regime types, such as democracy, authoritarianism and facism and of certain key elements of our project, like notions of crisis, survival (or re-equilibration) and breakdown.

Within the regular functions of political systems and certain thresholds which have to be established in this regard certain patterns and *types* of political systems are formed. For our universe of cases we are mainly concerned with certain variations of, at least in the beginning, parliamentary democracies. As a ‘minimal’ working definition we were content with Dahl’s definition of ‘polyarchy’, namely ‘a regime in which opportunities for public contestation are available to the great bulk of the population’ (Dahl 1971: 202).

Juan Linz specifies this somewhat further:

Legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to free association, free speech, and other basic freedoms of person; free and nonviolent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic process; and provision for the participation of all members of the political community, whatever their political preferences (Linz 1978: 5).

In a more recent work, Robert Dahl is even more explicit: ‘(P)olyarchy is a political order distinguished by the presence of seven institutions, all of which must exist for a government to be classified as a polyarchy:

1. Elected officials. Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.
2. Free and fair elections. Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
3. Inclusive suffrage. Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.

4. Right to run for office. Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government, though age limits may be higher for holding office than for the suffrage.
5. Freedom of expression. Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socio-economic order, and the prevailing ideology.
6. Alternative information. Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by laws.
7. Associational autonomy. To achieve their various rights, including those listed above, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.

It is important to understand that these statements characterize actual and not merely nominal rights, institutions, and processes. (Dahl 1989: 221)

Axel Hadenius (1992: 47) adds the thought that such characteristics must be, at least in their basic features, constitutionally guaranteed and remain unchangeable even by large parliamentary majorities. They have to be, as he puts it, 'enclosed by legally valid rules of limitation to safeguard both the electoral process and the political liberties'.

In actual fact, of course, certain variations of degree among democratic systems can be found with regard to such criteria – for example, suffrage in an otherwise relatively well-established parliamentary system such as Belgium remained mostly restricted to male adults in the interwar period. These variations can be assessed by a variety of more strictly operationalized 'indices of democracy' (for a broader discussion see also Inkeles 1990). For our period and cases the index employed by Vanhanen (1984) was the only available one which we included in our data base. In addition, independent assessments of 'political rights' and 'civil liberties' in the sense employed by 'Freedom House' (Gactie 1978ff.) were provided by the authors of our case-studies. Thus, it is quite apparent that the regimes in Hungary or Romania, for example, must be qualified, even before the final breakdown, as largely 'façade' democracies.

Beyond certain boundaries qualitatively different types of political systems can also be found, which in our cases could be grouped into the authoritarian or fascist varieties. Authoritarian regimes here are understood, following Linz, as

political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones (1975, 264).

Within this broader category a number of cases belongs to the 'authoritarian corporatist' sub-type. This is defined

as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized and licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports (Schmitter 1974: 93).

Examples of this latter kind are the regime in Portugal under Salazar after 1932 or in Austria under Dollfuss and Schuschnigg after 1934.

Stanley Payne specifies the following elements:

- a) The new authoritarian right was anticonservative only in the very limited sense of a qualified opposition to the more moderate, parliamentary forms of conservatism.
- b) The new right advocated authoritarian government, but hesitated to embrace radical and novel forms of dictatorship and normally relied either on monarchism or Catholic neocorporatism, or some combination thereof.
- c) In philosophy and ideology, the right was grounded on a combination of rationalism and also religion, and normally rejected the secularist irrationalism, vitalism and neoidealism of the fascists.
- d) The new right was based on traditional élites rather than new formations of déclassé radicals, and aimed their tactics more at manipulation of the existing system than toward political conquest from the streets.
- e) The new right never projected the same goals of mass political mobilization.
- f) Whereas the fascists aimed at changes in social status and relations, the new right explicitly intended to maintain and affirm the existing social hierarchy, if anything increasing the degree of dominance of established groups.
- g) The new right tried to rely a great deal on the army and was willing to accept pretorian rule, rejecting the fascist principle of militia and mass party mobilization (Payne 1980: 23).

By contrast, the *fascist* type, if taken as a generic term (cf. also Eatwell 1991; Griffin 1991) possesses a mobilized mass basis (with certain class distinctions), an explicit ideology based on 'natural' features of groups and peoples (blood and soil), a totalitarian all-encompassing organizational structure and a tendency toward a charismatic personal leadership style (Payne 1980: 20 nn). Roger Griffin elaborates this concept somewhat further. In great detail, he develops a definition of fascism as:

A genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism. The fascist mentality is characterized by the sense of living through an imminent turning-point in contemporary history, when the dominance of the allegedly bankrupt or degenerate forces of conservatism, individualistic liberalism and materialist socialism is finally to give way to a new era in which vitalistic nationalism will triumph. To combat these rival political ideologies and the decadence they allegedly host (for example the parasitism of traditional elites, materialism, class conflict, military weakness, loss of racial vitality, moral anarchy, cosmopolitanism), fascist activists see the recourse to organized violence as both necessary and healthy. Though they may well make some concessions to parliamentary democracy in order to gain power, the pluralism of opinion and party politics upon which it rests is anathema to their concept of national unity, which implies in practice the maximum totalitarian control over all areas of social, economic, political and cultural life (Griffin 1991: 44).

Again there may be differences of degree in the realization of such an 'ideal type' in any concrete case. Among the countries considered here, Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany undoubtedly correspond to a fully-fledged system of this type. In other cases there may have been strong fascist movements – for practical purposes, we have set a threshold of 15 per cent of the electorate at any given point in time – which have contributed to the final breakdown of the parliamentary system (as, for example, in Romania), even though the regime which followed was not a purely fascist one.

Another central notion for this study is the concept of crisis, about which Almond *et al.* (1973: 48) made the following observations:

Systemic crisis and structural change suggest something more than a shuffling of personalities, as when one cabinet falls and is succeeded by another. They imply a fundamental change in regime that alters the institutional power balance among the contenders. The contenders in our analysis, whether classed as incumbents or nonincumbents, are in general not defined as personalities, but as representatives of particular groups and interests in society. Thus the attack on the incumbent that accompanies a systemic crisis is not simply an attack on personalities that can be settled through a routine turnover process. The issues go to the heart of the institutionalized criteria for allocating authority and rewards and can not be resolved in favor of the challengers without some fundamental changes in the political structure – that is, in the structures and processes of recruitment and decision making.

In his comprehensive study of the subject, Michel Dobry emphasizes the exceptional situation and the 'fluidity' of a 'true' political crisis which may also open up new avenues and political choices: 'Il s'agit de penser les crises à la fois en tant que mobilisations et en tant que transformations d'état – passages à des

états critiques – des systèmes sociaux.’ In this sense, the meaning of the Chinese character for crisis which is said to signify both ‘danger’ and ‘opportunity’ is confirmed once again.

In our cases, the true system crises which could be observed either led to the successful ‘survival’ of the democratic regime including in some instances the emergence of a broader-based democratic coalition and the successful alignment of forces which hitherto had been inconceivable as, for example, the ‘Red-Green’ (Socialist–Agrarian) alliances in Finland and Sweden. In other instances a definite system ‘breakdown’ and a qualitative change of the political system occurred which brought ‘anti-system’ forces to power. In Juan Linz’s words: ‘... breakdown is a result of processes initiated by the government’s incapacity to solve problems for which disloyal oppositions offer themselves as a solution’ (Linz 1978: 50).

The direction which these changes are taking depends on the social forces involved. The outcome may be a more ‘traditional authoritarian’ regime. In the words of Linz: ‘The assumption of power by a combination of ademocratic, generally predemocratic, authority structures that coopt part of the political class of the previous democratic regime and integrate elements of the disloyal opposition, but undertake only limited changes in the social structure and most institutional realms’; or a more ‘corporatist authoritarian’ type: ‘The establishment of a new authoritarian regime, based on a realignment of social forces and the exclusion of all the leading political actors of the preceding democratic regime, without, however, creating new political institutions or any form of mass mobilization in support of its rule.’ But also a more truly ‘fascist’ type may emerge: ‘The takeover of power by a well-organized disloyal opposition with a mass base in the society, committed to the creation of new political and social order, and unwilling to share its power with members of the political class of the past regime, except as minor partners in a transition phase’ (Linz 1978: 81–2).

1.4 The status of the case-studies

All the case-studies in this volume have been conducted following the framework laid out in this introduction. In this way, they provide a comprehensive account of the major factors, facts and events leading to the culmination of the most significant political developments and crises in the period under consideration. They are all based on the extensive knowledge and, in some instances, specific additional research of the respective country experts, most of whom are natives of the cases dealt with. All of them combine intensive historical experiences and training with specific sociological and political interests and skills. In the beginning, the studies on Belgium by Gisèle De Meur and Dirk Berg-Schlösser and on Finland by Lauri Karvonen served as the major models for the other authors. In the course of time, these have also contributed their share in numerous discussions and meetings to the overall conceptualization and eventual outcome of the project. The case-studies may thus serve as a ready source of relatively complete information and reference for all readers – including students – who are interested in a particular case or a certain number of cases.

The editors have attempted to maintain the overall similarity and coherence of each case-study as much as possible and desirable. But the vagaries of such a large international project which has been extended over a long period of time, and the personal fortunes and misfortunes of the individual members of this research community, which has almost become an 'extended family' in many ways, have also contributed to some of the variations which can still be observed in the treatments of the different cases. Furthermore, each author was explicitly encouraged to spell out his or her own interpretation of each case which then could be meaningfully contrasted with others. In addition, of course, each author contributed his own style and personal flavour to the narrative of each case. Some of this may have been lost by the efforts of the two major native English-speakers of our group, Allan Zink, and, in particular, Jeremy Mitchell to convert the original texts into some form of coherent and plain English, but this certainly enhanced the overall comparability and readability.

In addition, each case-study author contributed in a systematic way to the overall data base for the explicitly comparative parts of the project, which are dealt with in the second volume. The categories, variables, definitions, operationalizations, thresholds for certain values etc. of this data base also have been discussed and agreed upon at numerous occasions. As becomes apparent in the overall documentation of this project, it was necessary in many instances to go beyond some of the more common data handbooks and international sources and to collect country-specific data from a number of indigenous sources. These again also had to be made consistent and comparable as much as possible. In some cases it also became apparent that even some of the most widely used international sources of reference still contain a number of major flaws and errors which had to be corrected, based on the original country sources, for our own purposes. The central collection and documentation of all these data has been conducted in a most thorough and skilful way by Sven Quenter at Marburg.

The case-studies and the common data base thus served as the major building blocks for the cross-cutting studies and comprehensive comparative analyses of the second volume. Each author of a particular chapter in the second volume could thus easily refer to these sources and, when necessary or in doubt, consult the original author on some specific points. In this way, the overall coherence of the project was similarly enhanced. The overall results can now, finally, be presented here and in the second volume which is to follow soon.

2

Austria: From Compromise to Authoritarianism*

Peter Gerlich and David F.J. Campbell

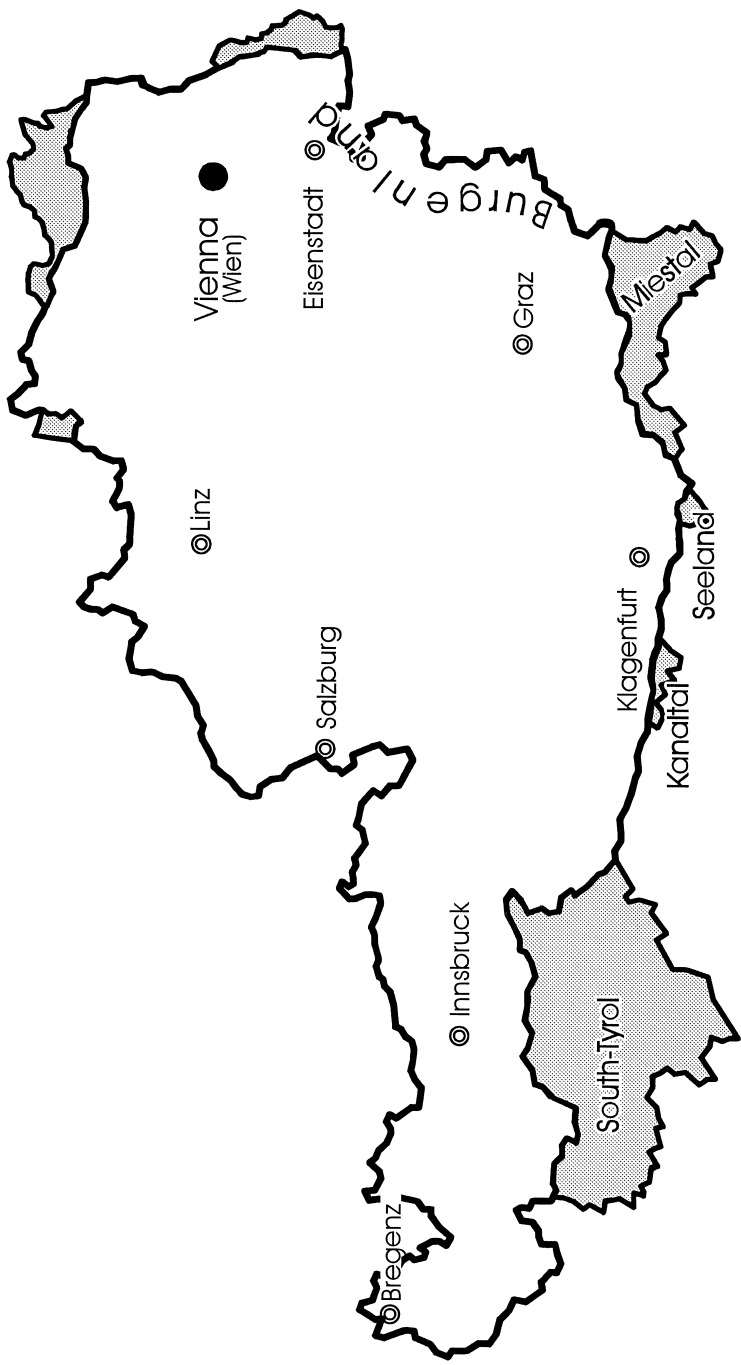
1 Introduction

The Republic of Austria created in 1918 consisted of ‘that which was left over’ when the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg monarchy collapsed and fragmented after being on the losing side at the end of the First World War. It was reduced to the German-speaking areas of the former empire, and did not even cover those completely. The formation of Austria turned out to be difficult and ambiguous. On 30 October, 1918, the Republik Deutsch-Österreich (German-Austrian Republic) was formed, and its creation was formally announced on 12 November 1918. On the same day the Socialist state chancellor Karl Renner declared the intention of Austria to unite and fuse with Germany. Thus from the beginning the newly created Austrian state had a very weak concept of *national identity* – the name German-Austria was forbidden by the Peace Treaty of St. Germain en Laye (1919), as were all attempts at unification with Germany. So the issue of national identity chronically influenced the development of the Austrian political system.

Confronted with this starting-point, a number of conditions arose which structured the political processes in interwar Austria. The following features appear central: (i) With a short exception at the beginning of the Austrian Republic (1918–19), the two major political forces, the Social Democrats and Christian Socials, could never work out a stable *basic consensus* on Austria and its political system. (ii) Parliamentarism, as established in 1918–19, was viewed as a *left-wing* phenomenon. However, this created a paradox: the Social Democrats were the driving force in the establishment of a parliamentary system, but, at the same time, the Social Democrats stayed in opposition after 1920. (iii) The Christian Socials oscillated between building a centre consensus arrangement with the Social Democrats and, at the other extreme, the exclusion of the Social

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Austria



0 100 Km.
Territory ceded after World War I

Democrats from power by forming a coalition with the right-wing German-national parties. Ideologically this reflected the struggle of the Christian Socials to define their political aims: should they accept 'leftist parliamentarism' or, rather, strive for an authoritarian and Catholic-oriented model of society? It appears that during the 1930s the leadership of the Christian Social Party abandoned their belief in parliamentarism. So, perhaps, in the case of Austria one reason for fall of democracy was the fear of the Christian Socials of a two-fold electoral pressure – that of being overtaken by the Social Democrats and the Nazi right-wing extremists (Hänisch 1995: 489–92). (iv) The worldwide depression of the 1930s destabilized Austrian society so radically that the conservative government was tempted to abolish parliamentary rule in 1933 and 1934. Even so, it is important to stress that the economic disturbances of the 1930s did not *create* the political problems – they just amplified effects that already existed. (v) This general crisis scenario was additionally fostered by an underlying scepticism over the viability (*Lebensfähigkeit*) of Austrian society *per se*. Discussions about its viability developed at the beginning of the Austrian Republic, in the aftermath of the First World War, and returned to the agenda in the context of the international depression during the 1930s.

2 Social conditions

2.1 Social structure

As a result of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the aftermath of the First World War, Austria found itself a remarkably homogeneous society, both ethnically and religiously. Thus the social cleavages, and to some extent the regional clusters, developed as the dominant conflict lines. However, the small but influential Jewish community prevented Austria from turning into a purely Catholic country and did sustain an important element of multi-culturalism. Consequently antisemitism kept its mobilizing potential for the 'right' of the political spectrum (Lichtblau 1995). The extent of homogeneity can be seen in two important indicators: *religion* and *language*. In 1910 78.9 per cent of the population were Catholic, in 1934 the figure stood at 90.4 per cent. By contrast, the Jewish community was 4.6 per cent of the population in 1910, and 2.8 per cent in 1934. In 1910 35.6 per cent were German-speaking, using it as the colloquial language in public (*Umgangssprache*), whereas in 1934 the German native-speakers stood at 97.4 per cent of the population (see Flora 1983: 63, 68).

Within this context, where to a large extent the religious and linguistic pluralism of pre-1918 was absent, social stratification and social class created the primary lines of division in society. According to the conceptual scheme of Januschka (1938: 32–3), updated by Bodzenta (1980: 159) and Bruckmüller (1983: 426–7, 435), the social stratification of interwar Austria resembled a *pyramid* – the pyramid emphasizing the inequality of societal structures (see Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1). The upper classes comprised only around 1.6 per cent of the population and the middle classes 12 per cent; the lower classes (around 86 per cent) were by far the largest segment of society. Bruckmüller (1983: 428)

Table 2.1 Austria: class structure, 1934

Population (millions)		6.8
Employment rate		46.9
Rate of agrarian employment		31.7
Agrarian	Landlords (>50ha)	0.3
	Family farms	11.1
	Agrarian proletariat	15.6
Non-agrarian	Capitalists	0.2
	Old middle class	12
	New middle class	9
	Proletariat	41.4
	Sub-proletariat	9.3
Total		98.9

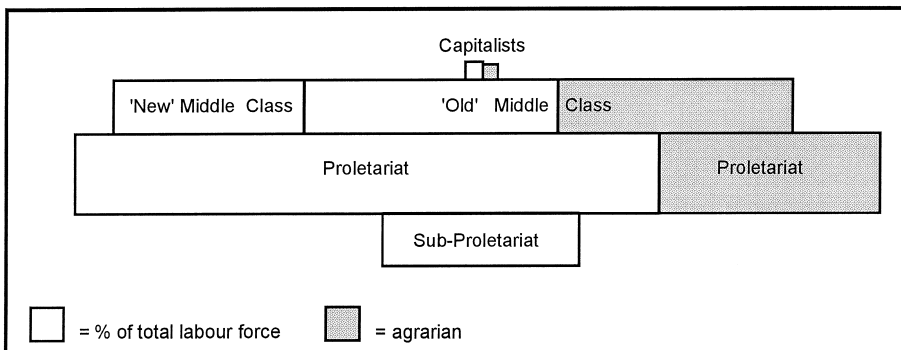
Sources: Januschka (1938: 32f); Bruckmüller (1983: 426).

Note: The data for the new middle class is an estimate based on *Statistisches Reichsamts* (1936: 205).

notes the fact that only three political ‘camps’ (*Lager*) evolved from eight to nine socio-economically structured clusters or strata.

As a legacy of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the regional division found one major manifestation in the conflict between the oversized capital, the so-called ‘hydrocephalic Vienna’ (*Wasserkopf Wien*), and the mainly rural and agrarian provinces. This conflict was politically loaded, as a conflict between *red* Vienna, controlled by the Social Democrats, and the conservative (*black*) provinces (Hanisch 1991: 13). Because of the demographic weight of Vienna, the Social Democratic dominance over the capital implied a major challenge to the conservative parties since nearly 30 per cent of the Austrian population lived in Vienna (Bruckmüller 1983: 383). To some extent the religious question divided

Figure 2.1 Austria: class structure, 1934



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 2.1.

the elites too. However, in a country where more than 90 per cent of the population were members of the Catholic Church, many of the potentially polarizing effects of competing Christian religions were prevented, with the major and tragic exception of antisemitism.

2.2 Aspects of political culture

A number of attitudes arose in interwar Austria, fed by those conditions that were 'transported' as structural legacies of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and its collapse. The attitudes of political elites played a crucial role.

1. *A lack of national identity*: The fusion of Austria with Germany (or so-called *Anschluss*) appeared necessary to practically all political parties (Jagschitz 1983: 508; Gerlich 1988). We have already mentioned that Austria initially called itself German-Austria, indicating its intention of uniting with Germany. Interestingly the Austrian Social Democrats explicitly demanded this in their Party Program at Linz 1926: 'The Social Democrats perceive the unification (*Anschluss* of German-Austria with the German Reich as a necessary completion of the national revolution of 1918. With peaceful means the Social Democrats desire the unification with the German Republic' (Berchtold 1967: 264). In 1933, when Adolf Hitler assumed power in Germany, the Social Democrats abandoned this political *Anschluss* demand.

2. *Acceptance of state authority*: The state, and its administration or bureaucracy, had a high degree of public acceptance and so their activities were seen as legitimate. But this legitimacy was challenged by the responsibilities which were delegated to the state administration. So a dichotomized legitimation/responsibility pattern operated (Hanisch 1991).

3. *'Lager' mentality*: Primarily the two major parties, the Christian Social Party (Christlichsoziale Partei, CP) and the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs, SDAP), created 'camps', the so-called *Lager*, with pervasive organizational networks and strong, boundary-creating ideological underpinnings (Catholic corporatism, socialist Austro-Marxism). Adam Wandruszka characterized the political system of Austria as divided into three camps, a socialist – including the Communist Party of Austria (Kommunistische Partei Österreichs, KPÖ) (see Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 455–6) – a christian-conservative, and a national cluster, and semi-ironically classifies this structural triad as 'inspired by nature or god' (Wandruszka 1977: 291; Müller 1984).

4. *Compromise (compromise/conflict)*: The natural reaction of the Austrian elites was to negotiate at the top level between the camps, and afterwards to mobilize and persuade their followers to accept these negotiated agreements. In this context Pelinka talks of the 'flexibility of the suprastructure' and the 'stability of the infrastructure' (Pelinka 1988: 38–40; see also Campbell 1991: 211–12). While it is justifiable to characterize Austria conceptually, post-1945, as a 'consensus democracy' (Lijphart 1984), this compromise model did not always function in the First Republic (1918–38). A grand coalition between the

Social Democrats and Christian Socials only operated in the years 1919–20, afterwards the Christian Socials always selected the option of a non-socialist coalition, called the *Bürgerblock Regierungen* ('bourgeois-block governments') (Wandruszka 1977: 483; Dusek *et al.* 1981: 12). It appears that Austria of the interwar period was not prepared to abandon the conflict path to compromise between left and right interests. The 'left/right conflict decision', manifested in the Christian Socials by forming a coalition with right-national parties, helped to create a process of political radicalization. The economic and societal problems did not supply Austria with the necessary stability to allow the experiment of *major left/right swings* at the level of government and parliamentary coalition linkages. It should be mentioned, however, that at the provincial level the model of consensus democracy was much better established than at the national level (Hanisch 1991: 16). After the Second World War, one of the crucial reasons for the viability of the grand-coalition pattern between the Socialists (SPÖ), the direct successors of the SDAP, and the Conservatives (ÖVP), the successors of the Christian Socials, lay in this previous instability. The Austrian political system encountered severe problems in trying to handle left/right conflicts, so the existing consensus and corporatist structures appear to guarantee a greater stability for contemporary Austria (Waarden 1992).

3 Intermediate structures

The relationship of the two major parties, the Social Democrats and the (conservative) Christian Socials, created the dominant frame of reference for the political system. These two parties can be easily located on a *left-right axis*. Only secondarily did they also differ along the *pro-anti-church axis*. The 'third parties' of the national cluster, those of the *German-national camp*, also manifested a clear political bias to the right, but in contrast to the Christian Socials they also adopted an anti-church policy (for a detailed analysis of the national camp, see also Wandruszka 1983). Wandruszka notes that this anti-church policy sporadically led to joint actions of the Nationals and Socialists (Wandruszka 1977: 483). In summary this implies that the dynamics of Austrian politics in the interwar period can be interpreted as a *two-dimensional spatial model*.

The German-national camp consisted most importantly of the Greater German People's Party (Grossdeutsche Volkspartei, GdVP), the Land League (Land Bund, LB) that originated from a fusion of several agrarian parties in 1922, and the 'national wing' of the Homeland Defence (*Heimwehr*), a semi-military political organization (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 457–8). The Homeland Block (*Heimatblock*) was the political formation of the *Heimwehr* that took part in the national elections of 1930. The *Heimwehr* developed in the aftermath of the First World War as a very heterogeneous movement unified by a strong anti-marxist ideology. The core of the *Heimwehr* was anti-parliamentary and fascist, taking Mussolini's fascist Italy as a reference model, but at the same time was also anti-Nazi. Later, in 1935–6, the *Heimwehr* was absorbed by the 'Austrofascist' state

structures (Jagschitz 1983: 506–7; Tálos and Manoschek 1988a: 33–5, 40–1; Tálos and Manoschek 1988b: 94–7). As a result of this threefold political camp-structure, different types of government coalitions were both possible and practised. On some questions, most importantly the drafting of the first constitution in 1920, a ‘three-camp’ grand compromise solution could be established, such as the ‘super-grand coalition’ of the Christian Socials, the Social Democrats and the German-national parties that existed between July and November 1920 (Flora 1983: 156). Thus, on 1 October 1920, the new constitution was implemented. In the period 1919–20 there was a governmental grand coalition between the Social Democrats and the Christian Socials, with a socialist chancellor, Renner (Flora 1983: 156). Otto Bauer, the ideological leader of the Socialist Party, described this initial grand coalition as an ‘equilibrium of class forces’ (quoted in Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 464). However, after 1920, right-wing coalitions excluded the Social Democrats from power. Bauer underlined this situation by emphasizing that opposition was the ‘natural’ state of a socialist party within a bourgeois society (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 464).

In the second half of the 1920s a process of political radicalization took place and the centrifugal forces which would lead to the collapse of parliamentarism in 1933 became evident. Although the Social Democrats mostly acted pragmatically, a feature of the Austro-Marxist socialist ideology was to use a left-radical language as political rhetoric (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 464). In the Party Programme of Linz (1926) the possibility of cooperation between different classes was underplayed as only a temporary state, as an exception (Berchtold 1967: 252–3). Leser assesses this verbal radicalism of the interwar Social Democrats very critically and blames the party leadership of that time as having developed a *conceptual bias* (Leser 1988: 36–7, 43–53). At the turn of the century Bernstein had criticized the orthodox Marxist self-perception of the social democratic parties and demanded an ideological adjustment to pragmatic day-to-day policy in real world politics (Fetscher 1984: 891–2). Höbel (1992: 768) observes that the Austrian interwar Social Democrats belonged to the left spectrum of the European socialist parties, and Jagschitz (1983: 509) notes that after February 1934 a large fraction of the left wing of the Austrian Social Democrats moved to the Communist Party.

The process of political radicalization among the non-socialist right-wing parties produced a more damaging outcome for the political system. Crucial here was the political decision of the Christian Socials to prefer, in principle, a coalition with the right parties. We have already mentioned the term *Bürgerblock* (bourgeois block) and the cooperation between the christian-conservative and national camp was obvious. This tendency must always be borne in mind when we analyse the process of coalition formation in interwar Austria: in the period 1920–33 the Christian Socials always selected a parliamentary coalition with both German-national parties, the Greater German People’s Party and the Land League (Flora 1983: 156). This pattern was only interrupted by minor exceptions: (a) from November 1920 until June 1921 the German-national parties ‘only supported’ the Christian Social government; (b) from January 1922 until

May 1922 there was a Christian Social minority government; (c) from September 1930 until December 1930 the Christian Socials based their government on a coalition with the parliamentary representatives of the *Heimwehr* (Homeland Defense); (d) from May 1932 until March 1933 the Christian Socials based their coalition government only on one German-national party, the Land League, and five representatives of the *Heimwehr*. The importance of these centre-right/right coalition linkages is underlined even more by the fact that for the national elections of 1927 the Christian Socials organized a joint election platform with the Greater German People's Party (see Table 2.2 for a general overview).

As a result of this parliamentary history, Austria, until 1933, could be considered a *bi-polar* system rather than a three-*Lager* system (the traditional conceptualization). The main political division drew a line between the left Social Democrats and the right bourgeois parties. Until 1934 the left–right cleavage, underlined by regional antagonisms, clearly dominated the political system. Practically all interest groups or other movements were subordinated to this dominant principle of *interest and conflict 'coding'*.

On 4 March 1933, the three presidents of the Austrian parliament (Renner, Ramek and Straffner) temporarily resigned because of a formal error. The Christian Social federal chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss used this as an excuse to abolish the parliament. This was followed by a ban on several political parties, beginning with the Communists and Nazis in 1933, and the Social Democrats in 1934. In May 1934, Austria adopted its 'Austrofascist' constitution. Politically the idea was realized to replace the party pluralism by one movement, called the Fatherland Front (Vaterländische Front, VF), which was established in May 1933. As the 'Austrofascist' government consisted primarily of the Christian Social elites, the Christian Social Party dissolved itself in May 1934 (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 466; Jagschitz 1983: 501, 509; Tálos and Manoschek 1988a: 42–4; Ucakar 1991: 87).

After the implementation of this 'Austrofascist' *Ständestaat* (Corporate State), in 1933/4, the conflict line between the christian-conservative and national camp became more active and visible. The Austrian Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei – Hitlerbewegung (National Socialist German Workers' Party – Hitler Movement, NSDAP), founded in Passau under the leadership of Adolf Hitler in 1926 (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 457–9), had been outlawed in June 1933, but swept Austria with a wave of terrorism that reached a first peak in May and June 1933 (Botz 1983: 260). In his famous *Trabrennplatz*-speech on 11 September 1933, Federal Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss used the notion of a 'two-front war' (*Zweifrontenkrieg*) of the authoritarian *Ständestaat*-government against the 'Marxists', meaning the Social Democrats, and the National Socialists (Berchtold 1967: 429). In July 1934 the Austrian Nazis attempted a coup against the authoritarian government, which the government forces suppressed; however, Dollfuss was assassinated by the Nazis. His successor, Schuschnigg, stayed in power until the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938. After the July Treaty between Austria and Germany (in 1936), the Schuschnigg government switched from an anti-Nazi strategy to a policy of trying to reconcile

Table 2.2 Government composition in Austria, 1918–34

Date in	Year	Chancellor	Party affiliation	Parties in government (number of parl. seats)	Parliamentary majority of government parties
30.10 ^a	1918	Renner	Soc. Dem.	pre-election phase	
15.03	1919	Renner	Soc. Dem.	Soc. Dem. (69) Christ. (63)	83.0 % (132 of 159)
17.10	1919	Renner	Soc. Dem.	Soc. Dem. (69) Christ. (63)	83.0 % (132 of 159)
07.07	1920	Mayr	Christ.	Soc. Dem. (69) Christ. (63) Germ. Nat. (24)	98.1 % (156 of 159)
20.11	1920	Mayr	Christ.	Christ. (85), supp. by Germ. Nat. (28)	46.4 % (85 of 183)
21.06	1921	Schober	–	Christ. (85) Germ. Nat. (28)	61.7 % (113 of 183)
27.01	1922	Schober	–	Christ. (85)	46.4 % (85 of 183)
31.05	1922	Seipel	Christ.	Christ. (85) Germ. Nat. (28)	61.7 % (113 of 183)
17.04	1923	Seipel	Christ.	Christ. (85) Germ. Nat. (28)	61.7 % (113 of 183)
20.11	1923	Seipel	Christ.	Christ. (80) Germ. Nat. (11)	55.2 % (91 of 165)
19.11	1924	Ramek	Christ.	Christ. (80) Germ. Nat. (11)	55.2 % (91 of 165)
15.01	1926	Ramek	Christ.	Christ. (80) Germ. Nat. (11)	55.2 % (91 of 165)
20.10	1926	Seipel	Christ.	Christ. (80) Germ. Nat. (11)	55.2 % (91 of 165)
19.05	1927	Seipel	Christ.	Christ. (73) Germ. Nat. (21)	57.0 % (94 of 165)
04.04	1929	Streeruwitz	Christ.	Christ. (73) Germ. Nat. (21)	57.0 % (94 of 165)
26.09	1929	Schober	–	Christ. (73) Germ. Nat. (21)	57.0 % (94 of 165)
20.09	1930	Vaugoin	Christ.	Christ. (66) Heimatblock (8)	44.8 % (74 of 165)
04.12	1930	Ender	Christ.	Christ. (66) Germ. Nat. (19)	51.5 % (85 of 165)

Table 2.2 continued

Date in	Year	Chancellor	Party affiliation	Parties in government (number of parl. seats)	Parliamentary majority of government parties
20.06	1931	Buresch	Christ.	Christ. (66) Germ. Nat. (19)	51.5 % (85 of 165)
29.01	1932	Buresch	Christ.	Christ. (66) Germ. Nat. (19)	51.5 % (85 of 165)
20.05 ^b	1932	Dollfuss	Christ.	Christ (66) Landbund (12), supp. by 5 Heimatblock MPs	47.2 % (78 of 165)
25.07 ^c	1934	Schuschnigg	F.F.	Authoritarian governing – the Corporate State ('Ständestaat')	

Source: Flora (1983: vol. I, 156).

Abbreviations (and Translations):

Soc. Dem. = Social Democrats
 Christ. = Christian Socials
 Germ. Nat. = German Nationals
 Heimatblock = Homeland Block (political formation of the *Heimwehr*, the homeland defence)
 Landbund = Land League
 F.F. = Fatherland Front.

Annotations:

- The first national elections were carried out on 16 February 1919.
- Parliamentary rule was abolished by Dollfuss in March 1933.
- Schuschnigg resigned on 11 March 1938.

the German-nationals with the authoritarian government (Dusek *et al.* 1981: 13; Jagschitz 1983: 510–11). Following this treaty Austria was forced to take nationals/Nazis into its government, like the National Socialist Seyss-Inquart who was minister of the Interior in 1938. This rather passive resistance of the ‘Austrofascist’ government against the Nazis finally culminated in the *Anschluss* of Austria to Nazi Germany in March 1938 and underlines our concept of a ‘bourgeois camp’ that consisted of the christian-conservative and national cluster. Finally, it should be mentioned that the electoral base of the German national parties was, to a very large extent, absorbed by the Nazi movement (Hanisch 1991: 500–1; Dachs 1995: 140). In May 1933 the Greater German People’s Party officially decided on a joint action platform with the Austrian Nazis (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 453–5, 457).

4 Dynamic factors

Inter-war Austria was caught in a contradictory network of *centripetal* and *centrifugal* tendencies that influenced its political processes. Among *centre-oriented* approaches we can cite the cooperation attempts between the two major parties, the Social Democrats and the Christian Socials. Despite the tragic course of the political system, which moved from a parliamentary democracy towards authoritarianism and fascism, first during the *Ständestaat* (1933/4–1938) and then under the Nazis (post-1938), we can observe both political behavioural patterns, embedded in an ambiguous cooperation/conflict dilemma. A comparison of data on political violence and economic performance figures does not support a one-dimensional explanation. Using the political violence index of Botz (1983: 305–6), three peak-phases of violence can be identified: 1919–20, 1927 and 1934 (see Table 2.3 for a systematic comparison of economic and social data). While the 1919–20 (postwar inflation) and 1934 (worldwide depression) phases clearly correlate with economic disturbances, the 1927 peak (when the Palace of Justice was set on fire) occurred in the context of an economic recovery. This implies that both the political and the economic systems were confronted with serious problems. Parliamentarism had to defend its basis of legitimacy, so the economic problems did not create the political problems, the economic problems had an amplifying effect. When the government (and the political system in general) failed in its anti-crisis policy and management, the economic turmoil fed the crisis in the political system, leading to a total collapse of the system (Bruckmüller 1983; Kernbauer *et al.* 1983; Mattl 1988).

In the beginning, as far as *centripetal tendencies* are concerned, the political system was sustained by a grand coalition in 1919–20, one that for a short period in 1920 was based on an all-party coalition. Within this political environment, the Federal Constitution was drafted in October 1920. After 1920 the Social Democrats went into opposition, and the *Bürgerblock* (bourgeois-block) governments dominated the political system. In 1929 the Constitution was amended, strengthening the position of the president; this was based on a consensus

arrangement between the bourgeois government and the Social Democrats (Tálos and Manoschek 1988a: 35–6; Ucakar 1991: 86–7). Despite the fact that the Social Democrats stayed in opposition after 1920, there were several offers of cooperation. In 1931, following an initiative by the federal president Wilhelm Miklas, the Christian Social leader Ignaz Seipel tried to persuade the Social Democrats to enter a grand coalition-based government, an offer which the Social Democrats rejected (Mommsen-Reindl 1981: 449, 464). During the ‘Austrofascist’ period, anticipating the potential collapse of Austria under the pressures of Nazi Germany, the Social Democrats – now an illegal organization – contacted Chancellor Schuschnigg twice – in August 1934 and in March 1938. In both cases these attempts at collaboration were unsuccessful and not translated into *realpolitik* (Jagschitz 1983: 512–13).

In terms of the *centrifugal processes* it can be observed that interwar Austria was first confronted with *left-wing violence*. Later the focus of violence shifted primarily to the right of the political spectrum, with the National Socialists as the most militant actors (Botz 1983: 277, 296, 301–3, 310–12). A particularly traumatic event occurred in 1927. In January two members of the socialist **Republikanischer Schutzbund** (Republican Defence League) were shot by the rightist *Heimwehr* in Schattendorf, a village in the Austrian province of Burgenland. However, in the legal process afterwards in Vienna, the three perpetrators were acquitted on 14 July 1927. In protest against this perceived bias in anti-socialist court sentences, a working-class crowd burned down the Palace of Justice (*Justizpalast*) on 15 July 1927. The police acted with brutality in trying to suppress the mass demonstrations, and caused a terrible death toll: 85 civilians and four policemen were killed (Betz 1983: 154). So 1927 can be considered as marking the beginning of the political crisis of the First Republic of Austria, clearly before the repercussions of the economic crisis.

In the national elections of 1930 the *radicalization* of the electorate and the politicians was obvious. In 1933, under the leadership of Dollfuss, the Christian Socials abolished the parliamentary system. In February 1934 a brief civil war broke out between the *Schutzbund* (Defence League), the paramilitary organization of the Social Democrats, and the now authoritarian government. Following a police action against the headquarters of the *Schutzbund*, fighting erupted first in Linz early on the morning of 12 February; it spread quickly, although unrest was concentrated in the cities of Linz and Vienna. Within five days (12–16 February) the government troops had crushed the socialist uprising completely – the total death toll amounted to approximately 320. There were several reasons for this quick government victory: a lack of cohesiveness in the Social Democratic leadership on the question of whether the *Schutzbund* should engage in combat operations; the poorly organized nature of the *Schutzbund* uprising; the failure of the *Schutzbund* (and of the Social Democratic Party) to mobilize the mass of workers; and the unequal distribution of weapons. However, the basic reason for the defeat was the fact that the Social Democrats had mainly followed a policy of *passive resistance*. After the dissolution of parliament in March 1933,

and the February fighting of 1934, the conservative government had enough time to consolidate its position and was never again seriously challenged by the Social Democrats (Botz 1983: 246–58, 306).

The government used the February fighting as a pretext for declaring the Social Democratic Party illegal. After the defeat of the Social Democrats, the Austrian government, which now proclaimed the *Ständestaat*, was increasingly challenged by the Nazi Party which operated underground and used terrorism as a means to achieve its political goals. The defeat of the Social Democrats, and the structural inability of the system to rebuild a centre dialogue, significantly weakened the ability of the conservative government to resist the Nazi threat. Eventually the **Ständestaat** gave in and capitulated under the pressures of Nazi Germany. On 12 March 1938 Germany executed the *Anschluss*, with German troops marching into Austria.

In addressing questions of ideological terms, we must also stress that the Austrian Corporate State based its legitimation on the underlying idea that the representation of society should not be through political parties in a parliament, but by corporatist structures that reflect the societal estates and professions. So a more precise translation for *Ständestaat* would be 'Estates State' (*Stände* = Estates, *Staat* = State).

5 Actions and reactions during the period of crisis

Why did democratic parliamentarism collapse in interwar Austria? Why could no *political centre-oriented compromise* be achieved during the late 1920s and early 1930s, despite several attempts and approaches? At this point, it is helpful to take several factors into consideration:

1 The economic problems must be at the centre of any analysis. Austria had been cut off from large parts of its former territories and markets after the First World War and so suffered from a prolonged structural crisis, from which it never really recovered in the interwar period. Basic crisis features were (Kernbauer *et al.* 1983: 344–6): (a) The Austro-Hungarian monarchy had developed an extensive regional division of labour. As a consequence the Austrian economy was biased with some sectors oversized (locomotive and steel production), and others underdeveloped (textiles and, partially, agriculture). (b) The economic base appeared too dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises. (c) For the successor states of the monarchy the goal of economic self-sufficiency served as a policy-premise. So trade and customs barriers were erected which severely damaged the trade relations of Austria with its Central-European neighbours. (d) The state administration, originally designed for an empire with almost 30 million inhabitants, and regionally concentrated in Vienna, was clearly oversized (the census of 1910 projected a population figure of 28.6 million – by 1923 this figure had dropped to 6.5 million; Flora 1983: 44; Bruckmüller 1983: 383). As a political

outcome of these structural deficiencies the 'viability issue' (*Lebensfähigkeit*) was raised which questioned the survival capability of Austria. Finally the international economic crisis of the early 1930s radically exacerbated the structural weaknesses and transformed the economic malaise into an open system crisis, where the parliamentary setting collapsed totally. The unemployment rate reached its peak in the years 1933–6 (Bruckmüller 1983: 408; Maddison 1986: 206; Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988). Table 2.3. shows the most important economic, social and political *key indicators* for interwar Austria.

Following an analysis of Kernbauer, März and Weber (1983: 343–79), the economic development of interwar Austria can be structured into four phases.

(a) *Phase I – Post-War Inflation (1918–22)*: The most prominent feature of this period was the process of devaluation of the Austrian currency, feeding a hyperinflation that reached its peak in the year 1922 with an inflation index of 2,644.4 per cent. The inflation was fuelled by several factors: the chronic trade deficits, the political decision of the Austrian government to subsidize and freeze the price of basic food products, and a lack of party consensus (or *Lager-consensus*) within the political decision-making process. The Treaty of Geneva (*Genfer Sanierung*), signed by the Austrian government and Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia and Italy on 4 October 1922, stopped the inflation process and restabilized the Austrian monetary system. In compensation for a major credit injection of 650 million gold crowns, Austria agreed to balance its budget, promised a reduction of its administrative personnel and had to accept the international control of the League of Nations. However, this period of high inflation did not only create losers, but also winners. Clearly on the losing side were those with bank accounts (i.e. large segments of the middle classes) and the banking industry in general. The winners were the Austrian government, as the inflation eliminated its wartime debts; the farmers – who also reduced their debts significantly; and some export-oriented industries (see also Bruckmüller 1983: 429).

(b) *Phase II – The Crisis of Stabilization (1923–9)*: Paradoxically, the outcome of the currency stabilization also created crisis-similar features. The basic problem lay in the biased policy management of the government which focussed only on balancing the budget and a stable currency, neglecting other issues. Perhaps most importantly, the unemployment rate climbed from 4.8 to 11.0 per cent during the period 1922–6. Exports were constrained by protectionist steps of the neighbouring countries – especially those of Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary. Thus attempts at industrial rationalization and increasing exports were blocked. The high interest rates deterred innovative economic behaviour. The banking industry was in permanent crisis which it tried to overcome through a process of mergers. In the late 1920s, 1927–9, the key indicators, like growth rates or unemployment, appeared to set for economic recovery – however, this 'recovery' was only short lived.

Table 2.3 Austria: economic and social indicators, 1913–38

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
GDP (m. S.)	10116						9257	10296	10283	11110	11678	12087	11560	10360	9550	9020	8980	9140	9319	9822	
NDP (m. S.)	9518						8556	9534	9515	10347	10882	11269	10762	9558	8741	8237	8200	8368	8548	9049	
in 1938 prices							10449	10280	9585	10200	10502	10579	10103	9421	8435	8119	8083	8248	8426	8920	
NDP/cap. (S.)	1407						1304	1448	1441	1562	1638	1691	1610	1426	1300	1221	1214	1238	1265	1340	
NDP (m. US-\$)	1339						1204	1341	1339	1456	1531	1586	1514	1345	1230	1159	1154	1177	1203	1273	
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	198						183	204	203	220	230	238	227	201	183	172	171	174	178	188	
Population (thousands)	6767	6420	6455	6504	6528	6543	6562	6582	6603	6623	6643	6663	6684	6705	6725	6745	6755	6761	6758	6755	6753
Unemployment (thousands)	147	19	12	49	110	127	184	202	200	200	182	192	243	300	378	406	370	349	350	351	245
B. o. Trade (m. S.)							-1478	-910	-1063	-1051	-1031	-1074	-848	-870	-619	-373					
B. o. P. (1000 m. S.)							-1.2	-0.7	-0.8	-0.7	-0.7	-0.8	-0.6	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	0.04	
Lost Working Days in Mio.							221	927	1763	1635	1074	2295	666	233	477	563	287	41	100	80	65
Persons Killed							39	29	0	3	4	0	3	0	91	0	8	2	8	11	15
Persons Injured							85	47	2	2	18	10	5	0	183	8	69	38	19	93	54
Crisis Indicators																					
Ind. Prod.							100	103	119	119	135	148	151	129	106	93	95	106	121	130	161
Cost of Living							2492	5116	9982	26396	100	113	128	137	140	143	147	147	140	143	140
Unemployment							24	100	224	259	376	412	408	371	392	496	612	771	829	755	712
NDP							100	111	111	111	121	127	132	126	112	102	96	96	98	100	106
Strikes							100	93	61	130	38	13	27	32	16	2	6	5	4	0.01	0.01
																					0.09
																					0.02

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987), pp. 36–7, 340; Mitchell (ed.) (1981), pp. 166ff., 356, 743ff., 820; Boz (1983), pp. 305–6; Statistisches Reichsamt (1936), p. 206.

Note: S (Austrian Schilling) is 0.1407 US\$; NDP and GDP are at current market prices; Interpolated estimates for the number of population; █ = Official Data for the Dollfuß-Regime; a = until 11 March.

(c) *Phase III – The Worldwide Depression (1930–3)*: After the first severe crisis symptoms at the end of 1929, the depression struck the Austrian economy fully in 1930. The crisis was accompanied by instability in the monetary system, most importantly the collapse of a major bank – the ‘Creditanstalt’. In May 1931 its general director publicly admitted the loss of 140 million schillings for the year 1930. This caused a shock-wave in the international banking system and affected Germany and England. Under pressure the Austrian government, in cooperation with the National Bank, decided to compensate the losses of the Creditanstalt. This produced a budgetary burden, in a situation where state revenues were declining from a shrinking tax base due to the economic depression. Focusing strictly on the policy goals of a balanced budget and a stable currency the Austrian economy of the 1930s was characterized by deflationary pressures. The Austrian government neglected the possibilities of public investments for demand-creating purposes, economic policy-making did not follow Keynesian principles. In the years 1931 and 1932 the growth rates dropped sharply – the decline was more than 10 per cent. In 1934 and 1935 economic growth rates restabilized, again being positive, but at the price of exploding unemployment figures.

(d) *Phase IV – Constrained Recovery (1934–8)*: Beginning with the year 1932, unemployment grew rapidly, reaching a peak in 1933–6, with between 24 and 26 per cent of the labour force out of work – the unemployment rate among the younger age cohorts was even higher and this produced niches for political radicalization. When, in 1937 and 1938, there was a modest recovery, unemployment never dropped below the 20 per cent value. This had a devastating effect on the legitimacy of the Austrian system, dangerously reinforcing scepticism about the survival capability of Austrian society *per se*. The *issue of viability* returned to the political agenda. As the Austrian government sustained its reluctance to apply Keynesian policies, the economic recovery never entered a serious take-off phase in the second half of the 1930s. Linked to an exhausted determination of the Austrian government to resist the pressures from Germany, the economic crisis of the 1930s should be seen as an additional reason why the Austrian society was receptive to the annexation by Germany in March 1938.

2. Parallel to the economic problems, Austria was exposed to *political pressures from outside*, most importantly the competition of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany for influence in Austria. We already have mentioned the split of the *Heimwehr* into anti-Nazi and pro-Nazi fractions. As the Austrian corporate state turned towards the path of authoritarianism, there were attempts to copy Mussolini’s Italy and the ‘Catholic authoritarian’ model of governance. Politically this should have led to the creation of a Catholic axis in Europe, sustained by Italy, Austria and other Central European nations, and which could have acted as a counterweight to ‘non-Catholic’ Germany. The Austrian government under Dollfuss believed that backing by Italy would widen its scope of action over the threats from Nazi Germany. After the assassination of Dollfuss in the (failed) Nazi coup in July 1934, Italy reinforced its troops on

the border to Austria to deter any interventionist ambitions by Germany. However, as Germany continued its economic recovery and, most importantly, its massive military build-up, this re-defined the spheres of influence in Central Europe. In the second half of the 1930s it was clearly Nazi Germany that began to influence Austria and to crowd out Italy.

3. The results from the national election of 1930 do not completely reflect the extent of electoral radicalization that developed in the early 1930s (see Table 2.4 for the outcome of parliamentary elections at the national level in interwar Austria). In 1930 the Nazis captured only 3 per cent of the votes. However, in provincial elections after 1930 they achieved spectacular breakthroughs and success. Four provincial elections document this electoral Nazi-shift (*Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte* 1933: 477): Vorarlberg 12.7 per cent (1932); Lower Austria 14.1 per cent (1932); Vienna 17.4 per cent (1932); and Salzburg 20.7 per cent (1932) (see also Hänisch 1995: 491–2).

4. Using the index developed by Campbell (Campbell 1992) as a basis, three conclusions can be drawn about the political system of interwar Austria. (a) At the level of the elections and the parliament there was dominance by the right. (b) If the model of a grand coalition had been followed, this would have led to a political equilibrium and a location of governments very close to the political centre. (c) But the crucial point is that the Austrian governments, after 1920, developed a *rightist bias*, lying clearly to the right of the electorate and the political composition of parliament.

5. *Mental blocks*: Both large parties can be considered as having fallen victim to their own radical ideology, one that did not support bridge building to the so-called 'class enemies'. Authoritarian traditions, cultivated by the influential bureaucracy and reinforced by the militarisation of society during the First World War, had structured an environment that fostered the shift from democracy to authoritarian government. For the Social Democratic movement the contradiction between pragmatic policy-making and a radical use of ideology unnecessarily constrained any consensus arrangements with the non-socialist parties.

However, it is still important to emphasize that the collapse of interwar democracy in Austria was not 'naturally' pre-determined by the year 1918. If the political elites could have developed a different *conceptual understanding* of society and politics, then a different political outcome might have been realized – 'theories of social systems, when acted upon, change social systems' (Umpleby 1993: 1).

6 Conclusions

Does history teach us any lessons? If you compare the fate of the First (interwar) and Second (postwar) Austrian Republics, it may seem that it does. The contrasts are remarkable. After 1945 Austria experienced economic recovery, social peace and political stability. Partly this can be explained by changed political mentalities, the willingness to cooperate and the fact that the Austrians, after

Table 2.4 Austria: electoral results, 1919–30

	16.02.1919		17.10.1920		21.10.1923		24.04.1927		09.11.1930	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Socialists	40.8	72	36.0	69	39.6	68	42.3	71	41.1	72
Christian Social Party	35.9	69	41.8	85	44.0	80	48.2	85	35.7	66
German Nationalists	18.4	27								
Czechs	2.3	1	0.3		0.2					
Communist Party			0.9		0.7		0.4		0.6	
Greater German People's Party			13.1	21	7.8	6		9	12.8	19
Land League			4.2	7	3.0	5	6.3			
Carinthian Unity List					2.9	6				
National Socialist German Workers' Party							0.7		3.0	
Homeland Block									6.2	
Others	2.7	1	3.7	1	1.7		2.0		0.7	
Seats total		170		183		165		165		165

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 26–31).

having experienced the *Anschluss*-annexation by Nazi Germany, were willing to accept their small state on the basis of national identification. Politically this manifested itself in the dominant grand-coalition pattern and the Social Partnership (*Sozialpartnerschaft*), a corporatist network structure that attempts to create consensus arrangements between the socialist and christian-conservative 'camps'. However, it is also important to mention the improved political environment: prosperous economic development, international stability through a neutral position between the two military systems in Europe, and the necessity for cooperation under the direct challenge of foreign occupation after 1945. So perhaps history does teach lessons, or is it that Austria just had better luck the second time?

3

Belgium: Crisis and Compromise

Gisèle De Meur and Dirk Berg-Schlosser

1 Introduction

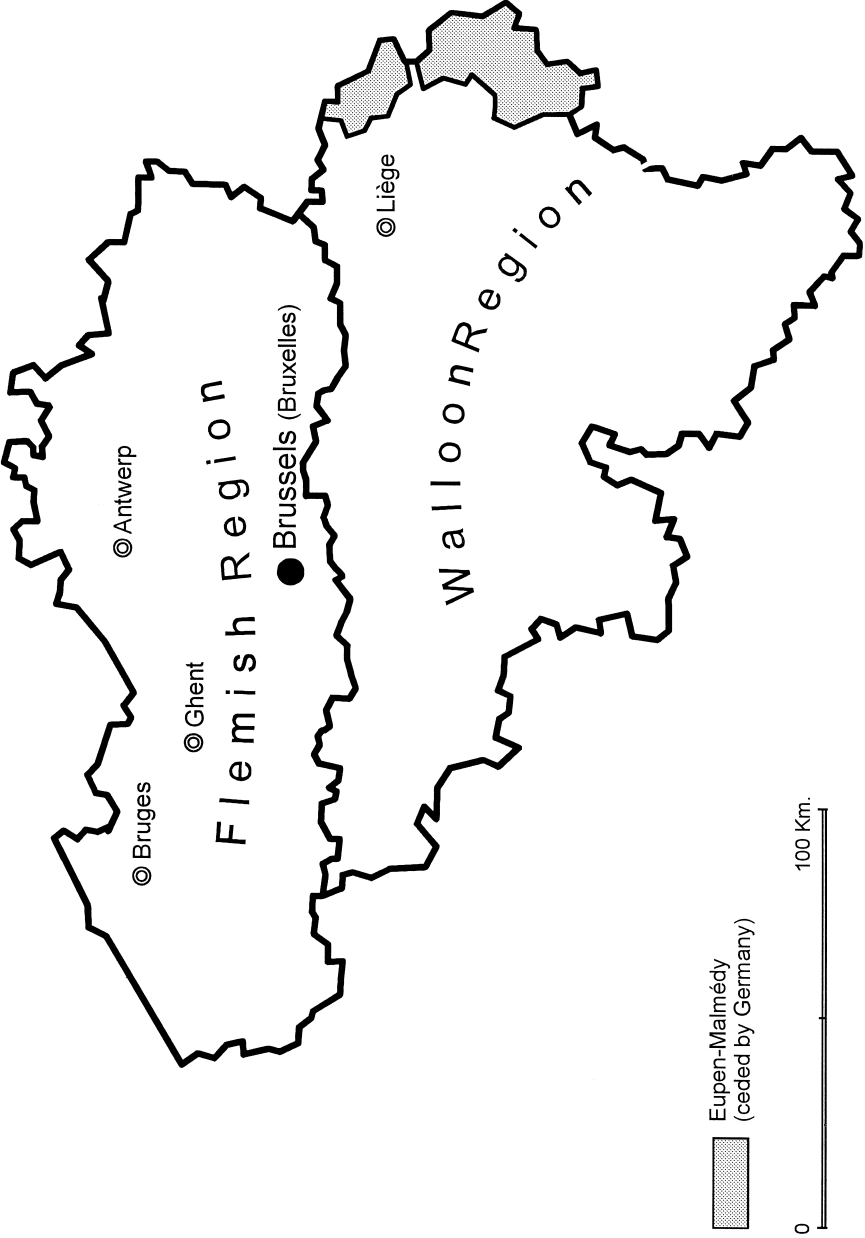
Belgium is one of the oldest parliamentary democracies, but it is also one of the European societies which is most deeply divided along ethno-linguistic, religious-secular and socio-economic lines, and these conflicts have brought about many tensions in the political structure. In the wake of the world economic crisis strong fascist or quasi-fascist movements emerged which brought the political system close to collapse. How Belgium weathered the storm of the 1930s within a democratic framework is, therefore, of particular interest for other similar conflict-prone societies.

We begin our analysis with a brief discussion of the social bases of politics in Belgium. These will then be related to the particular formation of interest groups, social movements and political parties, including their respective political cultural aspects. The political dynamics during the period will be examined against this background. These include socio-economic change, electoral results, and the actual coalitions formed, but also international factors and particular 'moves' during the climax of the crisis. The outcomes and their repercussions for the political and social system will, finally, be put back into a comparative context.

2 The social bases of politics

Belgium is part of the 'city belt' in the middle of Europe, and also one of the homogeneous Catholic Counter-Reformation territories (Rokkan 1975: 578–9). Linguistically it is divided, however, between the Dutch-speaking north and the French-speaking south, with the region of Brussels as a mostly French-speaking centre, and some peripheral German-speaking districts in the east. In addition to these 'basic' distinctions, there are economic cleavages between rural producers and urban consumers, and between employers and workers. This leaves us with Rokkan's 'four critical lines of cleavage', which in the case of Belgium are all particularly crystallized.

Belgium



2.1 The linguistic cleavage

The creation of the independent Belgian state in 1830 grouped together the predominantly Catholic southern provinces of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, formerly under Spanish (1555–1713) and then Austrian rule until the period of Napoleonic occupation between 1795 and 1815. The state comprised the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons all with their particular local and regional dialects. These territories had been separated by a north-south division since about the fifth century, (see map at the beginning of this chapter). In the interwar period roughly 57 per cent of the population were native Dutch speakers, 42 per cent French and 1 per cent German-speaking. Of these about 15 per cent – most of them in the Brussels area – were bilingual. Within the Flemish territories, however, there was a sizeable minority of French speakers (4–8 per cent ‘fransquillons’), most of whom were members of the urban bourgeoisie. In the Walloon territories only between 1 and 2 per cent were native Dutch speakers (see *Annuaire statistique 1936*: xxii; Lévy 1938).

On the whole, the relationship between these language groups was an asymmetric one. From the time of independence, French was the language of the court, the upper and urban middle classes, the administration, the judiciary and the army. Dutch speakers were only found in the rural areas and among the urban petty bourgeoisie of Flanders. Those who aspired to social advancement would learn French – and the entire system of middle and higher education was French too. This bias reflected the fact that French was an important international language, whereas the use of Dutch was limited, so hardly any Walloon would bother to learn it (see also McRae 1986: 35 ff.)

Another ethnic/socio-economic cleavage resulted from the relatively high level of immigration, in particular of mine workers. In 1930 about 18 per cent of all miners were of foreign origin – mostly from Eastern Europe and Italy. On the eve of the German occupation in 1940 there were also about 50,000 Jews, many of whom had migrated relatively recently from Eastern Europe (Morelli 1992).

2.2 The religious cleavage

In spite of being a largely homogeneous Catholic country (there are only negligible Protestant and Jewish communities), a strong Catholic–secular cleavage became apparent after independence. The secession from the (Protestant) Dutch monarchy was supported by both Catholic and the emergent bourgeois forces, which became the backbone of the limited constitutional regime of this period, but the foundation of the Liberal Party in 1846 introduced a strong lay and anti-clerical attitude among the dominant groups. The secularization of the state – and, in particular, of the educational system – was one of its main concerns. Favoured by restrictive electoral laws, which based the right to vote on the payment of a considerable amount of tax, the Liberals dominated the government during most of the nineteenth century. In 1879 a law was adopted which established the obligatory foundation of independent nondenominational primary schools in each local

community. The Catholics, who founded a party of their own in 1884, reacted by creating a Catholic school in each parish.

These tendencies were reinforced by external factors. The Catholics looked for support to the Vatican and the Liberals drew their inspiration in part from the example of the pronounced anti-clericalism of the French Third Republic. Because the French influence was stronger in the more heavily industrialized Wallonia, the Liberals tended to dominate there, while support for the Catholic Party was stronger in the more rural parts of Flanders, thus in part reinforcing the linguistic cleavage as well (cf., for example, Mabilie 1986: 175 ff.).

2.3 Economic cleavages

Favoured by an effective infrastructure, some natural resources, a moderate climate and fertile soils, together with an early accumulation of capital – and with the advantages of the Napoleonic administrative reforms and the relative independence of the bourgeoisie from its (foreign) overlords – Belgium became the first industrial country on the Continent. It was also the most densely populated. The transition from feudalism was relatively early and helped by external circumstances. At the time of independence, the bourgeois forces were clearly dominant. The newly established monarchy ('imported' from the House of Saxe-Coburg) was, from the beginning, a constitutionally limited one and the indigenous nobility tended to 'embourgeoise' itself by taking part in commercial and industrial activities.

In the rural areas the small, but increasingly market-oriented, family farm was the dominant form of enterprise. In 1905, 99 per cent of all farms belonged to this category, cultivating more than 86 per cent of all agricultural land. The number of agricultural workers employed from outside the family was correspondingly relatively low (*Statistisches Reichsamts* 1928: 107). The intensity and productivity of agriculture had been the highest in Europe since the middle of the last century, but because of the high population density large amounts of food, in particular wheat and barley, still had to be imported. This led to relatively liberal import policies as far as these products are concerned, which benefitted the urban population. Meat production, which was self-sufficient, was more heavily protected by customs duties and other measures. As a result of these policies, some conflicts of interest existed between rural producers and urban consumers, but these remained relatively attenuated. In addition, the rural-urban gap was bridged by a considerable number of workers (50 per cent) who continued part-time family farming in the vicinity of larger towns (Chlepner 1956: 147 ff.).

A more severe line of conflict emerged between industrial capital and labour. From the middle of the last century mining and manufacturing became increasingly concentrated in larger-scale enterprises. In particular, coal-mining and iron industries formed the backbone of Belgium's transition from an agricultural to an industrialized country; sizeable textile, leather, glass, chemical and similar industries developed. In 1900 about half of the working population were active in this sector, compared to 17 per cent in agriculture, 17 per cent in commerce

and services, and 7 per cent in the public sector. For most of the nineteenth century the material conditions of the working classes were poor. A working day of 12 to 14 hours, considerable amounts of child labour, very low wages, and the lack of any form of social security, health insurance or old age pensions were characteristic. Towards the end of the century labour became increasingly organized. In 1885 the Belgian Workers' Party (*Parti Ouvrier Belge* – POB) was founded and the following year a wave of violent strikes shook the country. The government reacted by both repressive measures and some social legislation which formed the basis for the increasing number of trade unions, a gradual reduction of working hours and some rises in wages. The constitutional revision of 1893, which introduced an almost universal male suffrage (limited by certain forms of multiple voting), opened up other avenues of political action (Mabille 1986: 189 ff.).

The role of the non-agricultural middle classes was important as well. Here, we distinguish between what is often called the 'old' middle class of independent craftsmen and traders, usually operating on a family basis or with a limited number of employees, and the 'new' middle class of employees in large enterprises and the public sector with some decision-making power of their own. Because of similarities of skills and attitudes, this last category is somewhat heterogeneous and is often seen to comprise self-employed members of the professions as well. The old middle class had been subject to considerable pressures during industrialization. Because of technological innovation and new forms of organization, a number of crafts practically disappeared, although some other small-scale enterprises emerged in new fields. Similarly, small-scale traders became increasingly threatened by department stores and supermarkets, but there also were some new opportunities. In 1900 slightly more than 7 per cent of the workforce belonged to this category. The 'new' middle class had about the same share, but, because of the expansion of the public sector, it was growing in numbers (Chlepnér 1956: 139 ff.). The overall class structure of Belgium's society in 1930, just before the effects of the world economic crisis were seriously felt, is summarized in Table 3.1. and Figure 3.1.

The categories chosen are comparable to those developed by Geiger (1932) and are based on the 'objective' economic position of the different groups (cf. Berg-Schlösser 1979; Geissler 1985).

2.4 Interactions of cleavages

In Belgium the linguistic cleavage was characteristically reinforced by economic and political differences. The Dutch-speaking part of the population consisted almost entirely of the lower classes and parts of the urban petty bourgeoisie in Flanders, whereas the Flemish upper bourgeoisie and nobility were French-speaking. As a consequence, within Flanders disputes over linguistic issues were also expressions of class conflict. Within the country as a whole, linguistic issues mainly concerned questions of political decision-making, but also of administration and adjudication at the centre.

Table 3.1 Belgium: class structure, 1930

Population (millions)	8.1
Employment rate	43.3
Rate of agrarian employment	19.3
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.02
Family farms	9
Agrarian proletariat	5
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	0.3
Old middle class	8.5
New middle class	17
Proletariat	58
Sub-proletariat	2
Total	99.82

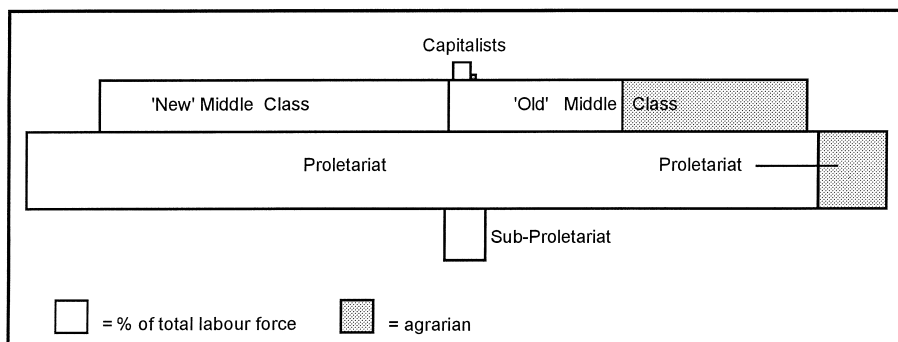
Sources: *Statistisches Reichsamt* (1936: 40); Pontanus (1959).

Note: Employment rates for year 1920.

In the period under consideration, the social structure within the two main regions had, to a certain extent, become assimilated. The percentage for the non-agricultural proletariat was still higher in Wallonia and that for the agricultural proletarioids and the agricultural workers slightly greater in Flanders, but the original preponderance of agriculture within Flanders had disappeared and industrialization had reached almost equal levels in both parts of the country.

The interactions between the economic and the religious–secular cleavages had mostly led to a cross-cutting pattern, even though the secular elements among the urban middle and upper classes were somewhat stronger. Among the lower classes, the Catholic Church had largely maintained its strongholds in

Figure 3.1 Belgium: class structure, 1930



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 3.1.

the rural areas and had contributed to a split of urban workers' organizations and political affiliations along religious–secular lines.

3 Intermediate structures and identifications

While this pattern of horizontal and vertical cleavages can be identified on an 'objective' basis, the actual level of self-identification, articulation and organization of these potential conflict-groups varied considerably. Some identifications, such as ethno-linguistic ones, emerge 'naturally' and cannot be changed easily at a later stage. They may not, however, be necessarily organized on this basis. Others, such as 'class consciousness', need not be felt at all in some cases and may only emerge through the very efforts of organizing a particular interest. Horizontal and vertical factors may combine and create distinct subcultures and social 'milieus' which then perpetuate themselves over time.

We will first look at the most important particular interests which are articulated in Belgian society. Then, some of the broader social 'movements' which cut across these specific interests and may be articulated on a linguistic basis, will be analyzed. As a third element, the directly political forms of organization, political parties and their affiliates will be discussed. In Belgium some of these forms have developed into specific 'political families', in particular the Catholic, the Socialist, and, to a lesser extent, the Liberal one, which developed overarching aspects of 'verzuiling' at the elite level. In addition, some further overarching aspects such as elements of a certain common basic culture of all groups, forms of 'national' identification, the role of the monarchy, etc., will also be examined.

3.1 Interest groups

Among the vast variety of interest groups, only the politically most significant organizations can be discussed here.

3.1.1 Rural interests

The mostly small and medium-sized rural enterprises increasingly became organized on a cooperative basis in the course of modernization and the commercialization of agriculture. Up to the First World War about 2400 organizations of this kind had been formed which comprised the majority of rural enterprises. The fact that many of these associations benefitted from public subsidies, which were only available for registered members, facilitated the establishment of such groups (Chlepner 1956: 150 ff.). Catholic priests, particularly in Flanders, were often instrumental in setting up these institutions. A number of these associations were grouped in larger federations which articulated the common interests of their members politically. The most outspoken and effective of these was the 'Boerenbond' which comprised the majority of the Flemish Raiffeisen organizations and similar activities (Varzim 1934). In 1936, it counted some 1200 local affiliations and 120,000 members. In Wallonia, a similar federation was only founded in 1930, the 'Alliance Agricole', which had some 25,000 members. Both

organizations formed an integral part of the Catholic 'political family' and nominated their own candidates for parliament (Höjer 1969: 38).

3.1.2 *Small commercial interests*

The petty bourgeoisie remained significantly less organized than their rural counterparts. A number of credit unions and buyers' cooperatives were created and in 1914 only some 700 recognized organizations existed, but the actual level of activity remained rather low and often purely nominal. Furthermore, the political pressure exercised by these groups was relatively insignificant (Chlepner 1956: 141 ff.).

3.1.3 *Trade unions*

As a result of the country's relatively early industrialization, the Belgian trade union organization is one of the oldest and strongest in Europe. Almost from the beginning, however, these organizations were split along ideological and party lines. The first unions, in particular in the coal and glass industries, grouped themselves around the workers' party (POB). In 1898, these became united in the 'Commission syndicale' (CS) which, on the eve of the First World War, had some 120,000 members. Helped by new forms of social legislation this number increased enormously after the war, reaching 500,000–600,000 members in the interwar period. In 1937, CS was reorganized as the 'Confédération Générale de Travail de Belgique' (CGTB), which gave even greater powers to this central body, including the right to call for a general strike (it became the present 'Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique' (FGTB) after the Second World War).

Towards the end of the last century, other unions emerged which kept ties to the Catholic Church and party. In 1909, these were grouped in the 'Confédération des Syndicats-chrétiens' (CSC) which had some 100,000 members before the First World War. After the war it similarly expanded its membership, reaching a figure of some 340,000 members in the late 1930s. This organization was as outspoken and active as the socialist unions on most economic issues, but it placed greater emphasis on family questions and, in general, kept close ties, in particular in its pattern of recruitment, to the Catholic 'milieu' (see below). In this regard, the CSC had some stronger roots in Flanders, whereas about two-thirds of the CGTB membership was to be found in Wallonia.

In addition to these large movements, which together comprised about half of the country's workforce, there was a smaller organization with links to the Liberal Party. In 1930, this was grouped into the 'Centrale générale des Syndicats libéraux de Belgique' (CGSLB). At the beginning of the Second World War, it had some 100,000 members. Constituting the more 'social' wing of the Liberals, they put the main emphasis on legal actions and, on the whole, are rather 'moderate' in their demands. There are some even smaller 'independent' organizations such as the 'Cartel des Syndicats Indépendants des Services publics de Belgique' with some 40,000 members (Chlepner 1956: 245 ff.; Lepszy and Woyke 1985: 54 ff.).

3.1.4 *Employers' organizations*

The employers were also organized in central bodies to lobby on their behalf, although business also exercised considerable influence by more indirect means on the conservative Liberal governments throughout a great part of Belgium's political history, and its spokesmen often had direct access to the king. In 1895, the 'Comité Central Industriel' (C.C.I.) was formed which comprised the representatives of the coal, iron, and major manufacturing industries. In the trade, finance, and service sectors some more organizations existed which later formed the present 'Fédération des Employeurs du Commerce, des Banques et des Assurances' (FCBA). On a regional basis, there were the 'Vlaams Economisch Verbond' and the 'Union Industrielle Wallone'. The Catholic element was represented by the 'Fédération des Patrons Catholiques' (FEPAC), the Flemish part of which, the 'Landelijk Algemeen Christelijk Verbond van Werkgevers', was especially active (Chlepner 1956: 255 f.).

3.2 **Social movements**

Beyond the formation of economic interest groups, Belgium's social cleavages – in particular the linguistic one – also found expression in other forms of organization. Among these the Flemish movement was the earliest and most significant one and was followed by similar activity in Wallonia as well.

3.2.1 *The Flemish movement*

Almost from the time of independence, the dominance of French in the administrative and educational system created strong reactions in Flanders. 'De taal is gans het Volk' ('the language is the whole people', J.F. Willems 1836) became the slogan of a movement which found its support initially among the young intellectual elites of Flanders. The 'Vlaamsch Verbond' articulated this idea from the 1860s and directed its activities mainly towards the reform of the educational system, not without some success. In 1883, Dutch was introduced as the language of instruction at the secondary level in Flanders and after 1898 all laws and official texts issued by the central administration had to be published in both languages.

Increasingly the movement became a political factor, too. The Catholic Church and party felt their dominance threatened by both the emerging socialist organizations and the pronounced anti-clericalism of the Third Republic in France, the ideas of which became more widespread among the French-speaking parts of the population. Thus, the Catholic party saw their natural allies among the more traditional, rural elements in Flanders. The introduction of (almost) universal male suffrage in 1893 lent additional weight to these groups. Their demands now centred on the question of extending the use of Dutch to the university level, too.

The German occupation during the First World War created some new factors. The German administration granted the conversion of the University of Gent into a Dutch-speaking institution in 1916, thus satisfying the demands of the

most ardent Flemish nationalists. On the other hand, the cooperation of some Flemish groups and politicians with the occupants discredited these elements after the war and led to a split between more moderate and extremist Flemish groups. The moderate forces organized themselves in the Katholieke Vlaamsche Verbond (KVV), and the more radical ones, among them a considerable number of war veterans, were grouped in the Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond (VNV) and the 'Verbond van Dietsch Nationaalsolidaristen ('Verdinaso') which was founded in 1931. The 'minimal' demands of the KVV concerned the use of Dutch in the educational system of Flanders – including the University of Gent; the division of the army into Dutch – and French-speaking units; and the reorganization of the central administration using the respective language in each part of the country. By contrast, the CNV was clearly separatist. It advocated the creation of a 'Greater Dutch' state. The Verdinaso had a somewhat different concept. Its founder, Joris van Severen, wanted to create a large Benelux state which would unify the former United Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with Luxemburg, but would keep the Walloons, now as a clear minority, within its borders (Mabille 1986: 198 ff.; Höjer 1969: 3 ff.).

3.2.2 *The Walloon movement*

The rise of Flemish nationalism produced a reaction in the French-speaking parts of the country. At first, as long as the Flemish demands focussed on changes within Flanders, the Walloons did not regard them as a major concern of their own. But when questions relating to the overall administration of the country were raised, they felt increasingly threatened by the numerical dominance of the Flemish. A first Walloon congress was held in 1890, and in 1912 the 'Assemblée Wallonne' was created (Mabille 1986: 199 f.). In 1921, a law was adopted which made each language the official administrative one in the respective region. This meant, in effect, that at least the higher-level functionaries in the central administration would have to be bilingual in order to deal with each region. This created a protest among the Walloons who felt handicapped by this regulation. As Höjer (1969: 19) aptly observed: 'In general, the Walloons accept as an axiom that it is difficult, if not impossible and not natural for the Walloons to learn Flemish, whereas it is easy and natural for the Flemish to learn French' (our translation). Thus the stage was set for further conflicts along these lines.

3.3 **Parties and 'political families'**

On the day-to-day political scene, the political parties, as in other parliamentary systems, tend to predominate. In Belgium, in contrast to some states who adopted democracy later in their political development, the establishment of parliamentary institutions preceded the emergence of parties. These centred around the major social cleavages and conflicts which arose over time. The first major conflict concerned the relationship between church and state. In its course, both the Catholic and Liberal Parties were founded. At a later stage, the economic conflict between capital and labour came to the forefront. This split the anticlerical camp and led to the foundation of the Socialist Party, but it also

created tensions within the Catholic domain between workers' organizations and more conservative forces. All three major political groups created a large variety of social and cultural organizations within their camp which tended to set them apart as particular sub-milieus or 'political families'.

3.3.1 *The Catholic milieu*

Numerically, the most important and politically dominant sub-milieu is the Catholic one. It dates back to more general 'statist' traditions before independence and groups the major 'standen' in this regard and includes the nobility and French-speaking bourgeoisie, including that of Flanders as well as the Catholic trade unions, consumer, cooperative and similar organizations. In this way, practically all major social groups are taken care of, even though a certain predominance of (rural) Flanders can be observed. The creation of a separate (but in part publicly funded) Catholic school system, a network of newspapers and, nowadays, other media, separate youth, women's associations and so on, led to the comprehensive organization of practically all aspects of social life. It also led to political administrative and other appointments on the basis of these affiliations, where Catholic groups dominated. The head of this family was the 'Union Catholique Belge' which was reorganized under this name in 1921 and the governing council of which consisted of an equal number of representatives of the four 'standen' which each took its presidency in turn. The main task of the council was to prepare the electoral platforms and to arbitrate between the different groups whose relations were not always very harmonious. In 1937 the party was renamed 'Bloc Catholique Belge' which now consisted of separate Flemish and francophone wings. These nominated an equal number of delegates to the common 'Directoire' and alternated in its presidency (Höjer 1969: 38 ff.).

3.3.2 *The Socialist milieu*

The non-clerical forces of the workers' movement grouped themselves in the socialist milieu and formed a 'political family' similar to that of the Catholics. The federation of socialist trade unions, the socialist cooperatives, the social and health insurance associations, and the socialist youth movement were all united under the umbrella of the POB. From its very beginning the POB had conceived its role as 'a state within the state' (Vandervelde, 1918) which would care for the needs of its members in all regards. The POB and its affiliates were effectively organized and exercised a strong sense of discipline. Apart from the more immediately economic demands, its main political goal was the attainment of universal suffrage in order to achieve its aims through parliamentary majority rule. In this sense, it always was a reformist party. As Karl Kautsky is said to have remarked somewhat sarcastically: 'The Belgian socialists are not revisionists, because they do not have a theory to revise' (quoted in Mabilie 1986: 203; our translation). When universal (male) suffrage had been obtained in 1919, the POB directed its efforts mainly towards immediate social and economic demands. In this regard, the socialists found their allies among left-leaning Catholic groups,

while on the question of secular public education they sided with the Liberals. They participated in several cabinets in the interwar period and have become a constant, although not majoritarian, factor in Belgium's politics.

3.3.3 *The Liberal milieu*

The third major force, and the oldest political party, were the Liberals. From the beginning, a strict separation of Church and State and a universal system of independent public education were among their foremost concerns – a stance which put them in opposition to the Catholic camp. At the same time, they were the representatives of the urban bourgeoisie and, to a certain extent, the middle classes. This set them apart from the emerging socialist movement. Their long-time espousal of 'Manchester liberalism' made them a major economically conservative force. Similarly, they were in favour of a strong army and for a long time successfully opposed the right of women to vote. The Liberal unions, which represented mainly middle- and upper-level employees, were relatively weak. The Liberal 'family' reflected the individualism of its doctrine and remained less organized than the Catholics or the Socialists. The introduction of universal male suffrage numerically reduced them to third rank, but the system of proportional representation safeguarded this status, making them an important factor in the formation of any coalition (Höjer 1969: 45ff.).

3.3.4 *Other political groups*

The three major political camps clearly dominated the Belgian political scene until the First World War, obtaining more than 95 per cent of the votes and practically all of the seats in the national parliament. After the war, some new factors emerged. One was the split of a small left-wing section of the POB over the question of the Third International in 1921 which formed a mostly insignificant orthodox Communist Party (PCB).

Groups on the political right became more influential, reflecting some Belgian developments, but also external influences. The more extremist Flemish nationalists at first founded the 'Frontpartij', which, to a large extent, was made up of war veterans. It remained a relatively heterogeneous organization which only in the early 1930s crystallized into the smaller, but intellectually influential 'Verdinaso' of van Severen and the broader VNV under the leadership of de Clercq. Whereas the VNV was not on the whole an anti-parliamentary or anti-semitic organization and only received some support from Nazi Germany in the mid-1930s, the Verdinaso exhibited some characteristic fascist features from the outset. It took its main inspiration from Italian fascism and advocated the suppression of the parliamentary system and the creation of a corporatist state under a strong single leader. Its doctrine included clearly racist, antisemitic, anti-masonic and anti-communist elements and its organization was patterned on the example of the Nazi Party, even including a uniformed militia.

Another right-wing movement, the 'Rexists', emerged among the franco-phone population. Initially inspired by 'Action Française' in France, it also followed more the pattern of 'Latin' fascism in Italy, Portugal and Spain. It

centred around the activities of its leader, Léon Degrelle, who had begun his career as a manager of a Catholic publishing house, *Christus Rex*, which was to give its name to the new movement. When the Catholic Party broke ranks with Degrelle in 1934, the 'Rexists', as they now called themselves, decided to go it alone. They proclaimed a corporate state and 'a physical and moral reform of the whole nation, a return to the profound virtues of the family, of labour, of the Earth, of the economy, of honesty, solidarity and human fraternity' (quoted from Schepens 1980: 507). Its main support came from the lower middle classes in Wallonia, who had suffered in the depression and were disillusioned by the Catholic Party, and the urban bourgeoisie in Flanders. Degrelle emulated many aspects of fascism and patterned himself as a strong demagogic leader.

3.4 Overarching aspects

In spite of the strong cleavages in Belgium's society and the many social and political organizations, there were some overarching aspects as well which contributed to some structural stability. On the one hand, there were some basic cultural elements which were shared in the different parts of the country. As one observer put it:

In addition to a Flemish cultural model which has become strongly structured and a corresponding Walloon model still in the making, there exists a Belgian cultural model which covers the whole country ... over a long period of time we have developed a remarkable aptitude for negotiation, which contributes to resolutions which never satisfy everybody but which are generally accepted (Molitor 1980: 153).

Further, some overarching common Belgian identity is rarely disputed and the extreme Flemish nationalists who denied this aspect ('Belgie capot!') always remained a small minority in Flanders and did not offer any viable alternative (Höjer 1969: 24 ff).

On the other hand, the cultural traits are reinforced by the pattern of the political structures. The three dominant 'political families' are locked into a framework which, even though the different 'pillars' are apart, carries a common roof, at least at the elite level ('verzuiling'). This pattern has been reinforced through the fact that since the introduction of (male) universal suffrage and proportional representation a single party could never govern. The necessary coalitions furthered the politics of accommodation and compromise.

A third factor which lent a certain measure of unity to the country's diversity was the monarchy. Although its function was usually symbolic, it became an important point of reference and even a centre of political action in times of crisis. During the war the king assumed the role of supreme commander of the armed forces. He was also an important arbiter in times of the relatively frequent governmental crises and by appointing the 'informateur' and 'formateur' of the

new cabinet he could influence its composition. As guardian of the constitution he helps to maintain its democratic substance and the integrity of the country as a whole (Höjer 1969: 349 ff.).

4 Dynamic factors of the interwar period

The multi-faceted pattern of Belgium's major social and political forces, with all the inherent conflicts and tensions, and some elements of partial consensus and cooperation, sets the stage for the course of events during this period. These events were shaped by some important institutional arrangements and reforms at the beginning of the period, internal economic developments, the outcomes of elections – including the formation of different political coalitions, and international factors and interactions.

4.1 The political setting

The war, which saw the originally neutral Belgium on the side of the victors, had contributed to an atmosphere of national unity and compromise. This was symbolized by King Albert I who enjoyed the respect of all major groups. On the day of the cease-fire, he received some leading personalities from the three major camps at his Lophem residence. This informal circle agreed upon a number of important reforms which soon were to be implemented and which shaped the future course of events.

One reform was for unrestricted suffrage of all those above the age of 21. This still applied only for males with the exception of mothers and widows whose sons or husbands had died during the war (universal female suffrage was only adopted in 1948). However, even though most women did not have the right to vote, they could be elected to the national assembly. A second constitutional amendment concerned the composition of the Senate and put both houses of parliament on an equal footing. In addition, Article 310 of the penal code limiting the right to strike was abolished, freedom of association guaranteed and the eight-hour day introduced. A number of further social welfare measures were adopted and, all in all, a greater measure of social justice was implemented. However, some of the linguistic reforms agreed to, such as the establishment of a Flemish university in Gent, took considerably longer, and were to continue to be a source of friction in the years to come.

4.2 Economic developments

The war had devastated much of the country. Large areas of agricultural land had been ruined and a considerable amount of industrial equipment destroyed. Furthermore, the excessive money supply at the end of the war was a major cause of inflation. So, the first years of the war were devoted to reconstruction. In 1923/4 prewar levels of production were again reached in most sectors. In 1926, the Belgian franc was devalued which, under generally favourable external conditions, led to a period of rapid growth until 1929. The world economic crisis then affected Belgium: industrial production and exports declined, and unem-

ployment increased. In these times of generally autarkic tendencies, Belgium continued to profit, however, from the increasing economic importance of its major colony, the Congo, the imports from which had been rising – from 1 per cent of all imports in 1913 to 8.2 per cent in 1937 (de Vries 1980: 9 ff.). Basic data on economic developments in this period are provided in Table 3.2.

4.3 Electoral results

Within the framework of reforms agreed at Lophem the country returned to its 'normal' pattern of politics dominated by economic and communalistic issues. The Catholic Party, which had enjoyed an absolute majority in the last elections before the war in 1912 (51.5 per cent, 101 seats), lost ground to the Socialists who almost doubled their number of seats (37 in 1912). The two major camps were now to be almost equal strength (fluctuating between 37 and 39 per cent) during most of the period. The third force, the Liberals, recorded somewhat less than half of the votes of each of their opponents and experienced a further gradual decline. The three major 'families' thus remained firmly established, obtaining together more than 90 per cent of the votes between 1919 and 1932. This reflects the 'hereditary' character of much of Belgium's politics within their respective milieu (Höjer 1969: 54 ff.).

In addition, the Flemish Nationalist groups became an increasingly important factor, increasing their share steadily from 2.6 per cent in 1919 to 8.3 per cent in 1939. The Communists also increased their strength from 1.6 per cent in 1925 to 6.1 per cent at the height of the political crisis in 1936. The major disruptive force, however, were the Rexists. They catapulted themselves to 11.5 per cent (21 seats) in 1936. Electoral results for this period are listed in Table 3.3.

4.4 Formation of political coalitions

The lines of tensions created by Belgium's three poles of politics – linguistic, religious, and economic – led to some minor oscillations between the major political camps depending on the issues concerned. The fact that, given universal suffrage and proportional representation, no single political force could dominate, made the formation of coalitions imperative. These shifted not only between different parties, but also between different currents within them so that the required adjustments became finer and more unstable, leading to 19 different governments within the period of 21 years considered here (see Table 3.4).

Nevertheless, below these frequent surface changes to political life the major social forces essentially remained the same, adjusting themselves only relatively slowly to changing circumstances. Thus, the Catholics were represented in virtually all cabinets of the period. Even though their major point of disagreement with the Liberals concerning the state–church relationship originally led to the formation of the Catholic Party, this issue remained relatively muted during these years which facilitated a mostly conservative coalition on economic issues for most of the period. During periods of more pronounced crisis the Socialists participated in governments of 'national unity'. In addition to this 'basic'

Table 3.2 Belgium: economic and social indicators, 1913–1939

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	
NDP (m. bfr)	6500							33154		51284			69260			47992	49860	54887	61988	62063	59453		
in 1938 prices								49927		48904			59432			54255	57110	61161	64127	62063	58775		
NDP/cap. (bfr)	855							4337		6489			8576			5809	6017	6601	7427	7412	7085		
NDP (m. US-\$)	904							4608		7128			9627			6671	6931	7629	8616	8627	8264		
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	119							603		902			1192			808	836	918	1032	1030	985		
Population (thousands)	7605	7566	7491	7443	7510	7573	7645	7748	7843	7903	7967	8031	8076	8125	8186	8230	8261	8287	8315	8346	8373	8391	
IND PROD (1913 = 100)	100			73	65	81	95	105	99	116	128	139	139	117	106	88	92	92	100	109	121	98	104
COST (1914 = 100)				473	418	391	445	518	536	645	818	855	909	909	827	745	736	690	681	700	754	780	789
Unemployment (%)				11.5	4.2	1.3	1.6	2.4	2.0	2.5	1.7	1.9	5.4	14.5	23.5	20.4	23.4	22.9	16.8	13.8	18.4	19.3	
B. o. Trade (m. bfr)	1002		4084	2930	3096	3499	3887	3115	3112	2447	1095	3747	4907	679	1350	790							
B. o. P.																							
Lost working days in (millions)										1658.8	2254.4	799.1	781.6	399	580.7	664						241	
Crisis Indicators																							
Ind. Prod.				100	125	146	162	152	178	197	214	214	180	163	135	142	142	154	168	186	151	160	
Cost of Living				100	94	106	124	128	154	196	205	217	217	198	178	176	165	163	167	180	187	189	
Unemployment				100	37	11	14	21	17	22	15	17	47	126	204	177	203	199	146	120	160	168	
NDP							100	118	136	155	173	192	209	198	184	171	145	150	166	187	187	179	
Strikes										100	136	48	47	24	35	40						15	

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 41); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 166ff., 356, 743ff); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 41).

Note: bfr (Belgian franc) is US\$0.139; NDP is at current market prices; █ = interpolated estimates.

Table 3.3 Belgium: electoral results, 1919–39

	16.11.1919		20.11.1921		05.05.1925		26.05.1929		27.11.1932		24.05.1936		02.04.1939	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Catholic Party	36.7	73	37.0	78	36.1	75	35.4	71	38.5	79	27.7	61	32.7	73
Liberal Party	17.7	34	17.8	33	14.6	23	16.6	28	14.3	24	12.4	23	17.2	33
Belgian Workers' Party	36.6	70	34.8	68	39.4	78	36.0	70	37.1	73	32.1	70	30.2	64
Daensists														
Liberal-Workers														
Dissident Cath. Lists	2.1		4.3	2	2.5	3	3.1	6	0.2		1.1	2		
Ex-Servicemen	1.1	2	1.1	1										
Flemish Nationalists	2.6	5	3.0	4	3.9	6	6.3	11	5.9	8	7.1	16	8.3	17
Middle Class Party	1.0	1	0.5		0.5		0.2							
Communist Party			0.1		1.6	2	1.9	1	2.8	3	6.1	9	5.4	9
German Minority							0.3		0.3				0.3	
Rexists														
Others	2.3	1	1.4		1.3		0.2		0.8		11.5	21	4.4	4
											2.0	4	1.5	2
Seats total		186		186		187		187		187		187		202

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 39).

Table 3.4 Belgium: government composition, 1918–44

Duration	Government	Parties in government
01.06.1918–21.11.1918	Cooreman	Cath. Soc. Lib.
21.11.1918–17.11.1919	Delacroix I	Cath. Soc. Lib.
02.12.1919–03.11.1920	Delacroix II	Cath. Soc. Lib.
20.11.1920–20.11.1921	Carton De Wiart	Cath. Soc. Lib.
16.12.1921–05.04.1925	Theunis I	Cath. Lib.
13.05.1925–13.05.1925	Vande Vyvere	Cath.
17.06.1925–19.05.1926	Pouillet-Vandervelde	Cath. Soc.
20.05.1926–21.11.1927	Jaspar I	Cath. Soc. Lib.
22.11.1927–21.05.1931	Jaspar II	Cath. Lib.
05.06.1931–18.10.1932	Renkin	Cath. Lib.
22.10.1932–13.11.1934	de Broqueville	Cath. Lib.
20.11.1934–19.03.1935	Theunis II	Cath. Lib.
25.03.1935–26.05.1936	Van Zeeland I	Cath. Soc. Lib.
15.06.1936–25.10.1937	Van Zeeland II	Cath. Soc. Lib.
23.11.1937–13.05.1938	Janson	Lib. Cath. Soc.
15.05.1938–09.02.1939	Spaak	Soc. Cath. Lib.
21.02.1939–27.02.1939	Pierlot I	Cath. Soc.
18.04.1939–03.09.1939	Pierlot II	Cath. Lib.
03.09.1939–Sept. 1944	Pierlot III	Cath. Soc. Lib.

Source: Höjer (1969: 369).

Abbreviations (and Translations):

Cath. = Catholics

Lib. = Liberals

Soc. = Socialists

stability, there was a considerable continuity at the personal level too. The key ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Industry-Labour-Social Security each saw only three different ministers during the entire period. The formation of governments between the wars resembled a game of ‘Musical Chairs’ as many of the same persons were reshuffled between other ministries in the different cabinets (Höjer 1969: 313 ff.).

Other possible majority coalitions, for example, between Socialists and left-leaning Catholics, never came about; they would have had serious economic repercussions from the conservative side, such as massive flights of capital.

4.5 International interactions

The internal forces interacted to some extent with the international environment. This applies particularly to foreign policy and general economic interactions. Some ‘givens’ are important. Situated in the centre of the northern part of Europe, Belgium was one of the smaller independent states with few, if any, ‘natural’ boundaries and had to come to terms with three major neighbouring powers – France, Germany (Prussia) and the United Kingdom.

Under the provisions of the London Conference in 1831, Belgium was declared to be a ‘perpetually neutral’ state, its security guaranteed by the five major

European powers. This neutrality, backed by some military forces of her own, was maintained until 1914. On the whole, it was a status which served the basic interests of the country well during this period. The German invasion and occupation at the start of the war then changed this equation. The end of the First World War saw Belgium as a victor on the allied side. Her future external relations and status were again open to some debate.

4.5.1 *Foreign policies*

At Versailles, Belgium obtained the (partly German-speaking) districts of Eupen and Malmédy and substantial reparations in gold and in kind for the devastations suffered during the war. She also became one of the founding members of the League of Nations and was given the mandate over the two small central African territories of Ruanda and Burundi which were adjacent to her Congo colony and which had formed a part of 'German East Africa'. In 1920, a military pact was concluded with France and in 1922 an economic union was formed with the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. In January 1923 Belgium joined France in the occupation of the Ruhr to lend weight to her claims for further reparations.

On the whole, however, the king and the respective governments aimed again at establishing some kind of more durable balance between the country and its three big neighbours. The Treaty of Locarno in 1925, which guaranteed the frontiers drawn at Versailles between Germany and the adjacent West European states including Belgium, served this purpose well.

The coming to power of Hitler in 1933 and his aggressive policies changed this position. After the German military reoccupation of territories west of the Rhine in 1936, Belgium reinforced her own military efforts, increasing armed forces to 88,000 and defence expenditure to roughly 11 per cent of the budget (Centre de Documentation 1988: 106). The country declared itself to be 'voluntarily neutral', thus giving up her military pact with France. In 1937, the governments of Paris, London and Berlin gave their guarantee to this renewed status of neutrality. The Belgian government maintained this neutrality even after the German attack on Poland in September 1939, but then had to cede to the aggressor in May 1940 (Mabille 1986: 263 ff.; Perin 1988: 135 ff.).

4.5.2 *Economic relations*

In this relatively small country early industrialization and favourable conditions for international communications created conditions in which a high percentage of GNP was devoted to external trade (55 per cent after the recovery in the mid-1920s; Mitchell 1981: 493 ff.) However, between a quarter and a third of this trade consisted of goods in transit. The balance of trade for most of the time was not positive, but this was partially compensated by foreign capital returns and transfers from the service sector. Nevertheless, the balance of payments always remained slightly negative through this period (see Table 3.2) (Statistisches Reichsam 1928: 116).

The Belgian currency and central bank policy were closely linked to the French franc. This reflected the close trade relations and the common position in terms of war reparations and inter-allied debts. In 1926, a currency reform after a period of high inflation led to the stabilization of the Belgian franc. It also led to somewhat greater independence from French monetary policies and a consolidation of the war debts until a further settlement in the Lausanne Agreement of 1932.

The effects of the world economic crisis shattered the country's external relations. Exports and imports dropped by more than half between 1929 and 1934. Because Belgium was an export-oriented country, the abandonment of the gold standard by Britain in 1931 and the subsequent strong devaluations of the pound and of the US dollar in 1933 (41 per cent) aggravated this economic situation. (Baudhuin 1974: 267 ff.).

4.5.3 *Cultural relations and perceptions*

In religious terms the country belonged clearly to the Catholic camp, but culturally Belgium's external position was as divided as the internal linguistic one, with major centres of reference on either side of the border. The long-time hegemony of the French-speaking bourgeoisie ensured a dominance of French influences in many areas. In contrast to France, however, the predominant Catholicism had not been attenuated by a clear separation between Church and State and the prevalence of anti-monarchist forces (see, for example, Daval 1962: 110 ff.).

Among the main strands of European social-political thought (conservative/Catholic, bourgeois/liberal, and socialist) of the period, the country was receptive to more specific and selective influences. At one extreme, the impact of nationalist, monarchist and Catholic-corporatist writers like Charles Maurras and his 'Action Française' was clearly felt. His views were shared by parts of the nobility and the clergy in Belgium and some of his underlying racist ideas were readily adopted by the upper-class Flemish nationalists of Verdinaso who hoped to establish a 'Greater Belgium' of 'Frankish' stock along the lines of medieval Burgundy. The creator of Walloon fascism, Léon Degrelle, educated by ardent Jesuit admirers of the Action Française, was similarly influenced. Both van Severen and Degrelle were also enthusiastic followers of Italian fascism and attempted to emulate Mussolini's style and rhetoric. In contrast to Degrelle, however, who accepted financial backing by the German National Socialists, van Severen never joined the collaborators after the German occupation in 1940. Similarly more receptive to German influences of this kind was the (more lower middle class and rural/Catholic) 'Vlaamsch National Verbond', founded by de Clercq in 1933, who was attracted by racist 'Germanic' ideas and direct Nazi support (cf, e.g., Cassels 1975: 243 ff., Wippermann 1983: 146 ff.).

Among the other ideological currents of the time, the less extreme Catholics were also influenced by 'Christian Democratic' ideas in the wake of the encyclical *Rerum novarum* with its emphasis on greater social justice and charity

(Daval, loc.cit.). In addition, the Belgian bourgeoisie drew some of its more 'liberal' inspirations from French 'radicalism' and more secular and Republican influences there. The socialists were divided among more radical and more reformist wings. A special brand was the 'national socialism' (as opposed to internationalist tendencies) of Henri de Man who had worked at Max Horkheimer's Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt and who became president of the Socialist Party in 1935 (Mabille 1986: 230 ff.).

5 Actions and reactions during the period of crisis

5.1 Principal actors and arenas

Against this internal and external background the major events, triggered in part by the world economic crisis in 1929 and its aftermath, occur in three major arenas: the economic, the general sociopolitical, and (in a constitutional-democratic framework) the parliamentary arena (for more elaborate definition and discussions, see Bailey 1969; Dobry 1986: 113 ff.).

5.1.1 *The economic arena*

The economic arena comprises the 'normal' exchange of goods and services in the sphere of production and consumption (in this case a predominantly capitalist mode of production). The major economic interest groups and the corresponding class-based organizations have been outlined above (see section 3.1). The effect of the world economic crisis on the size and the resources of each group must be considered more closely.

The consequences of the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929 were felt only relatively slowly in Belgium. In the beginning most actors considered it to be a 'normal' cyclical event, but then international chain reactions set in which revealed the fundamentally 'structural' character of the crisis. In July 1931 Germany declared her incapacity to further meet her debt repayments and two months later, the United Kingdom abandoned the gold standard and devalued the pound by almost 40 per cent.

Now the full effects of the crisis, which at first had been met with some moderately deflationary policies, became acute in Belgium as well. Exports and industrial production declined by one-third in 1932, and the number of unemployed jumped by more than 200,000 within little more than a year, reaching the previously unthinkable level of almost a quarter of the total workforce. Further deflationary policies and reductions in unemployment benefits, taken as budgetary measures in view of declining public revenues, then further aggravated the situation and led to massive strikes and incidents of violence in summer 1932.

Not only those out of work were affected; for those employed real wages declined considerably as well (by about one-third between 1930 and 1936). The self-employed middle classes were faced by a series of bankruptcies. In addition the structural crisis of the banking system (the biggest banks were at the same

time holders of vast industrial portfolios and a crisis in one sector strongly affected the others) threatened a collapse of the entire system of deposits and finance. In fact, the *Banque Belge du Travail* went bankrupt in 1934 and the *Algemeene Bankvereeniging*, the credit institution of the cooperatives of the *Boerenbond*, only narrowly escaped a similar fate requiring major sacrifices by its members (Baudhuin 1974: 269f.). Finally the government stepped in and guaranteed bank credits by bonds from the Central Bank. At the same time, a bank reform law separated the financial and industrial activities of these institutions. In March 1935 the Belgian franc was, in turn, devalued by 28 per cent.

In spite of the measures initiated by the government, economic unrest reached its peak in the summer of 1936. A new wave of strikes hit the country, affecting more than 500,000 workers, well over half the total workforce. Among the major demands were a considerable rise in the minimum wage, paid leave, and a 40-hour working week (Bartier *et al.* 1974). The crisis was thus spreading into the wider sociopolitical arena.

5.1.2 *The extra-parliamentary arena*

Beyond the sphere of immediate economic interests, practically all major groups in society were now affected and this put into question the very foundations of the overall economic and political system. The 'old' parties were both confronted with some internal generational changes and increasing competition from the spreading 'new' social movements. In the socialist camp, the 'young Turks', grouped around Paul-Henri Spaak and Henri de Man, became influential. They proposed a 'national' socialist policy of major economic reforms with the nationalization of key elements of the financial and industrial sectors, massive public works programmes and the more general realization of a truly social and democratic economy.

Among the Catholics, many of whom had become disillusioned by the involvement of some of their representatives in major financial scandals, both some 'Christian-social' ideas, which had been promoted by the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, and right-wing corporatist concepts influenced by Charles Maurras and others gained ground. The latter were in part also adopted by the more strongly based extremist movements of 'Verdinaso', VNV and, in particular, the Rexists. All in all, a general atmosphere of unrest and discontent with the dominant party system and the instability and inefficiency of the government prevailed.

Increasingly, political activity moved to the extra-parliamentary arena and the established forces could no longer contain 'wildcat' strikes and incidents of violence. The latter were often provoked by the militias of Verdinaso and the Rexists which were finally outlawed in 1934. But even rule by emergency decree, which was authorized several times by the parliamentary majority of the ruling coalition, did little to curb the violence. In 1934 the death of King Albert I, who had been a generally respected monarch and symbol of national unity, further aggravated the situation. His successor, his son Leopold III, did not enjoy a

similar respect (and was later to be implicated in allegations of collaboration with the Nazi occupants; cf. Willequet 1974).

5.1.3 *The parliamentary arena*

These developments led to a 'grand coalition' government in March 1935 under Prime Minister van Zeeland, made up of representatives of the three major parties and some 'technicians' like van Zeeland himself (a former Catholic vice-governor of the National Bank). Even though the measures taken (such as the devaluation of the franc and some public works programmes) were beginning to show some effects (for example, the number of unemployed dropped by 70,000 from 1935 to 1936), the political crisis as such had not yet abated and, in particular, the Rexists continued their agitation.

When general elections were called in May 1936, the Rexists scored their greatest success so far, obtaining 11.5 per cent of the vote and 21 seats in the Chamber of Representatives. Their gains were mostly at the expense of the Catholics who lost almost 10 per cent. The smaller losses of the Socialists (5 per cent) and the Liberals (2 per cent) must probably be attributed more to the gains of the Communist (+3.3 per cent) and Flemish nationalist parties (+1.3 per cent) who obtained 9 and 16 seats respectively.

Rex obtained most of its support in the non-industrialized *arrondissements* of Wallonia (13 seats) and in the industrialized *arrondissements* of Flanders (3 seats), where it could draw upon the votes of the French-speaking bourgeoisie. It was strongest in the province of Luxemburg in the south, where Degrelle was born, registering more than 25 per cent. In the mixed *arrondissement* of Brussels it obtained 15–20 per cent (5 seats). On the whole, there was a gradual decline from its stronghold in the south-east to only scanty representation in the north. In social terms, Rex was most strongly represented in the petty bourgeoisie, including its rural counterpart in Wallonia, and in the upper bourgeoisie in Flanders but drew very little working class support (Etienne 1968). As in other countries, the membership of the movement consisted of many relatively young people who had not been fully socialized into their respective 'political families' and who were therefore more susceptible to the political 'currents' of the time (cf. Merkl 1980).

5.2 **The development of the crisis**

The Rexists and their leader Degrelle had thus become a force to be reckoned with and they saw themselves only at the beginning of their eventual success. Born in 1906, Degrelle himself was a young, energetic, good-looking personality who exhibited considerable skills as a polemical writer and demagogic orator. He patterned himself in the style of Mussolini and organized large-scale public rallies. As a symbol of his campaign he had chosen the broom – to sweep away the old-fashioned corrupt politicians and the rotten, parliamentary regime. The weekly papers *Vlan* and *Rex* and the daily *Le pays réel* (established in May 1936) assured him a growing attention. In early October 1936 he reached an agreement

to cooperate with the Flemish VNV and its leader de Clercq in order to extend his support beyond his mostly francophone followers.

In the meantime, international developments had further polarized the situation. The reoccupation of the Rhineland had made many Belgians, including the government, more acutely aware of the precarious defence situation in the east. The electoral results leading to the formation of a popular front in France in May 1936 had raised the hopes of more left-leaning groups and intensified the fears of their opponents. The Civil War in Spain further accentuated right and left cleavages and influenced potential alliances which could cut across some of the existing camps. The Socialist youth organization, in contrast to the more hesitant older leadership, was in favour of active support of the Republican side, as were the Communists. The Catholics, in turn, were divided among those who advocated the recognition of the legally elected government and those who saw the conflict in purely anti-Communist and anti-atheist terms. The situation, indeed, had become more fluid; there was the possibility of a new left-oriented alliance on the one hand or a corporatist, authoritarian, or potentially fascist regroupment on the other. Paradoxically, it was the success of the Rexists which was to close the ranks of the grand coalition and to prevent these alternatives.

5.3 The resolution of the crisis

After the May 1936 elections a 'national unity' government of the three major parties with the same 'technocratic' prime minister ('van Zeeland II') was again formed. The relative weight of the Socialists had been strengthened at the expense of the Catholics. The new government quickly conceded to some of the major demands of the striking workers and granted higher minimum wages, six days of paid leave per year, and a gradual introduction of the 40-hour working week. At the same time, measures to control the armament industries and other monopolies in the industrial sector were announced, together with greater cultural autonomy to safeguard the interests of Flemish groups, and an independent commission of inquiry was to investigate allegations of waste and corruption in the financial and public sectors. In foreign policy, increased defence efforts included an extension of the military service to 17 months and neutrality towards all sides, proclaimed by the king in December 1936, was to contain the German threat.

These measures reduced some of the conflicts, but their longer-term effects were still to be seen. Degrelle continued his agitation, but, in overestimating his position, committed some major blunders. The 'march on Brussels' which he organized in late October 1936 was banned by the government and turned into a fiasco. The pastoral letter by the Belgian bishops for Christmas, contrary to his claims and expectations, unequivocally condemned all forms of totalitarianism and dictatorship and declared the support of the church for Belgian unity and the parliamentary regime. In March 1937 Degrelle decided to force the situation in his favour. One of the Rexist MPs for Brussels was asked to resign in order to open the way for Degrelle in the ensuing by-elections. He was eager to demonstrate that he

could win single-handedly and enjoyed the support of the masses. In a significant move, the national unity government decided to present Prime Minister van Zeeland, who was not yet an MP, as the single candidate for the three major parties. When Degrelle further provoked the church by claiming to enjoy at least the tacit support of influential circles advocating massive abstentions, Cardinal Van Roey issued a clear statement condemning the aims and methods of Rexism two days before the elections and called for a vote for van Zeeland. This 'coup de crosse', even though it was probably not decisive, solidified the Catholic camp and support for the governing coalition. The day of voting, 11 April marked the devastating defeat of Degrelle: 276,000 votes (76 per cent) for van Zeeland, 69,000 (19 per cent) for Degrelle and 18,000 (5 per cent) blank ballots. He had obtained even less than the votes of the Rexists and VNN combined in the previous elections in this constituency. Degrelle never recovered from this defeat. In the 1939 elections, the last regular ones before the occupation, the support for the Rexists had dwindled to a meagre 4.4 per cent. Degrelle's collaboration with the Nazis further discredited him in the eyes of most Belgians. After the war he went into exile in Spain. His Belgian-style fascism had been no more than an episode (Willequet 1974: 120 ff.; Höjer 1969: 245 ff., Mabille 1986: 236 ff.; personal interviews*).

6 Conclusions

Belgium was thus a successful case of the survival of democracy in the interwar period. Beyond this obvious result, it is important to put the analysis of the factors involved in a theoretical and comparative perspective. At first sight, this case clearly seems to fall into Barrington Moore's (1966) category of a country successfully modernizing along 'the democratic route'. It is also in line with Skocpol's (1979) argument about the role of a relatively weak state apparatus and its liberal-bourgeois foundation in this process.

However, a closer look reveals that this pattern, and the factors involved, were more complicated than any single, inclusive theory may suggest: the dominant Catholic Church played an important and not always 'democratizing' role, parts of the bourgeoisie had strong conservative and potentially authoritarian leanings, on the political left some anti-democratic forces emerged, and all this was complicated by the linguistic division of the country and some strong ethnic-nationalist and, in part, fascist movements. So the actual outcome could not always be taken for granted and given the particular mix of factors and their developments over time, at least three alternative results could not be excluded entirely: a fascist regime, a popular front government, or a corporatist-authoritarian state. It should also be noted that the parliamentary regime which

* In February 1988 a number of interviews were conducted with historians and some important actors and witnesses of the crisis period. In particular, the support and kind cooperation of the following persons is most gratefully acknowledged: Francis Balace, Lode Claes, Henri Jeanne, Leo Moulin, Jacques Willequet.

survived was more of the 'consociational' than the majoritarian 'Westminster' type (cf. Lijphart 1984).

Of these alternative scenarios, a fascist one seems to have been the least likely. At the peak of the crisis in 1936 Rex and the heterogeneous Flemish nationalists together mustered only 18.6 per cent of the vote (see Table 3.3). Even if the support of some nationalist bourgeois elements among the Liberals and some authoritarian forces in the Catholic camp could have been obtained, it still seems a very long way from any real fascist take-over, at least by regular parliamentary procedures. Furthermore, the bureaucracy and the army always maintained at least a neutral role and could not be considered potential allies in any attempted coup.

A popular front government, though numerically much closer to a potential majority (Socialists and Communists together achieved 38.2 per cent of the vote in 1936), similarly seems to have been unlikely. Even if some left-leaning Catholics had been won over, the strong Catholic-secular, rural-industrial and linguistic divisions of the country, and the examples of France and Spain, had polarized sentiments to such an extent that this alternative was not really viable either.

A corporatist-authoritarian solution grouping together Catholics, Rex and the Flemish Nationalists had 47.4 per cent of the vote in 1936 (if we take this as the best available measure of the respective strength of these groups at the peak of the crisis). Together with some 'national' Socialists, elements of the Liberal upper bourgeoisie and – possibly the support of the king and the army – such an outcome at least seems to have been feasible. But again, the heterogeneity of such a coalition, and the actual sequence of events, prevented its coming about.

So the 'political space' (Linz) for any truly alternative solution seems to have been quite limited. The three major 'political families', with the exception of the inroads made by Rex into the Catholic camp, proved to be resistant to any major changes and together controlled at least 75 per cent of the vote. Given their vested interests in the existing social, economic and political structures, the 'verzuiled' parliamentary regime, even though its support was far from being enthusiastic in many quarters, survived without too much difficulty.

4

Czechoslovakia: External Crisis and Internal Compromise

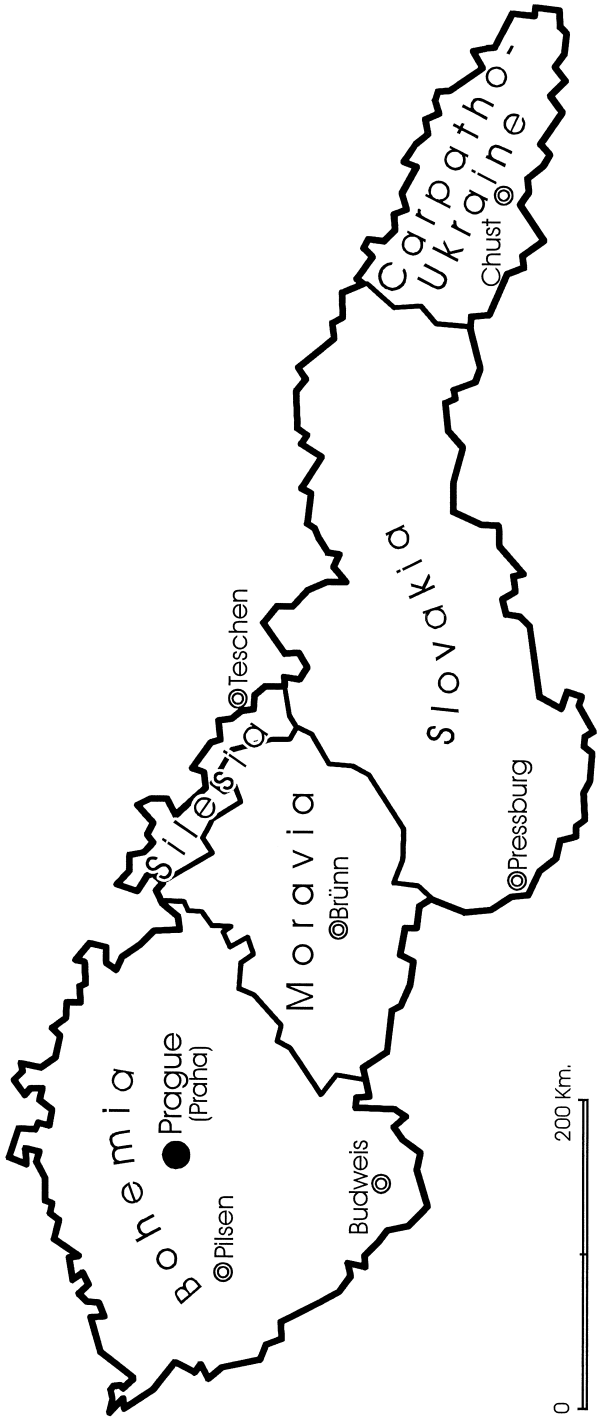
John Bradley

1 The emergence of the republic

At the outbreak of the war in 1914 no one in Bohemia and Moravia publicly demanded independence. The overwhelming majority wanted a greater measure of autonomy under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; the most ambitious politicians wanted a decisive say in the running of their part of the monarchy as befitted their 'economic development, political maturity and cultural level'. However, *kocourkov* (provincial obscurantism) and *svejkovina* (passive resistance by the Czechs against Austro-Hungarian authorities in everyday life) were widespread in Bohemia and Moravia. Only T. G. Masaryk was willing to struggle for independence, even if it meant committing high treason. A philosopher and university teacher by profession, he spent most of his life as a Czech politician in the Reichsrat. He became the leader of the Realist Party and its only representative in the Imperial Parliament. He alone appreciated the historical opportunity that the war offered for Czech 'realistic independence'. He launched the anti-Habsburg resistance movement on John Hus' anniversary day in 1915. This first 'velvet' revolutionary movement took the form of propaganda campaigns in Western media and among intellectuals. He was reinforced in his efforts by two old students, Benes and Stefánik.

Right up to 1916 the Western allies and Russia thought of postwar Europe in pre-1914 terms, as a collection of great and small powers kept in balance by the formation of alliances and mutual deterrence. None of the great powers was to be permitted to grow disproportionately powerful as a result of the war. This familiar balance of power had worked for the half-century before 1914 and thus there was no reason why it should not continue to work after the war. However, after two years of fighting with no victory in sight both sides decided in desperation to exploit each other's weaknesses more ruthlessly than before. At last Masaryk's chance had come. Both the Central Powers and the Entente Allies appealed to the numerous ethnic groups and nationalities in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe to join them and in case of victory gain independence and national self-determination. It is clear that most politicians had no idea of what the Pandora's box of the Eastern European empires really contained.

Czechoslovakia



With the death of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1916 and the Russian Revolution in 1917 the floodgates were opened as Great Powers vied with each other to attract to their cause all the nationalisms, alive or dormant or dead (Byelorussian). By then Masaryk had persuaded British politicians that the Czechs and Slovaks deserved independence. He offered them and their French counterparts a military contribution to the war effort in the shape of a volunteer army formed in 1917 all parts of which recognised Masaryk as their political leader. Now it was authorized by the revolutionary authorities to recruit Czech and Slovak PoWs in Russia into its ranks. Overnight Masaryk controlled a Czechoslovak Legion ready for combat and consisting of three divisions. In addition, recruitment took place among the Czechs and the Slovaks living in the USA. To underline his goals Masaryk proclaimed Czech and Slovak independence.

In November 1918 he ironed out agreements with American Slovaks and Ruthenes – the Pittsburgh Convention and the Philadelphia Agreement – to join the independent state which was to be called Czecho-Slovakia. At least in the eyes of the one Western ally, the USA, these democratically negotiated agreements justified the creation of a new state in Central Europe consisting of the three Slavonic nations, whose ‘democratic representatives’ concluded these agreements. As a result, the USA recognised the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris as a de facto co-belligerent government in September 1918 (Britain had already recognised it in August and France followed in October). Masaryk became President-Prime minister (and minister of Finance) with Štefánik and Benes as his War and Foreign (and Interior) ministers. On 18 October he issued the Washington Manifesto outlining the shape of the future state: it was to be a parliamentary democratic republic with freedoms of conscience, religion, science, literature, art, speech, press, assembly and petition guaranteed in the constitution.

Thanks to the activities of Benes the cause of Czech and Slovak independence was also progressing on the homefront. Czech political leaders from Bohemia and Moravia were invited back to the Vienna Parliament where they formed an all-party union proposing to transform the monarchy into a federation of free and equal states. One of these states should be composed of Czechs and Slovaks (the Ruthenes were not included as yet, for no one at home was aware of the Philadelphia Agreement). Even the Slovaks clearly welcomed an independent Czechoslovakia. After learning of the Allied recognition of the Paris Council as a provisional government, the Czech deputies rejected the proposed federation under the Habsburg aegis and persuaded the last imperial government to permit them to negotiate independence with Benes’ Paris Council in Switzerland.

Thus, Dr Kramar, chairman of the National Committee, who also headed the negotiating team, arrived in Geneva on 28 October, with his authority enhanced – but in his absence he lost control over the events in Prague. On that very day his National Committee, a coalition of agrarians, right-wing social democrats, national socialists, national democrats and others, proclaimed Czech independence in the capital and formed a de facto government. A Slovak, Dr Srobar, passing through Prague by chance, signed the independence manifesto as well.

The Slovaks 'formally' proclaimed their independence of Hungary on 30 October 1918, and opted to join the Czech provinces – Bohemia and Moravia – in one common Czechoslovak state. However, this proclamation had been issued by a self-appointed national council, not a democratically elected body, which detracted slightly from its legal authority. Despite this lack of legitimacy there existed among the Slovaks, as well as the Czechs, an overwhelming consensus regarding independence and joining the new state. Ruthene independence was left for a later date. The fact remains that the Czech, Slovak and Ruthene populations were neither directly consulted, nor offered a chance to express themselves democratically in a referendum in favour of the common state. This was the first point of Masaryk's Washington declaration which was not implemented in the new state.

2 The formation of Czechoslovakia

The administrative transition from the imperial to the republican system was smooth, except in the German-inhabited territories which refused to be absorbed peacefully and had to be occupied by the Czech militia at the end of 1918. Despite this 'military' intervention the nationalist revolution was on the whole peaceful. An overwhelming majority of the district administrations acknowledged the authority of the National Committee and thus became the administrative nucleus of Czechoslovakia.

Without consulting anyone, the National Committee began to act as a real government of Czechoslovakia. It also put in hand measures to legitimize its assumption of power. Their action challenged the claims of the returning Geneva delegation, thus threatening the country with a struggle for power. At last, however, Kramar prevailed and the National Committee as well as the Paris National Council dissolved themselves, giving way to Kramar's government of an 'all-national coalition'. On 14 November 1918 the 'revolutionary' National Assembly approved by acclamation the declaration of independence made on its behalf by the National Committee. Kramar personally proposed the election of Masaryk as the first president of Czechoslovakia. There was no other candidate and he was elected unanimously (254 votes) by the Assembly. Kramar, in turn, was confirmed as prime minister, Benes as foreign minister and Štefánik as war minister. However, after the elevation of Masaryk to the presidency, effective power in the newly created republic passed into the hands of Kramar, a self-confessed monarchist. He was not the leader of a majority party but neither were Masaryk or Benes. Exceptional 'revolutionary' circumstances required exceptional political responses. These might not always have been quite democratic ones; sometimes they were even contrary to the customary liberal democratic imperial procedures. All would be put right in a year or two when the national revolution settled down, a republican constitution was drafted and approved and a really democratic election legitimized the new state. At least this was how Kramar imagined the progress of the newly independent state. In the meantime the liberal Austrian constitution remained in force, as well as Austrian laws and statutes.

Although during these initial 'revolutionary' days certain constitutional niceties were infringed upon, popular support for independence in Bohemia and Moravia was clear. The nationalist leadership could mobilize entire populations both in the towns and the countryside to demonstrate its legitimacy on any occasion. Thus, in November Prime Minister Kramar's return from Geneva was in fact a triumphant procession of an acknowledged leader hailed overwhelmingly by the population. President Masaryk's return home, in December 1918, saw another demonstration of this informal legitimization and popular sanction. Immense crowds demonstrated the unity and consensus of the Czechs *vis-à-vis* independence and its incarnation, the President. However, after Masaryk's return all had changed. Before, Kramar was quite happy to carry on with improvised democracy, or at least what he considered as such. In fact he was carrying on as of old, in a Svejik-like fashion. He even began to indulge his penchant for what Masaryk termed *kocourkov* ('provincial obscurantism'): to Kramar, Bohemia was the centre of the universe and all jobs in the new state were given to his party followers and no one else. Masaryk, by contrast, had no party to cajole, no friends to reward. He was his own master, with his own ideas about democracy and after his stay in the West he hated both *svejkovina* and *kocourkov*. Immediately he appointed a 'brains trust' of political scientists and constitutional experts to plan Czechoslovakia's future. It was to resemble as closely as possible his Washington blueprint. But the Czechs and Slovaks had to wait for a formal legitimization in the shape of a constitution and popular elections until 1920. Almost at once the rigorous Masaryk clashed with the easygoing Kramar and by July 1919 the premier had been dismissed and sent into political wilderness never to return to power. The overwhelming national consensus and mobilization achieved by Masaryk was probably only possible in the atmosphere that prevailed in Czechoslovakia at the time. All Czechs were conscious of the great historical achievement of gaining independence and all felt acutely their collective responsibility for the newly independent state. Once again, after three centuries, the Czechs and Slovaks were independent, thus they all enthusiastically followed the almost mythical figure of the philosopher in power, who would lead them in the present difficult circumstances to a bright future. This was shown in the results Masaryk received in elections in the National Assembly. On 27 May 1920 he obtained 284 votes out of 411; in the next election on 27 May 1927 he polled 274 votes and in May 1934, at the age of 84 he won overwhelmingly with 327 votes to the 38 polled by his communist opponent, K. Gottwald.

3 The social bases of politics

Despite the initial impression of peace and order in Czechoslovakia, which supposedly attracted the Slovaks and Ruthenes to the republic, actual circumstances proved much less peaceful. National and social discontent was widespread. Thus the neglected Ruthenians failed to join the new Republic; on 21 January 1919 a Soviet-dominated congress at Chust opted for the Ukraine.

However, a few months later, after the Hungarian Red Army's invasion, Czechoslovak troops invoking Masaryk's American–Ruthene agreement occupied the territory. In September 1919 Ruthenia was annexed with the approval of the Paris Peace Conference, after the Ruthenians had been promised a special status within the new republic.

The new state was admittedly a curious body politic, similar in composition to the defunct Habsburg Monarchy, only on a microscopic scale. The bulk of the population of 13.6 million were formed by the Czechoslovaks (8,760,957). However, 23.4 per cent (3.1 million) were Germans, 5.6 per cent Hungarians, 3.4 per cent Ruthenians, 1.3 per cent Jews, 0.6 per cent Poles; and there were several other nationalities, with 238,943 resident foreigners thrown in. Despite Benes' promises to the Peace Conference, only Czechoslovaks and Ruthenes were recognised in the constitution as 'ruling peoples', while all the others remained minorities. German districts remained under an occupation regime for a long time; Slovakia appeared as an annexed province with Hungarian masters replaced by Czechs; and Ruthenia never obtained its much advertised autonomy. In fact it became a unique example of colonial occupation in Central Europe. Whatever valid excuses the Czechs might have had, Czechoslovakia was from the beginning their state, run for them from Prague. Soon even the Slovaks began to insist on being considered as a separate nationality, and the pretext for Czech predominance and a centralized state evaporated with it (for the Czech social structure, see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1).

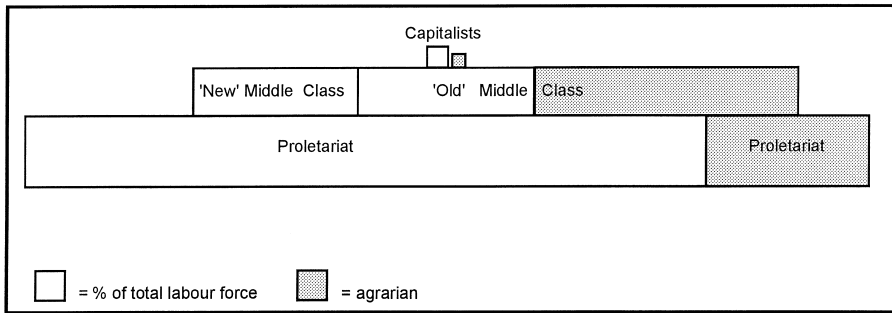
Unfortunately for Czechoslovakia the Germans proved to be the most unwilling citizens of the new state from the very beginning. Although the Czechoslovak constitution guaranteed their national rights and offered them legal protection, they had too long an experience of constitutional abuses to take these 'paper' guarantees seriously. Thus the declaration of Czech and Slovak independence

Table 4.1 Czechoslovakia: class structure, 1930

Population (millions)	14.7
Employment rate	68.2
Rate of agrarian employment	39.5
Agrarian	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.2
Family farms	14
Agrarian proletariat	13
Non-agrarian	
Capitalists	0.5
Old middle class	9.4
New middle class	8.7
Proletariat	54.2
Sub-proletariat	
Total	100

Sources: *Statistisches Reichsamt* (1936: 290); Wynne (1953: 66f., 68); Berend and Ránki (1974: table 8.2); Kaser and Radice (eds) (1985: 263).

Figure 4.1 Czechoslovakia: class structure, 1930



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 4.1.

coincided with that of the Germans of Bohemia and Moravia. The ultimate idea of the separatist Germans was to join the Austrian Republic which in turn would become part of the German (Weimar) republic. In the meantime they agreed to negotiate a *modus vivendi* with Czech national leaders. But France's influence at this stage was paramount; it was out of the question for the victorious Allies to sanction a territorial aggrandisement of defeated Germany.

The German proclamation of political independence was more a gesture of defiance than a practical policy. The Bohemian and Moravian Germans wanted to show that they were irreconcilably opposed to Czech predominance. Thus, the government in Prague had no choice but to take up this national challenge and send soldiers into the separatist districts. Gradually, by the end of 1918, after minor bloodletting, the independent districts were re-annexed with separatist leaders escaping to Germany. The Germans were too demoralized by the war defeat and future uncertainties to put up effective resistance, though their wish to separate themselves from the new state was almost unanimous. The most unfortunate consequence of this initial German opposition was their virtual exclusion from the state. The democratic citizens of German descent were subsequently considered as an obstreperous minority and treated as second-class citizens. Ostensibly a language clause in the constitution safeguarded the use of their language in their districts, in the law courts, schools and colleges. In addition their deputies could speak German in Parliament. But the Germans were not recognised as legal persons on a par with the Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenes. As early as 1919 they complained about discrimination and their complaints were undoubtedly justified. For example, in the application of the Land Reform Act Czech farmers were favoured over German farmers. This was equally true of civil service recruitment as well as of the state policies of employment and social protection. Discrimination was never blatant, though it particularly hurt well-educated Germans. Despite this, by 1926, German agrarians and German Christian Social Party members (after 1929 even German Social Democrats) had largely forgotten about these persistent violations of their rights. They accepted

an invitation to join the ruling Czech coalition in Prague. Henceforth, until March 1938, their representatives voted with the Czechoslovak majority and controlled various ministries in succeeding governments. Nevertheless the legal status of German citizens remained unchanged and would have remained the same, had it not been for the *Sudetendeutsche Partei*, in power since 1935, which took it up successfully with the ruling Czechs in 1937.

From the very beginning in 1918 the political situation in Slovakia was more complicated than in the Czech provinces. Peace and order in the province depended on the Hungarians and was less rapidly established than in the Czech provinces. Before the war the Slovaks had no autonomy whatsoever and only one deputy in the Hungarian Parliament. The demoralized Hungarian administrators responded immediately to the Czech National Committee's demands by handing over to the Czechs or their Slovak agents the purely Slovak districts. The Slovak National Council thus controlled only a smaller part of Slovakia, while the mixed districts remained under Hungarian administration. According to the Belgrade armistice, the Hungarian army remained in these districts. Negotiations followed about a peaceful transfer of these districts to Czechoslovakia and early in 1919 the Hungarian army began to evacuate them, but when Béla Kun seized power in Hungary his revolutionary armies invaded Slovakia in order to re-annex it. A state of emergency was proclaimed; the Czechoslovak government organized new army units commanded by French officers and sent them to Slovakia to resist the Hungarian invaders. The province was finally incorporated in the Republic after the Hungarians had been driven out. Thus it was the Czechoslovak army and not the people that established the new Slovak frontiers, as well as those of Transcarpathian Ruthenia. The question of a referendum was not even raised and Masaryk's Pittsburgh Agreement was never ratified by the Slovaks.

One more border conflict occurred before the Republic took its final shape. The Poles, who had claimed the entire Tesin area of Moravia, occupied it in November 1918. Until then the Czechs had kept several coal mines under their control, and above all the strategic railway link with Slovakia. The Tesin area was a nationally mixed region in which the Czechs were a minority. Despite this, Czech army units invaded the territory in January 1919 and drove out the Poles. For a time a full-scale conflict threatened to break out between Czechoslovakia and Poland, but in 1920 both sides accepted Allied arbitration. The area was divided between the new states according to economic criteria, and there was no war. None the less, as early as 1920, Europe came to realize how fragile was the balance of power in Central Europe. The region as a whole abounded in potential conflicts, the results of the arbitrarily drawn frontiers of liberated national districts or newly constituted states such as Yugoslavia.

4 Intermediate structures and identifications

The competition for power was regulated by electoral laws which were changed twice in order to limit the proliferation of parties. Twenty-three parties and

movements took part in the first election; 27 in 1925 and 19 and 16 in 1929 and 1935 respectively. The government was formed on the basis of proportional representation and duly verified by the Election Tribunal.

The National Democratic Party believed absolutely in a Czech domination of the new state, and they were even willing to sacrifice their conservative economic principles in order to achieve it. Although Dr Kramar and his fellow party leaders were themselves financiers and free enterprise entrepreneurs, they advocated the nationalization of German economic and financial interests. In foreign policy they also differed from Masaryk's orientation to the Western powers. They continued to look to Russian power and influence as represented by the White movements and armies in 1919. Thus President Masaryk differed practically in everything from his prime minister.

From July 1919 the social democratic left wing were dissatisfied with Tusar's leadership and the national coalition government. They organized themselves as a Marxist Left group and looked to Russian Bolsheviks for inspiration. In March 1920 Smeral visited the USSR, met Lenin and became convinced that his 'party' should follow the Soviet-Bolshevik example and seize power in a *coup d'état*. In April 1920, after the election Smeral was again disillusioned with the new coalition government to which none of the Marxist Left was appointed. Though he himself was elected to parliament, the majority of the right-wing representatives would have nothing to do with his group. This political ostracism only confirmed him in his subversive views. During the summer of 1920 many of the left participated in the second congress of the Communist International in Moscow. It is not clear whether they were encouraged to seize power in Czechoslovakia or not. Without doubt they came back inspired by Bolshevik victories in the civil war. There and then they decided to use a general strike, which they were sure they could launch whenever they wanted to attempt a coup. They also wanted to take over the party organization and above all its nerve centre (HQ) and the party newspaper.

A general strike was called for 9 December, but its objectives were purely political: the dismissal of the emergency government, nationalization of industry and expropriation of agriculture, formation of soviets and wage increases, to attract politically uncommitted workers. Martial law was enacted throughout the republic and Masaryk personally took charge of operations. Throughout 1919 whenever it wanted to pressure the government the left used the strike weapon: some 252 strikes mobilized 179,998 workers who almost invariably had their demands satisfied. Now instead of negotiations and concrete objectives, the left wanted to imitate the Bolsheviks and seize power by arms in the confusion caused by the general strike. Though initially some strikers seized arms the special gendarmerie quickly disarmed them and kept control of the situation throughout what came to be known as 'the revolutionary week'.

Only in Slovakia did rioting get out of hand and rural disturbances became widespread. Although some German, Hungarian and Ukrainian left-wingers supported this essentially Czech general strike, they did not join in openly. With the other three provinces calm, disturbances in Bohemia were contained. While on 13 December the whole country seemed in turmoil, by 17 December all

unrest had died down. Three thousand strike leaders were arrested and sent to jail. The president's resolution saved the democratic system, and the Communists achieved nothing. The government remained in power, nothing was nationalized and no soviet survived the strike.

After the assassination of the finance minister Rasin in 1923, Kramar re-asserted his influence in the National Democratic Party. He even dared to utter criticism of Masaryk's policies in public. As a consequence the Moravian wing of the party, led by Stransky, broke away from the Bohemian main body. Benes's party also split; the left founded an independent party and the right had to be expelled, thus weakening Benes's position. The communist wing of the Social Democratic Party, separate since 1921, united communist Slovaks, Germans, Ruthenes and Hungarians in its ranks. The bulk of its traditional electorate went with it. Svehla had also difficulties with his right wing led by Prasek, who forced him to legislate higher customs duties to protect Czech agriculture against foreign dumping. In December 1925 Svehla's all-national coalition was again given a vote of confidence, but – faced by the deteriorating situation in towns and the country – was looking for political reinforcement.

Throughout the period 1924–6 there were widespread disturbances in the largely rural Slovakia and Ruthenia. Early in 1926 the communists succeeded in spreading demonstrations against new customs duties, increases in the salaries for the clergy and agricultural prices to Moravia and Bohemia. By March 1926 Masaryk decided once again to pre-empt their attempts at de-stabilization. Svehla agreed to step down and Masaryk's civil service government took over to beat off this second communist challenge. For the first time since the creation of Czechoslovakia, German Agrarians, German Traders and German Christian Democrats supported the emergency government in parliament.

However, once again the communists overestimated their political capabilities. They simply could not use street demonstrations to topple the government, because it had such a broad support in the National Assembly. On 11 June 1926 they mobilized all their supporters in a large demonstration in Prague, but this was dispersed peacefully when the police fired in the air over the large crowd. With this action, the crisis was over and the communists would never try again to challenge the system on the streets.

In the early 1930s, the rise of Henlein's *Sudetendeutsche Partei* was unexpected because, as we have seen, the Germans were fairly integrated in the state. Though it received discrete support from Hitler's NSDAP it remained a democratic party, at least as far as Masaryk and Benes were concerned, aiming at changes by negotiation. Henlein's arguments were convincing. The Sudeten areas suffered most from mass unemployment and somehow state relief failed to reach them. Both industrial and agricultural workers, though ostensibly in power in Prague, were seething with discontent in German districts and were gradually being alienated from the 'collaborators'. In the end Henlein easily lured the majority of German voters from their coalition partners with promises he could not fulfil without destroying the republic. Only then, and too late, did the Czechs offer the Sudeten Germans legal and constitutional concessions. By September 1938, after the Munich agreement had satisfied all of Henlein's demands, the Sudeten Germans

were in the same position as the Czech nationalists in 1918. With the aid of Hitler's Third Reich, the German minority in turn inflicted great damage on the economy and territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia – damage which could roughly be compared to that inflicted on the German districts by the Czechs in 1918. All the border fortifications had to be abandoned to the *Wehrmacht* and the Skoda Armament Works at Pilsen were within German artillery range. Still the Czechoslovak state survived this debilitating blow. But Masaryk, and his successor Benes, were wrong to think that once the German problem was solved all the nationality problems would be resolved.

Politically both the ruling right and left believed in liberal democracy and economically in 'controlled' capitalism (state intervention in private enterprise). The right-wing parties controlled three merchant banks through which they dominated industrial and agrarian development, often using the state to bail them out when in difficulty. The left counterbalanced this influence with the control of organized labour (40–45 per cent of the working population belonged to trade unions). Though all the political parties organized their own unions, the Social Democrats' Confederation of Czechoslovak Unions was the largest, with 489,359 registered members. The National Confederation of Trade Unions, the Central Republican Union, the Christian Unions and the Trade Union of Agricultural and Forestry Workers had 316,000 members, while the Communist 'Red' Unions never exceeded 200,000 members. The affiliated politicians – capital and labour – had always been able to conclude compromise agreements – the only exception being the communist opposition with its weak and faction-ridden 'Red' Unions. Furthermore, practically all the political parties had their own organizations, which could be mobilized in times of crises. Overall, these groups had more than 1,000,000 registered members.

5 Dynamic factors of the interwar period

5.1 The political setting

In December 1918 the political system was in flux. The Constitution approved on 29 February 1920 reflected Masaryk's wartime ideas. Its first paragraph summed up its democratic motto: 'the people are the only source of power in the state.' In practice this meant that people's representatives were freely elected by secret ballot to a bicameral parliament, the National Assembly. This body had exclusive legislative powers as well as wide powers of control. The executive depended on a majority within the chamber of representatives. The Senate had the power of legislative veto. Political parties presented their lists of candidates who were elected to the Assembly and the Senate in direct secret elections every six years. The National Assembly was supervised by the Constitutional and Electoral Tribunals. This representative system bore a striking resemblance to the French Third Republic, although in reality it was a partial copy of the Austrian system. The separation of powers was more or less respected and procedurally enforced. The presidency exercised great powers, the greatest of them the right to appoint and dismiss governments, and to dissolve parliament. Furthermore, he had several

emergency executive powers; the president was commander-in-chief of the armed forces and responsible for appointments to the civil service. In reality, his powers were even further increased. Since no Czechoslovak party had ever achieved a clear majority in parliament, the president himself created majorities. The extreme right and left complained that the exercise of this type of presidential power was undemocratic, but it was not unconstitutional. In time the body politic known as the Castle faction, named after the royal castle in Prague, the presidential residence, became their bogeymen and, if anything, it added stability to the whole system. Otherwise Masaryk enforced democratic rules rigorously.

In the defence sector Masaryk's initial intentions were not fulfilled. He wanted to get rid of a standing army and create a less expensive militia instead. His excuse was the unstable international situation in Central Europe and the potential threat posed by Soviet Russia and Germany. None the less, although in 1919 the defence expenditure represented 22 per cent of the state budget it steadily declined and stabilized at about 14 per cent from 1924 to 1939. Masaryk maintained a large central establishment with an oversize General Staff headed by French general officers, largely on French advice. However, the army did not have it all its own way. With the exception of General Husak, all the ministers were civilians. Most of the commanding officers were former Legion members, loyal to Masaryk personally. With hindsight, democracy in Czechoslovakia did not need such a large defence establishment in peacetime and should perhaps have kept an army in proportion to those of its neighbours.

Fortunately for Czechoslovakia, its social fabric did not disintegrate after the war and civilized existence was possible even in the extraordinary postwar circumstances. In turn relative continuity was due to the solidity and efficiency of the administration inherited from the Habsburg Monarchy. However justified criticism of it might have been before independence, it was largely responsible for the survival of the Austrian liberal system and subsequently for the flowering of Czechoslovak democracy within this framework. Thus, what kept Masaryk continuously in power for some 17 years was most probably the administration. At first he wanted to make local government more 'democratic'. Its structural changes were included in the constitution. The country was to be divided into new administrative units (*zupy*), organized rather like French *departements*. The district chief administrator (*hetman*) was like a French prefect, appointed by the government, with great powers. The district councils were elected, but had consultative powers only, rather like the French *conseils generaux* under the Third Republic. The communal administration was structured along British lines. In 1920 the Local Government Reform Act came into force, but this was never really implemented. By 1927 a new law formally re-established the Austrian type of administration, which in any case was still in force. This time it applied to the whole of Czechoslovakia. The country was divided into four *Lands* and together with the district subdivisions was run by professional civil servants under the guidance of the Ministry of the Interior. *Land* and district commissions with consultative powers were put under the strict supervision of *land* presidents and district hetmans. This measure was necessary as the extreme left and right had tried to subvert, or at least sabotage the working of such bodies at these

administrative levels. Only the communes remained self-governing, though their mayors were subject to confirmation from the district professionals, the *hetmans*. This old administrative arrangement had proved so effective under the Habsburg Monarchy that even Masaryk was forced to return to it.

Like his imperial predecessors the president not only appointed all civil servants, general officers included, but also had them swear allegiance to himself as Head of State. Whenever necessary, as in 1920 or 1926, Masaryk directed them in person. Not surprisingly he modified the administrative structure only very slightly, mainly to fit peacetime conditions in the newly created state. The proverbially heavy-handed and bureaucratic Austrian central government became incredibly light and efficient. The personnel of the state administration was practically the same as of old. Otherwise the democratic rights of citizens were fully guaranteed and respected, although several of these freedoms had to be limited by law. Thus private property was such a fundamental right and as such inviolable except by law (e.g. the Land Reform Act). The judicial system was independent and acted as conciliator between the state and the citizens. The State Court set up in 1923 had three judges to run it and depended financially on the Supreme Court.

There were two serious flaws in this otherwise very liberal constitution. It created an artificial nationality – Czechoslovak – as opposed to the citizenship, ignoring the equitable Pittsburgh Agreement which recognized a separate Slovak nationality. In addition, the constitution was linked too much to Masaryk's personality. With all this power Masaryk could have been an enlightened despot, had he not been a convinced democrat. He scrupulously respected the opinions of his opponents and resolutely refused to outlaw the Communist Party; nor did he proceed legally against Henlein, whom the Czech nationalists accused of high treason for his dealings with Hitler. The unresolved question was what would his successors do with the system.

5.2 Economic developments

The entire economy benefitted most from the political and administrative stability of democratic Czechoslovakia. It attracted foreign investors throughout its existence. As early as 1919 a currency reform put the koruna out of the Austrian banking system and the country avoided the postwar hyperinflation common in the rest of Central Europe. Industrial production began to grow only to be halted by a partial recession in 1921. Though the country was in the grip of a recession between 1921 and 1923, political and social upheavals were avoided. None the less Slovakia continued to suffer from the recession until 1924, when the Czech provinces were already experiencing economic growth. Though the economy began to expand quickly, Czech industrial products were not competitive enough in foreign markets because of excessive social costs and the ease with which production could be stopped by industrial unrest. The country was flooded with cheap agricultural produce and domestic agricultural production was threatened with bankruptcy.

The economy finally pulled out of recession in 1921–3 and unemployment dropped dramatically from 207,000 in 1923 to 49,400 in 1925. Czechoslovak

agriculture was protected by legislation, which was not perhaps the best means of keeping it competitive. However, the international competitiveness of industry was restored by prudent social legislation – the right to strike was re-stated, but the right to work of non-strikers was also enforced. Social insurance and unemployment benefits were cut to affordable proportions.

However, because of its extensive exports, especially in armaments, the economy was sensitive to international trends. In 1929 the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange hit it badly and the world depression that followed caused grave economic and political difficulties. Economic recovery started in 1933, but was slow and another recession hit the country in 1937. Unemployment, which peaked in 1933 (738,300), was relatively high throughout the 1930s. In the 1920s it practically did not exist: in 1928 there were 36,600 unemployed in receipt of state benefits. However, despite this erratic economic progress capitalist Czechoslovakia was throughout the years 1918–39 a relative industrial giant. It was 8th in the league of developed industrialized countries and had the highest standard of living in Central Europe. Its greatest achievement was in the sphere of social security, which probably contributed most of all to the political and economic stability of the country and the maintenance of a relatively high standard of living.

5.3 Electoral results and the formation of coalitions

The first national coalition was rather weak politically because the political differences between the government parties soon became apparent. So, in July 1919, Masaryk took advantage of a local elections, in which the Social Democrats came top (30 per cent) with the Agrarians and National Socialists, polling 20 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. Bending the as yet unwritten rules, he had parliamentary representation adjusted. Since the National Democrats managed only some 8 per cent of the vote, the president felt justified in dismissing Kramar and replacing him with Tusar, the Social Democratic leader. In the elections of April 1920, shortly after the new constitution had come into force, the Social Democrats again emerged as the strongest party and Tusar, was reappointed as prime minister. Though the Social Democrats polled some 26 per cent of the vote, they were by now hopelessly divided. The discredited Smeral led a vociferous majority faction, which launched a campaign to join the Bolshevik-dominated Communist International. Prime Minister Tusar was in fact a minority leader. However the Social Democratic–Agrarian, Red–Green coalition had a comfortable majority. By now the so-called ‘Group of Five’ (Bechyne, Stribrny, Svehla, Rasin and Sramek) had a working relationship and met regularly to coordinate their policies under Masaryk’s direction. The National Democrats, now led by Rasin, polled only 6 per cent, the National Socialists 8 per cent, the Agrarians 9 per cent and Sramek’s People’s Party 11 per cent. The Slovak Club completed the majority. However, within four months the ‘communist’ left provoked the first political crisis in Czechoslovakia.

The president’s choice of the next prime minister was his wartime collaborator and foreign minister, Benes. The president could not recall Tusar, for his faction,

though retaining the Social Democratic label and parliamentary seats, was clearly too weakened politically to retain the premiership. In the meantime Benes had become leader of the National Socialist Party, despite the fact that the rest of his large family was entrenched in the Social Democratic Party. He had remained foreign minister throughout the emergency and now Masaryk offered him a chance to prove his considerable talent and skills in domestic politics. It was thought that after the split with the communists the right-wing Social Democratic rank-and-file would follow Benes' example. This was a risky calculation in 1921, but proved justified at least in Prague in 1923. In the city government elections the National Socialists emerged as the second largest party (24 per cent), while the Social Democrats polled only 9 per cent. In the meantime Benes had tried unsuccessfully to ease out Stribrny who represented the party on the coordinating body of Five.

As a result the government he formed did not command the necessary majority in the National Assembly and Masaryk had to turn to someone else. Benes returned to foreign affairs, staying out of the domestic rough and tumble until 1935. So the Agrarian leader, Svehla, was given a chance to form a government. After the 1920 crisis public opinion swung round against the turbulent left. People wanted peace and order. The postwar recession was over and there were signs of an economic boom coming. Svehla's leadership offered stability and the Agrarian Party's electoral influence was rising. In 1924 this was confirmed in the legislative election in Ruthenia: various peasant formations did well, while the local Social Democrats did badly (8 per cent). (Notably, the Communist Party polled almost 40 per cent in this underdeveloped province.) Svehla's broad 'all-national' alliance of the right and the left continued until November 1925. By then Masaryk knew that his gamble with Svehla had paid off. The Agrarian Party won the election and emerged as the largest Czech party (14 per cent). Henceforth the Agrarians would lead the coalition governments until the international crisis in September 1938. Svehla's influence also stretched beyond the coalition. In 1922 he skilfully enlarged the coalition with another party, the Trade and Business Party. So in 1925 Svehla's coalition controlled 57 per cent of the Assembly, but what proved de-stabilizing was the excellent Communist performance – they achieved 13 per cent in the 1925 election.

In October 1926 Svehla resumed as premier and remained at the head of the enlarged coalition until 1929. However, the Group of Five was the most notable casualty of this turbulent year. Henceforth the coalition consisted of eight centre-right parties, without the Social Democrats and the National Socialists. In 1926 Prime Minister Svehla was the only Agrarian leader trusted by the president, and capable of steering the country through this period when the extreme left was still challenging the state. For a few years afterwards the Agrarians produced several leaders to succeed Svehla. Though after 1926 Masaryk's tight hold on the system loosened, there was no real need for his active direction, because the system was running on its own. Thus Masaryk wisely kept in the background. Needless to say he was consulted on all the important questions of the day and his opinions were heeded, but by this time both the political system and the economy were stabilized

and the population began to reap the fruit of this seven-year 'austerity' process. Svehla's great success was the inclusion in the enlarged coalition of the German Agrarians and the Christian Democrats, with the Slovak People's Party joining in 1927. The political isolation of the extreme left was complete. No other party wanted any dealings with it. It began to split into rival factions and was purged during Stalin's 'New Way'. Svehla also had time to reform the administration (Local Government Act 1927) and the electoral law in an attempt to reduce the proliferation of parties.

In 1928 he had the satisfaction of seeing that all these changes work in the desired way. In the local government election of that year the Communist vote fell to 12 per cent and that of the Agrarians reached a peak of 15 per cent. The other democratic parties did well too – only the National Democrats continued to decline (4 per cent). Both German Nazis (*Deutsche nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*) and Czech fascists remained marginal.

Table 4.3 Czechoslovakia: electoral results, 1920–35

	20.04.20		25.11.25		27.10.29	19.05.35
	%	Seats	%	Seats	Seats	Seats
National Democrats	6.4	19	4.2	13	15	17
Business Party	2.0	6	4.2	13	12	17
People's Party	11.5	33	10.2	31	25	22
Agrarians	10.0	28	14.3	35	46	46
National Socialists	8.3	24	9.0	28	32	28
Social Democrats	26.2	74	9.3	29	39	38
Social Centralists	1.0	3				
Slovak People's Party	4.0	12	7.2	23	19	22
Communists			13.8	41	30	30
Slovak National Party					1	
Fascists						6
DNSAP/German National Party	5.4	15				
German National Party			3.6	10	7	
DNSAP			2.5	7	8	
Christian-Social Party	3.5	10	4.6	13	14	6
Association of Agrarians	4.0	11	8.4	24	12	5
German Social Democrats	11.4	31	6.1	17	21	11
German Dem. Freedom Party	1.7	5				
Zisper German Party					1	
German Association for Leb. and Econ.					4	
Sudeten Germans Party						44
Christian Social Party	2.3	5	1.5	4	9	9
Agrarians	0.4	1	0.5	1	1	
Social Democrats	1.8	4				
Polish and Jewish Parties			0.4	1	4	
Others						
Seats total		281		290	300	301

Source: Sternberger and Vogel (1969: vol. 2, 1285).

5.4 International interactions

Despite international endorsement Czechoslovakia found itself dangerously isolated in the international community. Initial conflicts estranged it from democratic Germany and Austria; as a result of armed clashes Hungary and Poland kept aloof, waiting for another opportunity to square their accounts with this protégé of the Western Allies. In fact from 1920 Czechoslovakia's security rested solely on France's power and influence. All neighbours were hostile towards it – largely because of ethnic problems – and jealous of its relative economic prosperity.

The power vacuum in the area created by the war, caused by the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy and the decisive weakening of Germany and Russia, was filled by Czechoslovakia and the other succession states. France stabilized the balance of power in the area with a system of alliances based on the Versailles settlement. Czechoslovakia became the pivot of a French buffer belt which was clearly directed at Germany and Soviet Russia. In 1924 Czechoslovakia concluded a political and military treaty with France which was supplemented by the Little Entente, formed by Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. The fatal flaw of this system was that France was territorially separated from its allies by Germany. Therefore she could not directly aid her 'little allies', if either Russia or Germany challenged them. Moreover by 1938, when the Sudeten German problem became acute, the Franco-Czech alliance was merely a piece of paper, a legacy of the First World War. Benes saw this brutal reality clearly and tried several times to strike a bargain with Germany – even with Hitler when he became chancellor. He even recognized the USSR in 1934 and in 1935, after France, he too concluded a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance with Soviet Russia to counterbalance the rising power of Germany.

6 Actions and reactions during the crisis

6.1 The parliamentary arena

The election of 1929 confirmed the trends observed in the local elections of the previous year. The Agrarians' share of the vote rose to 15 per cent and that of the Communists fell to 10 per cent. The bulk of the Communist vote came from Ruthenia and Slovakia and they suffered a real set-back in Moravia. Both the Social Democrats (13 per cent) and the National Socialists (10 per cent), as well as the National Democrats (5 per cent), slightly increased their shares and as a consequence were invited to rejoin the ruling coalition. Only the People's Party declined (8 per cent), while the Traders and Businessmen held their own (4 per cent). Hlinka's People's Party maintained its position in Slovakia (6 per cent). The German Social Democrats advanced slightly (7 per cent) as well as the German Christian Democrats (5 per cent). The German nationalists (8 per cent) re-grouped, but the Nazis failed again to attract the Germans despite their radicalism (3 per cent). Udrzal, who took over as prime minister from Svehla in February 1929, was an experienced and moderate agrarian politician. After the election, as the world recession began to bite he formed the broadest coalition so

far, which was joined by both the Czech and the German Social Democrats. However, Hlinka's Slovak autonomists left after 1929. On 5 May 1930 the subject of Slovak autonomy was again raised in the National Assembly and Hlinka was now determined to obtain it. For the 1935 election the HSLS united with all the autonomist parties and obtained only 7 per cent of the vote. Despite such disappointments and with Slovakia in the grip of a depression, autonomist progress became triumphant during the last three years of the republic. After the Munich crisis the autonomists obtained a provincial government from Prague. Though Hlinka died his successors persuaded all the Slovak parties to establish a separate Slovak Diet. In December 1938 the united party of National Unity had won the Diet election handsomely, with Slovak Communists as the only opposition. Thus Slovakia had finally achieved its autonomy in a democratic way.

Throughout his term of office Udrzal had to control widespread social disturbances following the wave of unemployment, which rose from 105,000 in 1930 to 554,000 in 1932. Numerous emergency measures were used to maintain public order, but failed to produce improvements. In October 1932, Udrzal, who shrank from initiating tougher public order legislation, resigned. His successor, Malypetr, was speaker of the National Assembly and a great consensus seeker; he could propose – and get through parliament – any legislation to check public unrest during the most serious recession experienced by the Republic (unemployment peaked in 1933 and thereafter declined). In June 1933 his government was given special powers to rule by decree. At the same time unemployment benefits had to be cut as they threatened to increase the budget deficit intolerably. A year later the state-run health, pension and invalidity insurance schemes were trimmed. To check communist incitement against these and similar unpopular measures, the government empowered the police to pursue agitators. One of the remedial measures tried in Prague was the use of the unemployed for public works in the city. The unemployed would work for three days a week and received a full week's wages. None the less, communist agitators organized frequent strikes, particularly in 1934, protesting against the lack of contracts, social insurance and fixed working hours in these projects. Once again the President tested the strength of the coalition electorally and called a general election before the statutory term, on 19 May 1935. A week later, the local government election in the provinces completed this extensive and democratic consultation of the people.

These last free elections carried out in May 1935 produced several surprises. They were also marked by tighter electoral pacts which effectively reduced the numbers of competing parties. Despite the violence of their campaigns, the Communists failed to improve their 10 per cent share, while the Czech fascists finally entered the Assembly with 6 seats (2 per cent). For the first time since the split in 1921 the Social Democrats polled more votes (13 per cent) than the Communists. Otherwise the coalition parties held their own: the Agrarians 13 per cent, the National Socialists 9 per cent, the People's Party 7 per cent and the Traders and Business Party 5 per cent. The National Democrats, who went into the election combined with other right-wing groups under the label National Unity, slightly improved their vote, to 6 per cent. A threatening surprise was that the new German party, the Sudetendeutsche Partei, emerged as the single largest party with 15 per cent. All the

three German coalition parties lost heavily. The second surprise was the good performance of the Slovak Autonomy Bloc (7 per cent); moreover, this good national performance was amplified in the provincial elections in which it polled 29 per cent, becoming by far the largest political organization in Slovakia. By comparison, Slovak Agrarians polled only 19 per cent. This second provincial election emphasized the parties' regionalization. The coalition, under pressure from abroad, turned its attention from the enfeebled communists to the Sudeten German Party and the problems it raised. However, in November 1935 the nationalist National Democrats left the coalition and Malypetr felt obliged to resign. His successor, Hodza, was thought to be an ideal prime minister to solve the numerous minority problems since he was a Slovak and also possessed international experience.

Before anything could be done in this respect Czechoslovakia was plunged into a presidential crisis. On 24 May 1935 Masaryk was re-elected president with the largest majority ever, but in December 1935 he resigned for health reasons. In his last years of presidency Masaryk hardly intervened in political life. Unfortunately, on retirement he had his last fling at showing his unabated influence. A curious political situation developed around this presidential election. The Agrarian Party, as the most important Czech party, wanted to put forward its own candidate for president. However, the outgoing president had already advanced his own nominee, Benes – but his party was floundering, he had spent all his political life in foreign affairs and, judging from his only domestic political test as prime minister in 1921, he was not the soundest candidate. It was probably the great moral prestige of the dying president that forced Benes on the reluctant politicians. To this should be added Agrarian clumsiness. Their candidate, Nemeč, was also sponsored by the Sudetendeutsche Partei, which meant that even the Czech communists voted for Benes. On 19 December 1935 he was elected by a majority of 340 votes.

It was thought that Benes would leave domestic politics alone to the reappointed Hodza, and for a time it seemed that it would be so. However, the German question began to dominate both internal and international politics. As Henlein and Hitler internationalized this problem, many saw a unique chance for the newly elected president to prove himself by solving this problem peacefully. By then unfortunately Benes as an expert in foreign affairs was a spent force, for he no longer commanded the support of either the French radicals or the British Conservatives now in power, nor of democratic public opinion. Moreover, like Western democratic leaders he misjudged Hitler's real objectives which were the destruction of Czechoslovakia and not the solution of the Sudeten problem. Thus, he proved to be an obstacle to peaceful solutions. None the less, despite the prolonged domestic and international crises the democratic government continued until 22 September 1938, when Benes replaced Hodza with another emergency cabinet headed by General Syrový. The same international pressures, from France and Britain, which had brought down Hodza now forced Benes' resignation on 5 October 1938. In May 1938 the categorical French refusal to go to war on his behalf broke him morally and the national

reaction to his 'capitulation' had a debilitating physical effect on the President. Benes left for exile and on 30 November 1938 a non-party judge, Hacha, was freely and constitutionally elected his successor. Benes' departure precipitated overdue reform: real autonomy in Slovakia. Up to its end on 15 March 1939 Czechoslovakia remained the most stable regime in Central Europe.

7 Conclusion

It can be said that without Masaryk there would not have been a strong liberal democratic system in Czechoslovakia, but probably something resembling the muddled old Czech provinces under the Habsburgs. But, as became evident with his successor Benes, no one else could continue to run the system the same way. Without Masaryk the country might have evolved into an authoritarian system of the kind that Czechoslovakia's neighbours had experienced in this period. Throughout the years leading up to the 1925 election, and especially after Benes' failure to form a government, Masaryk's influence began to wane. It is still unclear what enabled him to stay in power for some 17 years without losing prestige and popularity. His influence over the media (radio and press) was unrivalled, but not exclusive. The 'caucus theory', namely the substitution of his 'brains trust', the group of Five or Eight, and other personal arrangements, for interparty bargaining and negotiations, does not explain his political longevity either.

By 1939, with the evaporation of French power and influence and the Little Entente alliance worth nothing, Czechoslovakia as a unitary multinational state could not survive. The Sudeten Germans were back in power and the Czechs back within German hegemony. Democracy weakened by ethnic conflicts and international bullying perished with the state.

5

Estonia: Crisis and 'Pre-Emptive' Authoritarianism

Toomas Varrak

1 General background

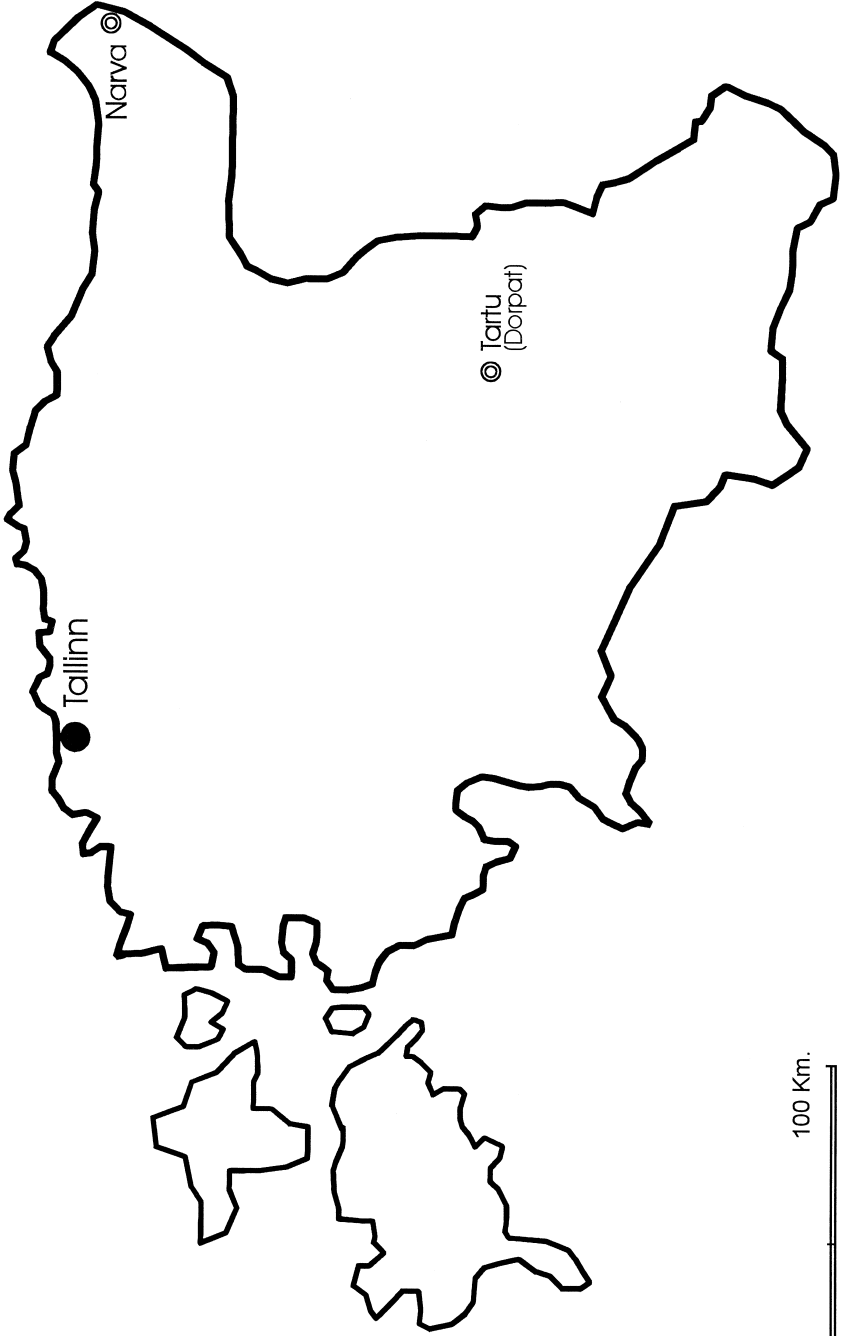
1.1 Pre-war characteristics

For Estonia the First World War ended with the War of Independence (1918–20) and the Tartu Peace Treaty of 2 February 1920, under which Russia recognized Estonian independence. Like many other European states, Estonia inherited a ruined economy, disrupted social relations and political uncertainty from the war. Before the war Estonia had been one of the most developed regions of Imperial Russia. It had a solid industrial base which included machine-building, cellulose, paper and textile industries. Metal-working had also developed in the prewar industrial period of growth. The production capacity of these industries widely exceeded the needs of the local market. Tallinn was a Russian naval fortress and in 1912–15 three shipyards and shipyard plants had been built there. This industrial growth created a demand for extra labour which was met by immigration from Russia. This changed the ethnic composition of the Tallinn population, and would have an influence on events during the revolutionary year 1917.

Despite industrialization, prewar Estonia was still a largely agricultural society: 68 per cent of its population was employed in that sector. Although production was relatively high, agriculture was characterized by complex socioeconomic relations. The roots of this dated back to the thirteenth century, when Estonia became a part of the German expansion to the east. The country was conquered and the land gradually taken over by the church and German knights. Until serfdom was abolished in the nineteenth century Estonian peasants became serfs of the Baltic-German nobility. In the second half of the nineteenth century the peasants started to purchase their holdings from the landlords. Two branches of agriculture developed: the Baltic-German large-scale farming on the estates and the Estonian peasants with small holdings. At the beginning of the First World War the peasants' landed property was not redeemed, somewhat over 80 per cent of the holdings had been purchased and most new owners were still in debt.

Large-scale farming was practised on 1100 estates and was generally based on wage labour. But some semi-feudal labour relations continued as some manorial

Estonia



duties still existed. Despite urbanization and rapid industrial development, which favoured the influx of a non-Estonian labour force, the bulk of the population lived in the countryside and was ethnically homogeneous. The socially dominant Baltic-Germans accounted for only 3.5 per cent of the population. With the era of Russification – the merging of the Baltic countries closer into the administrative and juridical system of Russia after 1880 – the relative numbers of Baltic-Germans started to diminish. The forced industrial development, especially the development of the war industry, paved the way for further Russian immigration. Historically, only a fraction of the Russian population had lived on the eastern border of Estonia. They had settled there to escape religious persecution during the seventeenth century. Now a new wave of immigration occurred, leading to a rough equalization of the Russian and German share of the urban population. In 1913 the urban population was 69 per cent Estonian, 12 per cent Russian and 11 per cent German. Due to the relative decline in the German population, the growth of self-consciousness among the Estonian population and the rapid immigration of Russians to the towns, the ruling Baltic-German nobility felt its position threatened and looked for policies that would help to consolidate their social and political power. After the 1905 revolution an attempt was made to stop the erosion of that power by bringing some 20,000 German peasants from Central Russia to Estonia. However, this measure did not solve the problems – in fact, it only exacerbated existing antagonisms.

As their social position improved, the Estonians started to play a more significant role in the life of the towns. Whereas in 1871 they owned, for example, 4.4 per cent of all the real estates in Tallinn (the biggest town and later the capital of Estonia), the situation had totally changed by the prewar years. Among the wealthy real estate owners there were almost as many people of Estonian descent as of German origin (42 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively), but among smallholders Estonians dominated (75–88 per cent depending on the tax group). In the Russian community owners made up 4–16 per cent depending on tax group.

Politically, prewar Estonian society was on a quite primitive level. Up to the 1905–7 Revolution public political activities (if this term can be used at all in the autocratic Russian Empire) could find an expression only in different newspapers' editorials on economic, social and cultural problems. Bearing in mind the later development of parties, *Postimees* (*Courier*), founded in 1886 in Tartu and the Tallinn *Teataja* (*Herald*), first published in 1901 were particularly important. *Postimees* represented national and ethnic attitudes, and *Teataja* was a radical paper scrutinizing social problems. The editor of the former was J. Tónisson and of the latter K. Päts, both of whom would later to become influential statesmen. Parties were first formed in the course of the 1905 Revolution. Discounting the illegal activities of the Russian Social Democrats in Estonia, the first parties here were the Estonian Progressive People's Party (under Tónisson's leadership) in the university town of Tartu, and the Estonian Social Democratic Union (attracting people from *Teataja* circles) in industrial Tallinn. Both parties emphasized democratic principles and their platforms dealt

Table 5.1 Estonia: class structure, 1934

Population (millions)	1.1
Employment rate	62.9
Rate of agrarian employment	64
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	
Family farms	52.3
Agrarian proletariat	11.3
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	0.8
Old middle class	4.2
New middle class	6.6
Proletariat	18.1
Sub-proletariat	6.5
Total	99.8

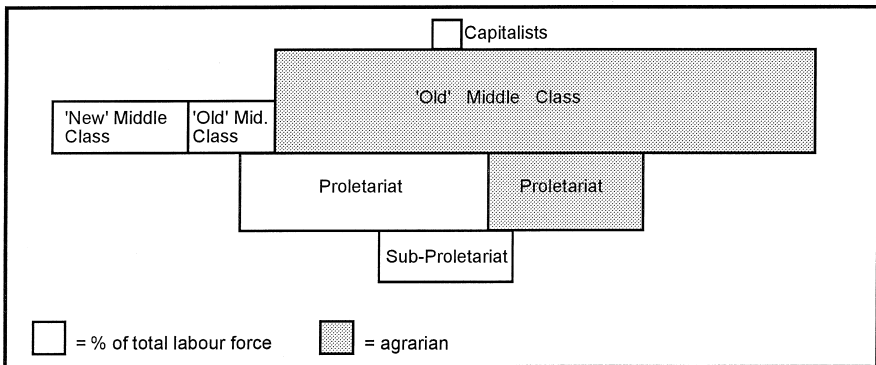
Sources: Fischer (ed.) (1987: 733, 744f.); *Eesti arvudes 1920–1935* (1937: 20).

extensively with social, economic and political issues. While Tartu was more idealistic, emphasizing law-and-order attitudes, Tallinn supported radical realism, demanding far-reaching reforms. Around the same time, the Baltic-German aristocracy formed the Baltic Constitutional Party with its centre in Riga (Latvia), and a branch in Tartu.

1.2. The impact of the war

The First World War had a considerable impact on the structure of Estonian society. Although the country was not directly damaged by the war, the proximity of the front affected economic and social relations. Mobilization took 100,000 young men, about 10 per cent of the population. The decline in

Figure 5.1 Estonia: class structure, 1934



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 5.1.

the labour force caused a fall both in output and income, and increasing immigration from the Russian hinterland. The problems were less pressing for industry where they were relatively easy to solve by recruiting immigrant labour. But agriculture suffered seriously from the lack of manpower because nearly 75 per cent of those mobilized had come from the countryside. The war caused growing shortages of foodstuffs and other essential commodities as well as inflated prices. Social tensions grew and were further aggravated by the great losses at the front: it was estimated that 12 per cent of the drafted men were killed and 19 per cent wounded or disabled (Raun 1987: 95). In February 1917 the economic disruptions and social tensions caused by the war contributed to the Revolution in Russia. The disintegration of the old regime gave an added impetus to national minorities and their fight for autonomy. On 30 March 1917, the provisional government in Russia adopted a law concerning the reorganization of the local administration in the Baltic countries. First Estonia, formerly divided between two provinces, was united into one administrative unit. Second, a representative body, the Estonian Diet and its executive, was established. The leader of the latter was K. Päts. Third, the Provincial Commissioner was appointed to represent the central power. The earlier Baltic-German institutions were abolished.

In the course of this struggle a new party system emerged in Estonia. Eight parties won seats at the elections of the first Diet in May 1917: Bolsheviks (5), Social Democrats (9), Socialist Revolutionaries (8), Labour Party (11), Estonian Progressive People's Party (7), Radical Democrats (4), Agrarian League (13), German and Swedish minorities' Party (2). At the outset the Diet supported the idea that Estonia should be an autonomous part of democratic Russian federation. But the greater the danger of occupation by the advancing German forces became, the more the idea of independence as a political counter-measure to this, took root in the Diet. A delegation was formed and sent to Western capitals to assess the attitude of the Entente states on this issue. Internally, however, the Soviets were slowly taking an upper hand in the Russian Provisional government and Estonian local authorities consolidating their power on the basis of military force. They were very much under the influence of radical elements in Russia, especially those at the bigger industrial centres that were also military bases. A considerable part of Soviet membership consisted of the non-Estonian population. This was the case with the Tallinn Soviet, where three-quarters of the membership were non-indigenous. In the late summer, the elections for local authorities were a considerable success for the Bolsheviks. At the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly in November, the number of votes for the Bolsheviks was even bigger at 40.2 per cent. All in all, the left polled 50.1 per cent. The shift to the radical left was, however, only one side of the political coin. Despite the active opposition of the Bolshevik Soviets, the executive of the Estonian Diet obtained the permission of the Russian Provisional government to assemble soldiers of Estonian nationality in Estonia. In mid-June the first congress of the Estonian military took place. Representing over 50,000 men the congress was carried by the moderate national spirit that

still prevailed when the first Estonian regiment was formed. The work of the Diet also proved the growth and popularity of the idea of independence. In September, when Riga had been seized by the Germans, Estonian statehood and the possibility of a Northern Union, i.e., forming a larger constellation of neutral states in the Baltics and Scandinavia, became a serious issues on its agenda.

The final factor to tip the balance for independence was the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917. At Tónisson's proposal the Diet assumed the highest authority in the country. Although the Diet was dispelled by the Soviets and they managed to consolidate their power for a couple of months, this was only a brief interlude. In February 1918 advancing German troops occupied the whole country, expelled the Soviets and imposed their own rule. The executive organs of the Diet (which had been tolerated as neutral at first) were dissolved. Just before the occupation, however, a special sub-group of the Diet – the Salvation Committee – had published the 'Manifesto of Independence'.

The German military authorities introduced harsh measures to enforce control over the country. Strict censorship was established, German was proclaimed the administrative and educational language. The economic situation deteriorated rapidly as the military authorities confiscated industrial equipment, foodstuffs, timber, textiles and ammunition and shipped it to Germany. Even before the German looting Russian authorities had already evacuated the larger industrial enterprises, and had transferred the capital of Estonian private banks to Moscow and St Petersburg. All this caused difficulties for the economy and brought production to a standstill. By the end of 1918 the industrial workforce had shrunk to a quarter of its prewar size. The political result of the industrial decline was a decrease in Bolshevik influence as the greater part of Russian troops and immigrants had left Estonia. Unemployment in towns was very high due to the German actions, and there was a real danger of famine. On the other hand the Baltic-German section of the population found the situation sympathetic to its political aims of linking Estonia to Germany. The Land Assembly made up of the hand-picked representatives of the *stands* convened to legitimize the decision of the Baltic-German nobility about Estonia's secession from Russia. Although the scheme failed due to the revolution in Germany, it managed to sour internal Estonian-German relations still further.

The revolution that broke out in Germany in November 1919 undermined the position of the occupying forces in Estonia. On 12 November the Estonian Provisional government reconvened and immediately faced a complicated situation: the German army was pulling out, leaving the country defenceless against invading Russian troops. However, the Estonian Provisional government succeeded in consolidating its power, organized an effective defence and forced the enemy to retreat behind the Estonian border. The war was still going on when the democratic elections to the Constituent Assembly were carried out, with 80 per cent of the electorate participating. Electoral activity had grown considerably compared to the previous elections. The results showed that centre

and leftist parties still dominated Estonian politics. One major change was the rise of the Socialists to 33.3 per cent, replacing the Bolsheviks as the leading party of the left.

2 Socio-economic conditions

After the peace treaty in Tartu, the economic recovery quickly gained momentum with the availability of credit granted from the Bank of Estonia. The 15 million gold rubles Estonia had obtained from the Soviets on the basis of the peace treaty supported an expansionary policy. The unbalanced growth, however, soon caused a deficit in foreign trade and the economy got into serious difficulties. The problems were aggravated by initial miscalculations of demand. The internal market was too small to absorb the production of large-scale industry that had been established in tsarist times and neither the finished products nor the semi-manufactured goods met the needs of the local consumers. The Russian market, on the other hand, had only limited purchasing power and, as a state monopoly, was subject to strict controls. Estonia's weak economic situation did not allow for credits to such customers and finally the prices of Estonian goods were not competitive in Western markets.

Although in 1920–3 much attention was turned to the revival of industry, far bigger changes occurred in agriculture. In October 1919 the Constituent Assembly passed an agrarian reform law which expropriated 97 per cent of the big estates. On foreign policy considerations, the issue of compensation was postponed until a law was enacted, in 1926, to pay the former Baltic-German landowners for their nationalized property. All in all, 54,000 small holdings were created on the expropriated lands. Preference in distributing the land was given to those who had fought in the war for independence.

The creation of new farms brought about a favourable investment climate and helped the restructuring of the Estonian economy. It also boosted markets for the timber industry, for building materials and for agricultural appliances. At the same time the demand for foodstuffs in towns stimulated production increases. Thus in 1920–2 the acreage under grain crops increased 14 per cent and the number of milk-cows surpassed the prewar level in 1924. There were, however, difficulties to overcome as the agricultural sector as well as industry had to reorient itself to western markets. These difficulties were felt for some time and influenced both the pace of structural change as well as competitiveness. The main cause of difficulties was, of course, the lack of financial resources. Private banks were weak and the credits of the Bank of Estonia to agriculture were limited (5.5 per cent of the total volume) as the bank could not give long-term loans.

In the early 1920s the industrial bias of the economic policy was based on the expansionary monetary policy of the Bank of Estonia and led to financial difficulties in 1923. A crop failure made these difficulties even more acute. The gold reserve of the Bank of Estonia had fallen from 15 million to 2.5 million gold rubles. The crisis resulted in a change of the government. A new economic

policy attempted to cut credits for industry, curb state expenses and raise customs duties on imports. All this helped to stabilize the situation by the end of 1924. At the same time it had an effect on the restructuring of industry, its adjustment to the needs of the domestic market. This change was made according to the plans of the new-born State Economic Council. The economic policy was directed toward a stronger integration of different branches of industry. New investments were directed into power engineering, cellulose, building-materials and agricultural products processing industries. At the same time the role of the former large-scale enterprises in the chemical, metal-processing and textile industries was reduced. Moderate economic growth, better incomes and improved working conditions could be noticed as a result of these policies by the second half of the 1920s. The average wages grew by between 22 and 24 per cent.

In the 1920s great changes took place in culture and social services, too. The social conditions of the workers improved compared to the pre-independence-time especially in the fields of social security, labour protection and trade union rights. Social security laws covered a wider group of employees and, as the legislation itself was improved, health care and education became better. One important measure was the law concerning minorities adopted in 1925. This recognized national groups that consisted of at least 3000 people and gave them a right to cultural autonomy. Organized minorities could establish their own executive boards and councils of culture to further their objectives. The activity of organizations for cultural autonomy was supported by public funding.

Early signs of the 1929 world crisis became evident in Estonia in 1927. The prices of timber and agricultural products dropped. In 1930 the crisis spread to industry and total output decreased by about one-third. In February 1933 there were registered 30,000 unemployed at the labour exchange. (At the time only about 25,000 people could be employed in large-scale industry.) The recorded unemployment, however, did not include the agrarian unemployed. The major problem for agriculture by this time was not so much the slump but debt. Although agricultural output did not decrease in the crisis years, prices fell by half. For a number of farms – with a total debt of about 100 million kroon (crowns) – the situation became untenable. Unable to pay off their debts, thousands of farms were auctioned.

3 Intermediary structures

According to the Constitution adopted on 15 June 1920, Estonia was a parliamentary republic with the highest authority vested in the State Assembly. The head of the State was the State Elder whose powers were combined with that of the prime minister. The State Elder was dependent on the confidence of the State Assembly, which was elected for three years. The people exercised their right through elections and the citizen's legislative initiative. With minor adjustments

Table 5.2 Estonia: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	
Population (thousands)			1068	1087	1102	1111	1116	1117	1117	1116	1116	1116	1116	1116	1118	1122	1124	1126					
IND PROD (m. KR)			298	363	36.7	42.8	43.6	44.8	44.8	51.7	52	52	52.7	49	42.7	46.6	54.6	60.9					
COST (1913=100)	100		85	91	102	94	107	106	105	112	117	117	104	100	94	88	87	88					
Unemployment (thousands)						11			20	21	21	22	25	23									
B. o. Trade (m. KR)			-2.6	-23.2	-8.6	-39.2	-3.2	0.1	0.6	9.4	-4.3												
B. o. P. (m. KR)									1.3		-7	-3.3	2.8	4.4	5.3	-4	-2.3	4.3					
Tot. Indebtedness (m. KR)									112.5	103.5	115.4	115.9	126.5	132.2	122.4	124.9							
Lost working days (millions)			7.9	42.2	10.3	4.8	2.5	1.2	3.1	49.3	6.4	0.3	20	2.1	0.3								
Crisis Indicators																							
Ind. Prod.			100	122	123	144	146	150	173	174	177	164	143	156	183	204							
Cost of Living			100	107	120	111	126	125	124	132	138	122	118	111	104	102	104						
Strikes			100	534	130	61	32	15	39	624	81	4	253	27	4								

Sources: Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 74); Statistisches Reichsamt (1937: 33); *Estonian Economic Yearbook* (1937: 79); *Esti arvudes 1920–1935* (1937: 130, 198, 229).

Note: KR (Kroon) is US\$0.268.

the party system that emerged in spring of 1917 remained unchanged until 1935, although the activities of the parties were curbed by the coup of 12 March 1934. At the elections to the State Assembly in the early 1920s, there were numerous smaller and temporary groups that soon disappeared from the political scene – either by joining bigger parties or by disintegration. In 1923, for example, 26 parties competed for seats in the State Assembly, including parties for demobilized soldiers, house-owners, tenants, eight parties for farmers, four socialist and four nationalistic parties. Ten years later, only nine of these parties remained.

The political results of agrarian reform were also significant. From the Constituent Assembly up to the establishment of the authoritarian regime in 1934, the balance of political forces shifted clearly to the right. One of the main reasons for this was the emergence of a solid middle class in agriculture which was created by land reform. Having become independent farmers, they turned their back on the parties that had carried the land reform through the Constituent Assembly – the democratic left and the centre parties. Soon after the War of Independence the Farmers' Union rose to a dominant position on the right. The communists' opposition to bourgeois independence, and their support for Soviet Russia and the Bolshevik terror, resulted in a decline in their vote. After the long years of war and desolation – and despite all difficulties – there was the prospect of reconstruction and stability. In these conditions the communist policy, based on ideological dogma, held little appeal.

At the present stage of research it is difficult to say much about the social basis of different parties but it is obvious that by the mid-1920s ties between social classes and parties had been strengthened. Ninety per cent of the supporters of the two agrarian parties – the Farmers' Union and the Union of Settlers and Leaseholders – lived in rural areas. The support for the political centre (made up of the Settlers, the Labour Party, the People's Party and the Christian People's Party) was, except for that of the Settlers, mostly urban. In the mid-1920s the urban population represented roughly half of the support for the centre parties but by 1932 the share was roughly two-thirds. In spite of the fact that the ideology of left-wing parties derived from the interests of industrial labour, the greater part of their supporters came from rural communities (Parming 1991: 3, 28). In the years of independence the socialists (the Socialist Workers' Party) was the largest of these parties, with about one-third of the total votes in the mid-1920s. The influence of the communists had considerably decreased; their share of the vote had settled at 6–7 per cent. There have been claims, however, that without their image as a foreign agent the communists could have become the second strongest party after the agrarians (Parming 1991: 3, 32). As for the minorities, the Germans and the Russians were represented by the wealthy members of the respective communities and belonged to the right-wing parties. Their electoral support fluctuated at between 5 and 9 per cent of the vote. No political party in Estonia truly cut across class lines or, in the case of the bourgeois parties, across the rural and urban components of the middle class (Parming 1975: 23).

Table 5.3 Estonia: electoral results, 1919–32

	1919		1920		1923		1926		1929		1932	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Farmers' Union	6.5	8	20.8	21	21.6	23	21.4	23	23.1	24		
Union of Settlers					3.8	4	13.5	14	13.7	14		
Other agrarian parties												
United Agrarian Party	25.1	30	21	22	11.2	12	12.4	13	10.2	10	0.9	42
Labour Party	20.7	25	10.4	10	7.5	8	7.4	8	8.9	9		
People's Party	4.4	5	7.5	7	7.3	8	5.4	5	4.1	4		
Christian People's Party			1.1	1	2.2	2	2.4	2	2.9	3		
Houseowners' Party					1.2	1						
Demobilized Soldiers' Organization					4.5	4						
National Liberal Party					1.3	1						
Organization of Tenants												
National Center Party	33.3	41	17	18	14	15					22.1	23
Social Democratic Party	5.8	7	10.6	11	4.7	5						
Independent Socialist Party												
Socialist Workers' Party							22.8	24	24	25	20.9	22
Communist Party	3.8	4	5.3	5	9.5	10	5.8	6	7.3	6	5.2	5
Minorities' Parties	0.4		5.7	5	7.6	7	5.9	5	5.7	5	9.2	8
Others			0.6		3.6		3				1.9	
Seats total		120		100		100		100		100		100

Source: Mägi (1967: 321, 324).

4 The central political system

Constitutionally the government had wide-ranging powers. In addition to the normal administrative functions the government was the collective commander-in-chief in times of peace as well as the highest administrative organ of the state enterprises and the Estonian Bank. It was still totally dependent on the State Assembly though. The government did not have the right to dissolve the State Assembly, to appeal directly to the people, or to arrange new elections.

The coalition governments were usually unstable as there was no dominant single party in the State Assembly. Between the autumn of 1919 and the autumn of 1932 Estonia had 18 governments. The main reason for the fall of a government was conflict within the State Assembly which led one or another coalition partner to recall its representatives in the government. Often the new government was formed on the basis of the same parties that shared responsibility for

Table 5.4 Estonia: government composition, 1919–33

Date	Prime minister	Parties in Government
5.9.1919	O Strandman	Lab. P.P. Soc.Dem.
11.18.1919	J. Tõnisson	P.P. Lab. Soc.Dem.
7.30.1920	J. Tõnisson	P.P.
10.26.1920	A. Piip	Lab.
6.25.1921	K. Päts	Farm. Lab. Chri.
11.21.1922	J. Kukk	Lab. Farm.
8.2.1923	K. Päts	Farm. P.P. Lab. Chri.
3.26.1924	F. Akel	Chri. Lab. P.P.
12.16.1924	J. Jaakson	P.P. Lab. Chri. Farm. Soc.Dem.
12.15.1925	J. Teemant	Farm. Lab. Settl. Chri. P.P.
7.12.1926	J. Teemant	Farm. Settl. Chri. P.P.
3.4.1927	J. Teemant	Farm. Settl. Chri. P.P.
12.9.1927	J. Tõnisson	P.P. Farm. Settl. Lab.
12.4.1928	A. Rei	Soc.Dem. Chri. Lab. Settl.
7.9.1929	O. Strandman	Lab. Chri. Farm. Settl.
2.12.1931	K. Päts	Farm. P.P. Soc.Dem.
2.19.1932	J. Teemant	Farm. P.P. Lab. Settl.
7.19.1932	K. Einbund	Farm. Settl. N.C.P.
1.9.1932	K. Päts	non-political
5.18.1933	J. Tõnisson	P.P. Settl.
10.21.1933	K. Päts	non-political

Source: Mägi, A. (1967: 322).

Abbreviations (and Translations):

Chri.	Christian People's Party
Lab.	Labour Party
P.P.	People's Party
Soc.Dem.	Social Democrats
Settl.	Union of Settlers and Lease Holders
Farm.	Farmers' Union
N.C.P.	National Centre Party (coalition of P.P., Lab., Chri. in 1932)

the previous one. Thus the Labour Party participated in the government on 12 occasions, the Farmers on 14, the People's Party 11 and the Christian People's Party ten times. Socialists participated in four governments.

The economic difficulties of 1923–24 and success at the election of the Second State Assembly and local elections led the communists to believe in the possibility of an easy take-over by force. But the attempted *coup d'état* on 1 December 1924, failed despite the backing of the Soviet Union. The failure was due to a gross overestimation of the level of support among the workers.

5 The period of crisis

All these factors set the stage for the sociopolitical crisis in Estonia in the first half of the 1930s. This crisis reached its peak in the period between winter 1932 and 12 March 1934. The latter date was the turning-point towards an authoritarian regime. Estonian authoritarianism has been called 'pre-emptive' because its political basis was neither a conservative coup nor a civil war – it developed as a reaction to the presumptive rightist danger (Parming 1975: 5). The latter was supposed to come from the war veterans, whose popular movement had developed into a full-fledged party – the Union of the War Veterans (1929–34). The crisis centred on the constitutional reforms which were meant to strengthen the power of the executive. However, as the following account shows the advent of an authoritarian regime in Estonia in 1934 was not a reaction to a particular event or issue but rather the culmination of several crises – a merging of different events, attitudes and aspirations that together brought the end of democracy.

5.1 The economic arena

The economic crisis (1929–33) was the background to the political crisis. But economic issues cannot be seen as the only cause of the crisis. Rather the economic problems formed a policy area in which the different political forces and personalities interacted, producing conflict.

In 1929–32 the working hours in industry were cut by about a quarter. This meant lower wages and higher unemployment. In the winter of 1932/3 there were at least 45,000 unemployed in Estonia, and employees were hit harder by unemployment than workers. Although the economic difficulties caused by the crisis were felt by all groups, the situation was worst for the urban middle class. The bulk of the the middle class emerged in the independence years. It was made up largely of state and local employees. In contrast to the workers, and the majority of the farmers, the entire social status of this emergent middle class was threatened by the economic crisis.

It was only in February 1932 that the pressure exerted by the crisis on the political forces became obvious. The two governments in power after 1929 had been more stable than the average. In a similar period after 1932 there were five governments which each held office for between 4 and 6 months. All of them were coalitions formed by the centre and right-wing parties, the parties that had

won the 1932 State Assembly elections. One of the main issues that gradually became more and more important was the exchange rate of the Estonian kroon. In 1927–31 over one-third of Estonian exports went to England (which accounted for only 10 per cent of imports). So when the pound sterling left the gold standard in the autumn of 1931 it was a heavy blow to the Estonian foreign currency reserves and aggravated the economic problems. The different interests of agriculture and industry, producers and consumers, exporters and importers clashed violently in the discussion over whether to maintain, or to devalue, the kroon's gold parity. This created new antagonisms between the parties and weakened their internal stability (Marandi 1991: 16). When the kroon was finally devalued in the summer of 1933, it stimulated an economic upturn, but failed to influence the development of the political crisis that fed on the new issues of constitutional reform and the Central Union of War Veterans.

5.2 The political arena

The Central Union of War Veterans was founded as a patriotic association in the summer of 1929. Initially, it did not work for political ends, but this situation changed in 1931 when a politicization of veterans' activities developed at the 2nd Congress of the Union. The constitution of Estonia, perceived as too democratic, was blamed for the political and economic difficulties of the country. According to the veterans, it prevented the formation of an efficient government.

The idea of consolidating executive power and creating a presidency with more extensive powers had been proposed earlier in the Constituent Assembly. It was rejected at that time by a small majority. After the attempted communist *coup d'état* of 1 December 1924 the issue was raised again but no solution was found. At the State Assembly in 1926 the Farmers' Union again suggested reform of the Constitution, but the socialists once more rejected the proposition. In 1929/30 the Agrarians under Päts and the People's Party under Tõnisson put forward a bill concerned with constitutional reform, but this became bogged down in debate and political bureaucracy. Against this background the Central Union of War Veterans decided to make use of a citizens' initiative and put forward their own ideas for reform at their Second Congress. At the time the political crisis was still to come, although the economic problems were obvious. The government then in office was one of the most stable in the short political history of independent Estonia.

The State Assembly was placed in an awkward position after this decision of the veterans. Parties in the State Assembly would be discredited if they allowed a non-parliamentary organization to take a legislative initiative. To avoid this problem two bills on constitutional reform were prepared by different State Assemblies. However, the people voted both projects down – the first with a small majority, the second by two votes to one. At the same time the Central Union of War Veterans prepared their own bill for constitutional reform. It had actually been completed a few months before the first State Assembly proposal, but it was put to a referendum only after both State Assembly proposals had failed in the autumn of

1933. There were claims that the State Assembly would never have introduced its second project if the Veterans had not launched theirs (Marandi 1991: 220). Although it was not the only reason, political tensions increased gradually while constitutional reform was being discussed. In addition to economic difficulties there were acute ideological differences based on antagonisms between democratic and more authoritarian views. There was also an unscrupulous propaganda campaign against both democratic institutions and leading political figures by the Veterans. Several events helped these developments. In January 1932, in line with an earlier law, the state began to pay the Baltic-Germans for their expropriated landed property. In the crisis situation public disapproval of both government and the political parties increased. In 1933 there was also a scandal about the sale of two aging warships to Peru – the government and the military were accused of corruption, weakening the State and even treason. The illegal activities of the communists added to the feeling of insecurity.

On the one hand the lack of constructive cooperation within the State Assembly and the unstable government that resulted and, on the other, the ostensible success of West European authoritarian regimes such as Mussolini's Italy in solving social and economic problems – all seemed to support the Veterans' campaign against the existing constitutional order. This is reflected in the referendum results of October 1933: The Veterans' proposal was endorsed by a large majority (72 per cent). The Veterans' constitution contained several provisions for consolidating the power of the executive branch of government. The newly created institution of the presidency was provided with a wide range of powers which decreased popular control over government and made the executive virtually independent of the State Assembly.

The constitutional referendum changed the parliamentary situation considerably. Hounded by the critics of devaluation, blamed for the sale of warships and corruption, and condemned as undemocratic for the emergency law that banned the Veterans' Central Union for several months in 1933, the government of J. Tónisson stepped down. The new government consisted of regrouped political forces: the former ruling coalition of the Settlers' and the People's Party became the opposition, the new governing coalition was formed by the Farmers' Union under K. Päts and the Socialists. It has been suggested that this became possible because Päts assured the Socialists that he would curb the activities of the Veterans – 'to bridle them' (Kuuli 1976: 105). Earlier, both parties had resisted devaluation: now they joined forces against the Veterans who had a rapidly growing membership and by now had virtually become a party. The ban on their activities had been lifted after their victory in the constitutional referendum and a new Union of Estonian War Veterans was founded in October 1933. This new organization was a highly centralized organization. By this time too the Veterans' Unions had gradually changed from an ordinary patriotic group into a rather intolerant populist movement which shared some common features with similar movements in Western Europe. It was a right-wing radical movement without any doubt, but it is not clear if it was fascist – a point which has been discussed by later commentators (see also Marandi 1991: 486).

The first test for the reorganized Veterans' Union was the local elections in January 1934. Their success was spectacular – 21.7 per cent of the votes. They were particularly successful in urban areas, where the Veterans' share amounted to 41.2 per cent of the votes. In rural districts they were less successful with 10.7 per cent of the votes. However, it should be remembered that in rural areas the Veterans did not put up any candidates in half of the constituencies. This election has been described as a landslide, unparalleled in the political history of independent Estonia (Marandi 1991: 368). Evidently one of the reasons for their success in urban areas was the growth of Veterans' influence among the unemployed. Whereas in 1930 the Socialists had the most support in this group, by 1931–33 they had given way to the communists and at the end of 1933 the unemployed were under the influence of the Veterans. However, it should be pointed out that the Veterans obtained considerably fewer votes than they had in the referendum a few months earlier, 72.7 per cent and 21.7 per cent respectively.

Elections were called in early February 1934 in accordance with the new constitution. Four candidates were put up for president by different political groups. General J. Laidoner, the popular commander-in-chief in the War of Independence was the candidate of the Settlers' and the People's Parties' representing the interests of the political centre. At least a part of the Veterans were ready to support his candidacy, too, and a preliminary agreement on this subject was reached. But when the vote was taken at the Veterans board Laidoner's candidacy was set aside and another retired general, A. Larka, was adopted as the official candidate. He was not as well known as Laidoner and was more of a figurehead in the Veterans' movement. This change raised misgivings for Laidoner and may have had a negative influence on the possible success of the Veterans. Päts, the State Elder in office, was the Farmer's candidate and A. Rei was the socialists' nominee. Although there were two generals among the presidential candidates, the role of the military in Estonian politics should not be overestimated. In a young state that had obtained its independence only a decade ago by war, officers were treated with a certain respect. The Estonian military was not an elite force, but a rather small, democratic, state-controlled people's army. Its commanders, though, could count on a ranking position in the political leadership. Before the authoritarian regime was established, four of the 11 ministers of Defence had been high-ranking army officers.

The election campaign, and especially the appeals for support by the candidates, again created increasing tension. The Veterans' propaganda was extreme and unscrupulous, even resorting to personal threats. In early February 1934, they called for the boycott of a number of the opposition's newspapers, and started a campaign to outlaw the Socialist Party, their most consistent opponent.

The Päts government, which was in office from October 1933 onwards, was initially rather passive as far as the Veterans were concerned. No move was made to intervene or to suppress extremist activities on either side. However, after a few months of government inactivity measures were taken to curb

their growing influence in the civil service, the armed forces, the police and the Defence League. Civil servants were forbidden to take part in political activities or organizations and political uniforms were forbidden. The changing attitude of government became apparent at the Congress of the Farmers' Unions in February 1934 when Päts announced that his government was ready to apply drastic measures to uphold law and order. His message to the congress said: 'You may be sure that as long as I am at the head of the state, I shall not let discontent develop so far that it could endanger the state' (Marandi 1991: 412).

At the end of February the State Assembly adopted a law that made it illegal for the military to join political organizations and unions or otherwise take an active part in politics. A bill was introduced to make political harassment a crime and allowing the dismissal of officials by a simple administrative procedure. At the same time some top leaders of the army and the police were transferred. On the first days of March the minister of Justice and Internal Affairs was asked to submit lists of the Veterans leaders. By mid-February the Veterans' leaders had obtained confidential information on the secret police orders to find compromising data on the Veterans. A few weeks later information the names of those veterans' leaders to be arrested leaked out. On 12 March 1934 at an emergency government meeting Päts proposed proclaiming a state of emergency to stop the Veterans' activities and restore internal stability. Laidoner, Päts' rival in the presidential campaign, was to be appointed commander-in-chief of the army. In this capacity Laidoner was also the head of the whole internal defence system. Although the Päts proposal was a surprise to the government, nobody was opposed to it. The army was ordered into stand-by as a safeguard against the possible opposition of the Veterans. At the press conference Päts told the journalists that political agitation had passed all limits and endangered internal peace and safety. In the course of this the Veterans' Union was declared illegal and large-scale arrests of its members followed; political demonstrations and several newspapers were banned and the election of Veterans' deputies to the local self-government bodies were nullified. The presidential election was postponed until the end of the state of emergency and the subscription list of the candidates were also nullified.

At first, the State Assembly took a wait-and-see attitude, but it soon became clear that Päts was attempting to use the situation to consolidate his own personal power. In September the state of emergency was extended for another year. The State Assembly was dissolved by decree from 2 October 1934 after government policies were not wholly endorsed when it convened earlier in the autumn. With this action, the very last obstacle to the establishment of an authoritarian regime had been removed. The so-called 'silent period' of this regime was ended only by the Soviet occupation in June 1940. This replaced one arbitrary government with another. It did not bring back democracy or democratic freedoms. On the contrary, compared to what followed (the Soviet occupation and annexation of Estonia) the 'silent period' can be described as a 'modestly democratic' regime. Indeed, although it did not allow organized

political activity which went contrary to official policies, curbed individual freedom of political expression, introduced an official state propaganda service, and encouraged an ideology and activity of national unity, there was no large-scale organized persecution nor an attempt to suppress deviant individual political opinion (with the exception of a few conspicuous cases). The regime did not try to interfere in the arts or literature and even left the judiciary in peace. Nor were there any concentration camps or authorized political murder – these came into Estonian politics following the Soviet occupation.

To sum up, we may say that the collapse of democracy in Estonia was brought about by the measures taken against the activities of the Veterans who were themselves attempting to establish a strong executive type of government. 'Estonian authoritarianism was peculiar because it was pre-emptive, but it was also unique because of its generally mild nature' (Parming 1975: 61).

6.3 External factors

Although the parliamentary crisis was brought about by internal political developments, there were background circumstances which should be seen as external contributory factors. These factors had no direct impact on the course of events nor did they create the crisis or determine its outcome, their impact was peripheral but none the less discernible.

The first external factor was Italian fascism. Though the Veterans' Movement developed from internal origins, it soon began to reflect the influence of Mussolini's Italy. The common root was the fight against corruption, class interest and a desire for national unity. Yet when accused of fascism, Sirk, the leader of the movement, denied it vehemently, indicating that the Veterans did not accept the fascist 'Führerprinzip' (Marandi 1991: 344). It should be remembered too that the few attempts made to copy or propagate fascism in Estonia failed completely. On the other hand, despite the suppression of the Veterans, Päts did include some features of the Italian example – most noticeably corporatism – in his own authoritarian regime.

There was also a German factor incorporating both ideological and political dimensions. The ideological kindred of the Veterans to the Nazis – and especially the small signs of support coming either from Germany or Baltic-German circles in Estonia – made the Veterans susceptible to being portrayed as some sort of representative of German interests. This was the most important argument against the Veterans in the later Soviet accounts, but even contemporary political opponents were eager to use it. Apart from ideology, a printing-press, obtained from Germany at a very favourable price, undermined Veterans' claims to be independent. But in reality, there is little reason to see the Veterans' Movement as a representative of foreign interests. In considering the German factor, we also have to mention the value of Germany as a counterweight to possible Russian pressure in Estonian politics. But it contained a potential threat at the same time. Memories of German behaviour in the First World War were still fresh and Hitler's policies inspired suspicion. Furthermore, the small but

influential Baltic-German minority in Germany was hostile to Estonia because of their nationalized property.

There was also a Russian factor. As is well known, Russia was nervous in the early 1930s about the rise of right-wing extremism in Europe. The Veterans' Movement was automatically included within this concern. Attacks in the press show that the Veterans were thought of as representing German interests and threatening Russian security. Several times this compelled Estonia to make an official statement on the problems of domestic and foreign policy (Marandi 1991: 441). On the other hand, the Veterans themselves tried to establish confidential contacts with the Russians in order to head off these suspicions (Marandi 1991: 444). Lastly, the Veterans also had quite good contacts with similar right-wing movements in neighbouring Finland. Whatever the implications of these contacts for internal policies in Estonia were, they were not as important as the other external factors.

7 The year of collapse

Three intertwined factors have to be examined when we consider the question of why Estonian democracy collapsed in the early 1930s, and whether this collapse was inevitable or brought about by contingent circumstances – such as the constitutional crisis, the Veterans' movement and the government decision of 12 March 1934. Of course, the backdrop to all three was the social tensions caused by the economic crisis. However, the latter was not a direct reason for the development of the political crisis. For example, whatever the role of disagreements over the use of gold reserves to back the kroon, this was not a basic cause of the political crisis. It was a contributory factor like other economic issues. On the other hand, the gradual revival of the economy after devaluation should have mitigated the political crisis. In fact events moved in the opposite direction, the political crisis came in the course of constitutional reform, which made it necessary to prepare for the election of the president and a new State Assembly. The constitutional reform itself, however, in the setting of an acute economic crisis, must be seen as a peripheral or a pseudo-problem (Marandi 1991: 477).

Constitutional reform to strengthen the power of the executive had been a subject of intermittent debate since the days of the Constituent Assembly. The State Assembly started to prepare reform seriously only when the Veteran's Union had decided on their own proposal. As far as the Veterans' movement is concerned, it had come into being as a patriotic organization, its forerunners having been unions of the demobilized military. But at its Second Congress in the spring of 1931 the Veterans began to take an interest in active politics. Their main idea was for a strong executive branch of government and this made it tempting for them to advocate and demand constitutional reform. Such a reform was seen as the main remedy for all the difficulties of which the current

government was accused – such as mismanagement, corruption, and the arbitrary rule of the parties. By taking up this position the Veterans soon virtually became a party themselves. The inability of the parliamentary parties to cooperate constructively to solve the basic economic and political problems, and to deal with the existence of the independent Veterans' organization outside parliament, facilitated such a development.

It has been said that if the Fourth State Assembly's reform draft had passed the 1932 referendum, the War Veterans' movement would have lost its mass support in a few years and would not have submitted its proposals at all (Marandi 1991: 174). By introducing a constitutional proposal the Veterans were not particularly original, although publicly they were in strict opposition to the parliamentary parties. Their draft had similar goals and was obviously based on the proposal discussed earlier in the State Assembly. Despite mutual criticism there were attempts to cooperate between right and centre parties and the Veterans. The similarity of the aims of the Farmers and the Veterans provided a basis for this. After the constitutional draft of the Fifth State Assembly had been rejected in the summer of 1933, Päts appealed to the public several times to support the Veterans' draft. In principle the National Centre Party (representing the base of the political centre, but without the Settlers) was also ready to cooperate. When the Veterans' draft had been accepted in the referendum Tónisson, the current State Elder, immediately proposed a partnership with the Veterans in government. His offer was rejected on the assumption that the forthcoming elections in April 1934 would bring them power on their own. Later, before the beginning of the nomination period for presidential candidates, the Veterans sounded out the possibilities of cooperation with Päts and Laidoner, later the presidential candidates of the Agrarians and the centre parties respectively.

Observing how constitutional reform became the main issue of the Veterans' policies, we might add the following. At their Second Congress, marking their transformation into an explicitly political organization, the Veterans still behaved like any other patriotic movement. The congress received and sent greetings to the top state and military leaders; the subsequent confrontation with the parliamentary parties was not yet inevitable. A resolution adopted at the congress contained principles which were considered essential for effective government. The Veterans wanted to receive the opinion of the State Assembly about their principles. If they were rejected, the board of the Veterans was given a mandate to work out a draft for constitutional reform of their own in accord with these principles. On 21 January 1932, after the rather lukewarm reaction to the Veterans' proposals, the board decided to draft its own bill to put to a referendum. By then the State Assembly draft was approaching completion. When it was ready and put to a referendum, the Veterans reacted violently against it. A furious propaganda campaign followed and the draft was rejected by a small margin. The criticism was rather vague and the main emphasis was laid on electoral procedures, the Veterans insisting on personal election instead of

party lists. When they introduced their own constitutional draft a year and a half later, the Veterans kept to party lists, although some amendments on personal election had been included (Marandi 1991: 183).

Explaining his decision of 12 March 1934, Päts said that the political agitation had exceeded all limits and endangered internal peace and safety. A little later the minister of Justice and Internal Affairs stated that the Veterans had attempted to overthrow the constitutional order by force. Later still it was suggested that the activities of the Veterans would have led the country to a civil war.

Whatever the dangers caused by the reckless and unscrupulous actions of the Veterans and propaganda that often bordered on violence, the threat of a *coup d'état* was not real. Even a later court investigation could not prove otherwise. So all the claims of a threat to safety of the state seem erroneous. As a preventive measure the action of 12 March might have been justified, but in this case we must firstly ask how far preventive action can go without losing its essentially preventive purpose and, secondly, what kind of preventive measures are justified. The following must be said if we assess the events of 12 March in terms of internal politics. The devaluation of the kroon and the referendum supporting the Veterans' constitutional draft should have resolved the issues at the heart of the existing political conflict. Instead, conflict shifted to the issue of the election of the State Assembly, and the presidency created by the new Constitution. In this situation the Veterans clearly had an advantage over the traditional parties. On 12 March the day of Päts' coup, shortly before the presidential election, 50 per cent of the nominations for candidacy went to Larka, the Veterans' candidate, 31 per cent to Laidoner and 15 per cent to Päts. The latter had not even collected the minimum number of subscriptions required to stand as a candidate.

So particular significance should be given to the remark of an old colleague of Larka who knew all the contestants very well from the War of Independence. According to his warning to Larka, expressed at the height of the presidential campaign, Päts and Laidoner were capable of setting their differences aside and of uniting to take power by force (Marandi 1991: 418). This comment introduces a subjective factor, perhaps of relevance to the events of 12 March, but it is difficult to elaborate on this point because there is neither research nor even resources which might help to illuminate the reasons for the Päts coup. One has to rely on comments like the one that Päts was well aware of his services to the Estonian state, but often confused his personal ambitions with the interests of the state (Tomingas 1961: 98, 102). Such remarks do not resolve the problem of the causes of the events of 12 March or the collapse of democracy in Estonia in the 1930s, but they draw attention to the subjective factors which may have had some effect in determining historical outcomes. Whatever the role of Päts' personal attitudes or ambitions, subjective factors influenced the course of events through miscalculations at one decisive juncture. Despite a preliminary agreement with Laidoner in November 1933 to stand as a joint candidate for the

Veterans and the Settlers, the Veterans dropped his candidacy at the last moment and nominated Larka instead. In the light of later developments this was a fatal mistake which smoothed the way for the Päts–Laidoner alliance and the events of 12 March.

8 Conclusion

The story of the parliamentary crisis in Estonia leads to the conclusion that the collapse of democracy was brought about by the measures taken against the reckless actions of the Veterans' Movement, and their aim to establish a strong executive branch of government. A closer study of relevant factors was made to find out whether the collapse was the result of the inevitable course of events or was caused by fortuitous circumstances. First the formation of the Veterans' Movement, their involvement in politics and their outspoken policy objectives, were scrutinized. Although the movement had some ominous characteristics, it is doubtful whether it was a more serious threat to democracy than were the measures taken by Päts to avert the perceived danger which the Veterans posed to the established political system. In any case, despite the heated pre-election atmosphere and wild rumours, there was no imminent risk of a take-over by force. This might not have been so evident at that time, but the court investigation that followed more than a year later could not prove otherwise (Marandi 1991: 457).

The Veterans' Movement was born out of the associations of demobilized soldiers which were active – but not particularly successful – during the politics of the 1920s. When the Central Union of Veterans was formed in 1929, they had no specified political orientation or objectives. Their involvement in politics began with the deterioration in the economic situation, but their interest was not so much in economics as in politics. The emphasis on constitutional reform was a clear indication of their objectives. The grievances created by the economic crisis furthered their determination to engage in politics and gave them an opportunity to speak up. Their military inclinations and experiences influenced their understanding, outlook and interests, and the growing economic problems provided support so that the movement grew into a threat to the traditional parties and the internal political order.

In a situation of uncertainty the subjective motivations of the leading politicians came into play. There were both opportunities and challenges. Bearing this in mind, one can conclude that the coup of 12 March was inevitable in the sense that in early 1934 different patterns of events came together as they did. It happened in a way that gave a free hand to a strong personality who paid little attention to the niceties of democratic order and was ready to act, as he saw fit, to put an end to the dangerous developments, but with unforeseeable consequences. Judging his actions one must not forget that his first steps were in accordance with the new (Veterans') constitution and therefore on sound

ground legally. The moves towards authoritarianism occurred later when the State Assembly failed to support his further actions.

On the other hand, the freedom of action of the main characters in the events of 12 March was not unlimited and depended, at least partly, on circumstances which should be seen as fortuitous. Of course, there was a strong populist movement which contained elements of intolerance and strove unscrupulously to establish a strong government. But one should neither overestimate their popular support, which was on a level with other major parties, nor is it certain what would have happened if the Veterans had been given the chance to go to the polls.

6

Finland: From Conflict to Compromise

Lauri Karvonen

1 Introduction

Finnish history between the world wars seems to defy most generalizations about the conditions for democracy in Europe. During the roughly two decades between the Declaration of Independence and the outbreak of the Second World War, Finland experienced a civil war, a prolonged internal ethnic strife, expansionist nationalism and a strong indigenous fascist movement. Despite these conflicts, Finland was one of the countries where a basic democratic consensus was reached in the 1930s: the Red-Green Agreement of 1936–7 signified the defeat of authoritarian movements in Finland.

This study aims at uncovering those factors that account for this somewhat unexpected outcome of interwar Finnish politics. It starts out by providing a short historical background to the political situation of the newly independent Republic. The next section presents the basic cleavages in Finnish politics related to the structure of the society and to the critical junctures of its history. After that the focus will be on the organizational resources of the various social forces. From there we move on to dynamic aspects, as the major issues of the period and the interplay between them are discussed. Finally, an attempt will be made to interrelate the various levels of explanation to account for the outcome of interwar politics in Finland.

2 Historical background: Finland before 1918

After some six centuries as part of the Kingdom of Sweden, Finland was ceded to Russia in 1809. For several reasons, the Czar granted Finland far-reaching autonomy within the framework of a Grand Duchy. The Swedish laws and social order remained in force, and Helsinki, rather than Saint Petersburg, replaced Stockholm as a centre of national administration.

In the first six decades of autonomy peace and social tranquillity prevailed, and steps towards state- and nation-building were taken. Economically, Finland profited from access to the enormous Russian market. Politically, however, Finland was out of step with its Scandinavian neighbours. The Czar feared any

Finland



signs of mass mobilization; consequently, the gradual expansion of political franchise typical of northwestern Europe in the nineteenth century did not take place in Finland. However, an important change was initiated in 1863 over language when Finnish – the language of the majority – was granted equal status with Swedish – spoken by the dominant classes and, independently of these, by a sizable population along the south and west coasts.

The rise of panslavic sentiments in Russia during the last decades of the nineteenth century endangered Finnish autonomy. Out of the reaction to this danger three different political orientations emerged in Finland: acquiescence, constitutionalism and activism. The constitutionalists and activists – who represented peaceful and military resistance against the Russians respectively – were eventually backed by the labour movement who saw in Russian dominance a major cause for the lack of social and political reforms. The 1905 Russian Revolution was accompanied by a general strike in Finland, leading to a temporary halt in the russification attempts and, more significantly, to the 1906 Representative Reform, as a result of which, over night, the last system based on the four estates in northern Europe was replaced by the first parliament based on universal suffrage in the whole of Europe.

Thanks to this reform, the Finnish Social Democrats suddenly emerged as the strongest socialist party in Europe. The first elections (1907) gave them 80 out of the 200 seats in Parliament; their support grew until they finally commanded an absolute majority in Parliament in 1916. Their initial enthusiasm, however, soon faded. The bourgeois parties united against them on most issues. Moreover, there was no principle of parliamentarism in the relations between Parliament and Cabinet. Cabinets were appointed and dismissed by the Czar at will. Consequently the Social Democrats achieved little in Parliament. In particular, their social policy concerns – the plight of crofters and landless rural workers – was endlessly debated and investigated by parliamentary commissions, but remained unsolved.

The revolutions of 1917 in Russia finally allowed the Finns to become fully independent. At the same time Finnish society polarized. In January 1918, socialist Red Guards took up the armed struggle against bourgeois Finland defended by White Guards under the leadership of Mannerheim, and eventually aided by a German intervention. The Whites emerged victorious in May 1918 (Upton 1980).

Historically four points of particular relevance for the politics of independent Finland should be underlined:

1. The barriers to mass political mobilization were removed at a late point in time, but this took place unprecedentedly fast.
2. As a consequence, the political enfranchisement of the proletariat and the middle strata largely coincided.
3. Parliamentary democracy was introduced ‘in the wrong order’: universal suffrage (1906) was realized before the principle of parliamentarism (1917). This added to the socialist frustration with representative democracy. This, with other reasons, led them to attempt:

4. A socialist revolution, which failed. The fact that the Red Guards had fought side by side with revolutionary Russian soldiers still remaining in Finland, caused bourgeois Finland to largely equate domestic socialism with the Russian threat to Finnish independence.

3 Main cleavages in Finnish society

'A cleavage is a division on the basis of some criteria of individuals, groups or organizations among whom conflict may arise' (Lane and Ersson 1987: 39). The definition suggests that the number of possible cleavages is basically unlimited; the choice always reflects a theoretical statement on the part of the author. Here, the basic assumption is that there is no absolute hierarchy of cleavages; they are time- and issue-specific. Moreover, they can be related to social structure as well as to historical events. This section outlines the main cleavages in Finnish society in a chronological order. Their appearance as organizing principles in Finnish politics, particularly their impact on party formation, determines the order in which they are discussed. However, the order of presentation here should not be taken to imply a statement on their relative importance in general.

3.1 Language

Finland is a bilingual country. The majority of the population speaks Finnish, whereas a minority speak Swedish (Klovekorn 1960). The size of the Swedish-speaking population has steadily declined: from approximately 13 per cent around the turn of the century, it fell to 10 per cent in 1940 and stands at a little over 6 per cent today. This decline is due to both a higher birth-rate among Finns and a decrease in the absolute number of Swedes. Given the small share of the Swedes it may seem curious that language has been a major cleavage in Finnish politics, but its importance is due to three interrelated factors:

1. Up until the last decades of the nineteenth century Swedish was the only language used among the higher bourgeoisie, civil servants and the upper classes. Despite rapid change during the following decades, Swedish for a long time remained 'over-represented' among the most influential groups in Finnish society.
2. Swedish has always been an official language of the state. Up until 1863 it was the only official language. In the Constitution of 1919 gave bilingualism constitutional status. This has given rise to language-based parallel systems notably in the field of education.
3. The Swedish-speaking population has always been concentrated on the west and south coasts, the Baltic islands in particular. Locally and regionally, Swedish has been a dominant or major language.

The basic structural feature of the linguistic division has been the traditional identification of Swedish as an 'upper class language'. Especially among Finns living far away from the genuinely Swedish areas of Finland, it has been common to think of Swedish solely in these terms. However, the Swedish

population at large has always had basically the same social structure as the Finnish population. Thus, while it was necessary in the nineteenth century to know Swedish if one wished to climb socially, being a Swede was in itself a far from sufficient guarantee that this would occur.

3.2 Relations to Russia

A major cleavage in Finnish politics since the latter half of the nineteenth century is the relationship with Russia. During the last decades of the autonomy period, this was of paramount importance and had a direct impact on party formation and other organized activity (Soikkanen 1987). Independence and the White victory in the Civil War meant that those who had been most anti-Russian emerged victorious. Consequently, a strongly negative attitude towards the Soviet Union prevailed in interwar Finnish politics. Apart from the pro-Soviet standpoint of the communists, the variation concerned the degree of rancour with which the Soviet Union was condemned. The Social Democrats, while unambiguously 'western' in their attitude towards the Soviet system, displayed the least militant attitude in terms of foreign policy, whereas right-wing circles had a more aggressive attitude. Overall, the question of *Ostpolitik*, while generally important in Finnish politics, had lost some of its relevance as a dividing line in interwar Finland with the exception of the communist/noncommunist distinction.

3.3 Economy

Up until the end of the Second World War, Finland was a predominantly rural society. The primary sector, basically consisting of agriculture and forestry, was by far the most important source of employment for the Finnish population.

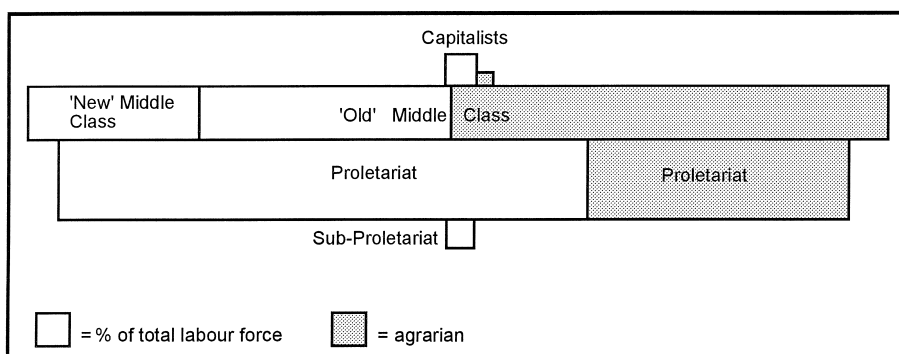
Table 6.1 Finland: class structure, 1940

Population (millions)	3.7 ^a
Employment rate	50.7 ^a
Rate of agrarian employment	64.6 ^a
Agrarian	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.2
Family farms	20.6
Agrarian proletariat	18.5
Non-agrarian	
Capitalists	0.9
Old middle class	11.8
New middle class	8.1
Proletariat	37.4
Sub-proletariat	0.7
Total	98.2

Sources: *Statistisches Reichsam*t (1936: 81); Waris (1948: 183); Valkonen (eds.) (1980: 96).

Note: ^a Data for 1930.

Figure 6.1 Finland: class structure, 1940



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 6.1.

Industrialization was a twentieth-century phenomenon in Finland; before The Second World War Finland could be classified as a fairly undeveloped economy.

The agricultural structure inherited from Sweden was characterized by an absence of feudalism and a low degree of manorial farming. The bulk of the rural population, some 70 per cent in early nineteenth century, consisted of independent small farmers. The change during the next hundred years was, however, dramatic. The population of Finland tripled during the nineteenth century, whereas the number of independent holdings only doubled. Since industrialization was barely under way and emigration still was of minor importance, a large rural proletariat was created. Moreover, the commercialization and modernization of agriculture worked in favour of those farmers who had large holdings. Consequently, the rural surplus population came to form a new stratum of crofters and landless farm hands under the management of manors and big farms. Thus, while the share of independent farmers had been among the highest in Europe around 1800, it was probably below the European average one hundred years later. There was a regional concentration of the rural proletariat in southern and central Finland, with the strong tradition of independent small farming remaining intact in the southeast, the northwest and the north.

The position of the rural proletariat was *the* basic social problem in Finland before 1918 and became a major dividing line in the 1918 Civil War. The working-class movement relied strongly on the support of the crofters and agricultural workers of south central Finland in particular. After 1918, a series of land reforms were rapidly introduced. For the moderate bourgeois circles who advocated these reforms they had a clear political purpose; the rural proletariat was to be included among the propertied classes. Although the new farms created were mostly very small, they still gave their owners 'something to lose'. By the Second World War Finland again had one of the highest shares of independent small farming in Europe.

Another important feature of the primary economy in Finland was forest ownership. Sawmill and wood-processing products were the dominant export commodity up until the late 1940s. During the interwar period, the bulk (some 60 per cent) of productive forest remained in private hands. This meant that the farmers had a large potential influence over the country's most important natural resource. Corporate ownership of forests never exceeded 10 per cent; the bulk of the remaining forests belonged to the government.

Finnish industry during the interwar period consisted of wood-processing and manufacturing. The former, which employed between 30 and 40 per cent of the industrial workforce, was heavily export-oriented. The latter was primarily dependent on domestic consumption, with textiles and metal industry the most important components. Industrialization was also regionally concentrated. In the cities and towns of southern Finland, many industrial milieus developed, whereas most of central, eastern and northern Finland remained outside this process. Throughout this period, industry did not become the dominant source of employment for the Finnish working class – the number of farm workers was comparable to that of industrial labour throughout the interwar period.

As for the other economic divisions, the number of people attached to them was considerably smaller. Small entrepreneurs, functionaries and civil servants are identifiable groups although numerically small. The uppermost echelons are, as always, numerically small. In the Finnish case it is important to note that the aristocracy has been of limited importance. This, together with the fact that Finland had no army of its own until independence and that manorial farming was limited, explains the absence of an influential 'Junker' element in Finnish society (Alapuro and Allardt 1978).

In sum, the agricultural dominance of the Finnish economic structure must be stressed. In comparison to the countries of Western Europe, Finland scored low both on the share of the industrial proletariat and the industrial, commercial and landed upper classes. The working class retained a large agricultural element throughout the period. As for the position of independent small farmers, the land reforms after the Civil War swung the pendulum back to the situation of the early nineteenth century. This shows that that social structures can be radically modified through political action.

3.4 'White and Red': the heritage of 1918

The most active and immediate cleavage in Finnish society during the interwar period was the polarization created by the Civil War. Few people were able to remain neutral. The side a person had chosen in 1918 strongly influenced his position in interwar Finland.

'White Finland', largely identified with those who sympathized with bourgeois parties in politics, had experienced a unique sense of unity across linguistic, economic and partisan barriers. After the victory, there was a strong pressure towards maintaining this White unity at least in symbolical terms. The Civil Guards became the chief symbol of this unity (see below). Preserving White hegemony was a serious obstacle to any plans for compromise across the

socialist/nonsocialist divide. However, the bourgeois parties soon differed over the severity and scope of punishment for involvement in Red Guards.

For the 'Reds', the defeat in 1918 meant either a critical reappraisal of the course leading to 1918 or a continued revolutionary line. Roughly speaking, this was the basis of the Social Democratic Party split, which led to the establishment of a separate network of communist organizations (1920). So the impact of 1918 in the socialist camp was the opposite of that in bourgeois Finland. Moreover, the defeat and the ensuing White hegemony meant that the social democrats had to content themselves with a basically defensive position in interwar Finland.

3.5 A note on region and religion

Apart from the Swedish-speaking areas during the first years of independence, no region in Finland has displayed irredentist tendencies. Political parties and ideologies have had clear regional strongholds, but the parties have made a point of pursuing a nationwide profile by running candidates and trying to organize in all parts of the country. Thus regionalism, while a feature of the electorate, has not been an *ideological* element in Finnish politics.

Similarly, religion has never constituted a major cleavage in Finland. Finland belongs to the hard core of Lutheranism. In the interwar period, some 97 per cent of the population were members of the Lutheran Established Church. The church as an institution had a clearly conservative image, and a certain anti-clericalism was discernible within the political left. Nevertheless, only communists made outright ideological attacks on the church. The social democrats adopted a low-key approach, considering religious beliefs and church membership to be a private matter.

3.6 Combinations of cleavages

Finland is a multipolar society. Apart from the fronts during the Civil War, no cleavage has been powerful enough to split the nation into two completely opposing sides. The language conflict – which at all times was conducted by the educated classes – led to attempts to bridge some of the other cleavages. Before 1906 the basically conservative Finnish Party adopted a fairly radical social policy program in order to appeal to the Finnish-speaking lower classes. In the 1920s tacit cooperation arose in Parliament between the entirely 'White' Swedish Party and the Social Democrats, who resisted the Finnish attacks on bilingualism. The constitutionalist and activist resistance against russification during the last decades of the Russian period bridged the language gap – particularly among Swedish and Finnish liberals. On the question of land reform, independent small farmers stood closer to the left than the right.

Thus, while a strong unifying pressure was created among bourgeois circles by the 1918 Civil War, other cleavages made for competing combinations of interests which implies a potential threat against 'White unity'.

Table 6.2 Finland: cleavages, issues, organizations and effects

Cleavage	Related organizations	Political effects
Language	Parties, linguistic movements	Bourgeois split
Economy: – agriculture – industry	strong farmers' org. weak unions. strong employers' org.	No definite left-right polarization in economic policy
'1918'	Civil Guards	Bourgeois unity
Issue	Related organizations	Political effects
Parliamentarism	Parties	Bourgeois split
Language strife	Parties, linguistic movements	Bourgeois split Tacit cooperation: Swedish Party–left wing parties
Labor unrest	Unions, strikebreaker movement	Bourgeois unity
Economic depression	Farmers' Crisis Movement Small Farmers' Party	Bourgeois split
Fascist threat	Lapua Movement, IKL	1) Bourgeois unity: Anti- communist laws 2) Bourgeois split: threat of fascist takeover

4 Intermediate structures

4.1 Political parties

When party formation started in Finland, language was the main division: around 1880, a Finnish and a Swedish Party were established. The question of the Russian threat in the 1890s split the Finnish Party into an Old Finn ('conservative') and a Young Finn ('liberal') group. The latter joined the majority of the Swedes in resistance to russification. The creation of the Social Democratic Party in 1899 signified the first clearly class-based division in the Finnish party system. The 1906 Representative Reform gave rise to another 'class party', when the Agrarian Union was founded by small farmers in southeastern and northwestern Finland to further their economic interests. The split of the working-class movement after the defeat in 1918 was the final key element in shaping the Finnish interwar party system (Soikkanen 1987).

As a result of the elections of 1922, Finland established the same basic party system as, again, after the Second World War: Conservatives (National Coalition), Swedes (Swedish People's Party), Liberals (Progressive Party), Agrarians (Agrarian Union), Social Democrats (Social Democratic Party) and Communists (Socialist Workers' Party), as shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Finland: electoral results, 1922–39

	03.07.1922		02.04.1924		02.07.1927		02.07.1929		02.10.1930		03.07.1933		02.07.1936		02.07.1939	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Social Democrats	25.1	53	29.0	60	28.3	60	27.4	59	34.2	66	37.3	78	38.6	83	39.8	85
Socialist Workers' Party		27	10.4	18	12.1	20	13.5	23	1.0 (b)				0.0		0.0	
National Progressive Party	9.2	15	9.1	17	6.8	10	5.6	7	5.8	11	7.4	11	6.3	7	4.8	6
Agrarian Union	20.3	45	20.2	44	22.6	52	26.2	60	27.3	59	22.5	53	22.4	53	22.9	56
Swedish People's Party	12.4	25	12.0	23	12.2	24	11.4	23	10.8	21	10.4	21	11.2	21	10.1	18
National Coalition		35	19.0	38	17.7	34	14.5	28	18.0	42	16.9	18	10.4	20	13.6	25
Patriotic People's Movement																
Others	0.1		0.2		0.4		0.4		1.0		2.0		0.8		6.6	8
Seats total		200		200		200		200		200		200		200		200

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 109).

Note: a Notably the Small Farmers' Party in 1929–1939.

b Outlawed as of 1930.

In addition, there have always been small, short-lived parties in Finnish politics. In the interwar period which we are considering, two were of particular importance. The Small Farmers' Party was founded in 1929 to protect the interests of rural smallholders against the economic depression. The Finnish Fascist Party (IKL) came about in 1932 after the Lapua Movement (see below) had been outlawed.

The Conservatives, who mustered between 15 and 20 per cent of the vote in the 1920s, relied on the urban higher bourgeoisie throughout the country and the big farmers of southwestern and western Finland. The Swedish Party was entirely dependent on the Swedish population in the south and west and ran candidates only in these constituencies. Its electoral support (10–12 per cent) was socially heterogeneous as roughly 80 per cent of the Swedish population voted for it. There was always a tension between upper-class and lower-class Swedes in the party. The Liberals were the most urban-based party in interwar Finland and were characterized by the low level of its support (between 5 and 10 per cent). It was dependent on the urban middle strata and academics. Since many prominent intellectuals belonged to this party, however, it was able to offer numerous *ministrables* to cabinet coalitions. The Agrarians (20–26 per cent) had next to no support in urban areas. In the interwar period, they established their position as the peasant party *par excellence*. The small farmers of eastern and northern Finland remained, however, the hard core of the Agrarian constituency. The Social Democrats were not predominantly an urban party, either. In fact, an important base of their support still lay in rural southern Finland. With growing industrialization, however, urban workers gradually became more important. The Social Democratic share of the vote in the 1920s was between 25 and 30 per cent. Finally, the communists won their 10–15 per cent of the vote partly in industrial areas, partly in the outermost periphery of northeastern and northern Finland (Allardt 1970).

4.2 Interest organizations

The first decades of the twentieth century were a period of organizational expansion in Finnish society. The liberalization and democratization around 1906 and the attainment of full independence some ten years later saw the creation of a host of economic and social interest groups (Luoma 1967: 187–91; Karikoski 1956: 250–73).

The interests of the farmers were pursued through three types of organizations. Producers' associations, united in the Central Association of Agricultural Producers (MTK); in addition, there was a separate network of Swedish organizations. Their purpose was primarily to act as a lobby *vis-à-vis* the government, political institutions and other interest groups. Agricultural societies formed a dense network of local organizations with a membership of some 75,000 in the mid-1920s. The growth of their membership was extremely rapid, exceeding 200,000 in the immediate postwar period. These were general associations for the advancement of agriculture and the position of the farming population; their main activities

consisted of information and education. Finally, agricultural interests were pursued through the cooperative movement consisting of three main branches: commerce, banking and insurance and dairying. The farmers' co-op stores had some 300,000 members, the Cooperative Savings Banks about 60,000 and cooperative dairies some 55,000 in the mid-1920s (see 'Agriculture de la Finlande' 1925: 95–124). Given the fact that there was a growing involvement in the Agrarian Party throughout the period the conclusion must be that the Finnish farmers were highly organized socially, economically and politically.

While the organizational basis of the Finnish farmers underwent a steady expansion, the *labour* union movement was subject to dramatic swings. Founded in 1907, the Finnish Trade Union Congress (SAJ) had some 40,000 members before 1917. That year, the membership quadrupled reflecting the revolutionary organization of the working class. After the Civil War, the membership was again below 50,000; helped not only by defeat but also by the organizational split in the working class. The labour union movement remained under communist control, until communism was outlawed in 1930 (see below). That year, the Social Democrats founded a new central organization, the SAK, which aimed at replacing the outlawed communist unions. The new organization experienced a fairly rapid growth, but it never came close to organizing the bulk of the work force. In fact, during the entire interwar period, working-class unionization never exceeded 13 per cent. Overall the organizational position of the workers was a weak and basically defensive one.

The low degree of worker unionization is shown by the fact that the number of union members among functionaries and civil servants, who made up 8 per cent of the workforce as compared to 56 per cent for the workers, was roughly equal to that of the workers.

In contrast to the labour movement, the Finnish employers had a highly centralized and integrated organizational apparatus. The Central Association of Finnish Employers (STK), founded in 1907 as a reaction to the rise of the labour union movement, brought most of the industrial employers under the same roof. In the interwar period, it represented nearly 500 industrial and commercial enterprises with a total workforce of some 250,000. Finnish industry also had two influential special organizations. The Central Association of Wood Processing Industry and the Finnish Industrial Society were powerful lobbies for Finnish large-scale industry. Basically, it was the big industrial and commercial interests that were well-organized, small and medium-sized enterprises had a much more fragmented and weak organizational structure.

In sum, Finnish agriculture and large-scale capitalism had fairly strong interest organizations in the interwar era. By contrast, the labour movement remained divided and weakly organized. Moreover, the principle of collective bargaining was not yet established in labour relations: the Trade Union Congress and the Employers' Association did not recognize each other as negotiating partners until 1940. All of this goes to say that the position of the labour unions in the network of Finnish interest organizations was difficult throughout the interwar era.

4.3 Other movements

The linguistic cleavage was important throughout the period and it gave rise to organized activity both within and outside the established network of parties and interest organizations (for a thorough account, see Hamalainen 1966). The Finnish movement underwent a significant change in the early 1920s. The moderate 'Fennomania' typical of the last decades of the Russian period was challenged by *Aitosuomaisuus*, literally 'genuine Finnishness'. While the Fennomans had contented themselves with striving for equality with the Swedes, the *aitosuomalaiset* demanded absolute Finnish dominance with many of them openly propagating total Finnification.

The Finnish movement was a general current in interwar politics; it had a great number of spokesmen in political parties and other established organizations. At the same time, special organizations devoted to this issue worked as organizational spearheads of the movement. The Finnish Alliance was originally a relatively moderate organization for the advancement of Finnish culture; in the 1920s, however, it was taken over by more chauvinistic elements. This latter line came to be particularly pronounced in the AKS, the Academic Karelia Society. The AKS was an association of students and young academics at the University of Helsinki. With its some 3000 members it was totally dominant among Finnish-speaking students. Through this influence over the future intellectual elite of the country, the AKS came to have an impact on Finnish society beyond the linguistic strife of the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, the AKS provided an organizational bridge between fascism and the Finnish movement in the 1930s (Alapuro 1973).

While the Finnish movement was heterogeneous in terms of parties and organizations, the Swedish movement was much more integrated. The Swedish Party, *Svenska Folkpartiet*, was its core. There were, to be sure, numerous special organizations for cultural, educational and social affairs, but their activities were at all times quite closely coordinated with those of the party. Despite this general one-party dominance among the Swedes, it was important that there was at all times a well-organized and influential Swedish element in the Social Democratic Party as well. This was the ultimate guarantee against chauvinistic Finnish influence in the largest political party in the country.

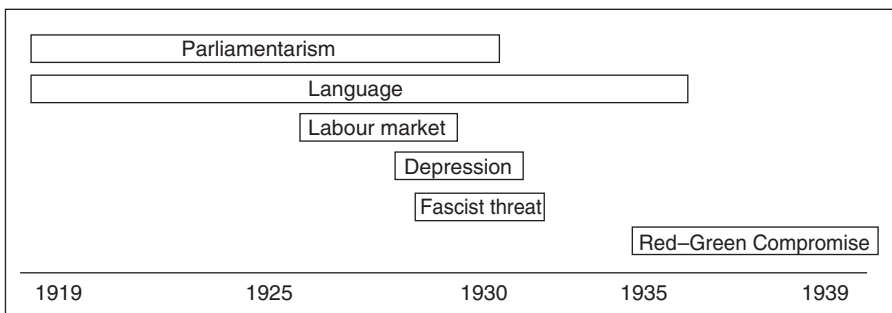
The Civil Guards, historically a direct continuation of the victorious White Army of 1918, were both a popular movement and a semi-official part of the Finnish defence forces. They were based on voluntary individual membership but recognized by law and in many ways supported by the government. Among other things, numerous regular officers worked as part time Civil Guard officers. The basic unit was the local Civil Guard; these were part of a military chain of command on the local, regional and national levels. With a membership of 80, 000–100, 000 armed men (about four times as large as the regular army), the attitude of the Civil Guards could change the course of Finnish history over night.

The question of politics was immensely delicate in the Civil Guard movement. The Guards were intended as the symbol of White unity; since the White side was politically heterogeneous, it was decided that the Civil Guards were to refrain from political activities. At the same time, it was obvious that the Civil Guards, their officers and leaders in particular, represented a strong rightist potential. In 1934, a questionnaire showed that two-thirds of the Civil Guard officers had conservative or fascist sympathies, whereas the rest supported the political centre (Siltala 1985: 326). There was a constant tension among the bourgeois parties concerning the political image of the Civil Guards. On the one hand, they publicly testified to the unpolitical nature of the Guards; on the other, the Liberals and Agrarians were always suspicious about the right-wing influence in the organization. The very symbol of White unity was plagued with the seeds of bourgeois discord embedded in the party system as well as in the social structure of Finland.

5 From turbulence to stability: highlights of Finnish history 1919–39

The interwar period in European history has been described in many ways: as a crisis of democracy and parliamentarism; as a crisis of capitalism; as an era of totalitarianism, and so on. While none of these characterizations is basically incorrect, none of them is in itself sufficient: they are all needed to make the picture complete. By the same token, the course of Finnish politics can be described and analysed with the aid of a number of issues and themes. They are interrelated both causally and chronologically, but none can be omitted, they are all important. The instability of parliamentarism, linguistic strife, the turbulent labour market, the Great Depression, the fascist threat and the final Red–Green rapprochement form the essence of interwar Finnish politics:

Figure 6.2 Six major issues in Finnish politics



Shortly after victory in 1918, the bourgeois parties became divided over the form of government for an independent Finland. The Conservatives and the Swedes argued for monarchy, the Liberals and Agrarians joined the Social Democrats in a demand for parliamentarism. The German defeat in the war – Prince Friedrich Karl von Hessen had already been elected king of Finland – thwarted the plan for a monarchy. The ensuing compromise resulted in a dualistic republican form of government. A president with encompassing powers was to satisfy the right's call for strong executive power, whereas the Cabinet's dependence on the will of the Parliament resulted from the centrist and social democratic demands concerning parliamentary sovereignty (Rintala 1962: 122–42).

The Conservative commitment to parliamentarism was from the very beginning half-hearted at best. They also disagreed with the Liberals and the Agrarians on a number of important issues, such as amnesty for the red prisoners of war, Finnish voluntary expeditions to Soviet Karelia, land reform, etc. More than anything, however, political arithmetic made bourgeois fronts problematic. For fear of Finnification schemes, the Swedes did not wish to see the three Finnish bourgeois parties (Conservatives, Agrarians, Liberals) united in cabinet. The left, on the other hand, feared the same coalition since it represented the White front of 1918; the left's primary goal was to keep right and centre separated. Since the Swedes and the left commanded a majority of the seats in Parliament, they gave the Agrarians and the Liberals a convenient excuse to form cabinets without the Conservatives. Thus, there was a negative consensus among the parliamentary majority: they knew what kinds of cabinets they would oppose. However, they were far from agreeing what cabinets they would jointly support. Consequently, stable cabinets were rare in the 1920s. From 1919 to 1930, 14 different cabinets, of which only two could temporarily rely on a majority in Parliament, held office. The fact that cabinets frequently fell over apparently minor issues did little to enhance the standing of parliamentary democracy in the eyes of those who were already sceptical.

The two largest parties – the Agrarians and the Social Democrats – were not diametrically opposed on all major issues. In the 1920s, however, the idea of them as cabinet partners was not seriously discussed. On the Agrarian side, the White experience of 1918 constituted a barrier. For the Social Democrats, the feeling was mutual; there was also an ideological opposition in the party against 'ministerial socialism', although it was not an entirely dominant attitude. Thus, when the fascist threat from the Lapua movement compelled the Social Democrats to support the 'bourgeois state' rather than to go under along with it, the social democratic recipe was initially not a governmental alliance with democratic bourgeois forces. Rather, the Social Democrats decided to refrain from destabilizing bourgeois cabinets intent on safeguarding democracy against fascist demands. This was the reason why the Lapua period (see below) was followed by a time of relative parliamentary stability.

5.2 Finns against Swedes

The linguistic question has been mentioned several times and had its roots in the nineteenth century. During the resistance against russification and during the Civil War, the conflict had more or less lain idle. After 1918, it re-emerged with unprecedented intensity. To begin with, both Swedes and Finns waged offensive strategies (Hamalainen 1966).

The first major confrontation concerned the movement in the Aaland Isles for reunification with Sweden. This archipelago had an entirely Swedish population, who feared both Finnish chauvinism and Russian Bolshevism. The dispute was resolved by the League of Nations in 1921, who proposed a solution under which the islands remained within Finnish sovereignty but were granted far-reaching autonomy and a unilingually Swedish status. However, a movement to achieve a similar autonomous status in other Swedish areas in Finland did not succeed (von Bonsdorff 1950).

These Swedish aspirations stirred considerable resentment among nationalistic Finns. Finnish nationalism did not, however, primarily direct itself against the Swedish areas. The main bone of contention was the linguistic status of a number of important institutions: the armed forces, the church, the Board of Education and the University of Helsinki. Swedish was not eradicated from any of these institutions, but it seems safe to say that Finnification was carried further in the armed forces and the university than in the two other areas. Gradually, it was the linguistic status of the university that emerged as the major issue in the strife. In the 1920s the number of Finnish students from rural backgrounds increased rapidly; in Helsinki, they were confronted with a university which still had a strong Swedish tone. After a prolonged dispute, which at times degenerated into street-fighting, a compromise was reached in 1937. Finnish became the official language of the university, but 15 chairs were to have Swedish as the language of instruction.

In the general course of interwar politics, the language disputes played an important role as it split the White front of 1918 and made for a tacit cooperation between the Swedish Party and the left. It never became an issue of overarching importance: from time to time, it was pushed aside as other issues emerged. That was the case during the Lapua years (see below), when Swedes and Finns were found among both the supporters and the opponents of the Lapua Movement. And it disappeared when Russia attacked Finland in 1939.

5.3 Labour conflicts

Three basic facts conditioned labour relations in the 1920s. First, the 1919 Constitution provided for freedom of association, which enabled the labour movement to reorganize unions shortly after the Civil War. Second, the labour unions came under communist dominance. The communists adopted an uncompromisingly revolutionary strategy, in which the labour unions were a central instrument. Third, the employers refused to accept the principle of collective bargaining and strove to preserve their positions by maintaining hegemony locally (Karikoski 1956: 249–60).

Unrest in the labour market was particularly marked on two occasions – both at periods of economic growth. Around 1920, the economic boom was accompanied by strong inflation. The fear of lower real wages was combined with the bitterness created among the working class by the Civil War (Luoma 1967: 186–91). As a result, the number of work stoppages in 1920 was higher than at any other occasion between the world wars. The employers responded with characteristic firmness. A strike-breaking organization called Export Peace was created to counter labour union activity. Export Peace came to be a massive popular movement with as many as 34,000 supporters, who came in handy for the employers in 1927–9, when labour unrest peaked for the second time. This time, the strikes were generally interpreted as direct Soviet manoeuvres against Finnish independence. The metal industry strike of 1927 prevented the Finnish armed forces from obtaining strategically important materials, whereas the prolonged harbour strike of 1928–9 was seen as a Soviet attempt to wreck Finnish timber export. The Soviet Union had recently started to dump timber on the world market, creating serious competition for this lifeline of Finnish exports. It was not difficult to engage timber-producing farmers for strike-breaking activities at this time; as in 1918, it was easier to fight the workers when they were seen as agents of Russia (Siltala 1985: 43–4).

The strikes, in the 1927–9 period in particular, added to the polarization and through the creation of Export Peace they were a direct prelude to the Lapua Movement. The bulk of the strike-breaking force came from those areas that were to be the very heartland of Finnish fascism and right-wing extremism.

5.4 The Great depression

The Finnish economy repeats the roller-coaster course familiar from other countries in interwar Europe, as shown in Table 6.4.

Clearly, the Finnish economy reached the bottom of the economic cycle in 1931–2. Nevertheless, the downward trend was visible already in 1929. In fact the depression, the effects of which manifested themselves in the form of foreclosures a couple of years later, hit Finnish farming well before the 1929 crash. As early as 1928, agricultural prices and timber sales declined considerably, and the harbour strike led by communist unions was perceived as a measure to support Russian dumping on the world market. The fact that many farmers first engaged in strike-breaking and then in the Lapua Movement is often explained with reference to this (Tanner 1966: 107–9).

Large and small farmers also experienced differences over the timing of the economic crisis. The early depression (1928–30) hit the larger farmers considerably harder, whereas the small farmers suffered most in the general crisis after 1930 (Oittinen 1975: 66, 75). The crisis of small farming produced a special *Depression Movement*, which was a specifically *economic* protest against the crisis and the course of economic policy up to then. The Depression Movement, accompanied by the creation of the Small Farmers' Party, resisted the call for cooperation by the Lapua Movement (Alapuro 1980: 680). The 'Depression Men' never propagated a rightist or fascist course in politics; their radicalism

Table 6.4 Finland: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	
NDP (m. MK)									19800	22100	23500	22700	21100	18600	18,500	19,600	22,400	23,600	26,200	31,300	32,500	32,800	
in 1938 prices									16325	18038	18600	18144	18334	17497	17608	19339	22400	23286	25852	29444	32500	29481	
NDP/cap. (MK)									5582	6180	6521	6252	5773	5052	4988	5255	5973	6253	6900	8192	8510	8899	
NDP (m. US-\$)									499	557	592	572	532	469	466	494	564	595	660	789	819	827	
NDP/cap. (US-\$)									141	156	164	158	145	127	126	132	151	158	174	206	214	224	
Population	3214	3331	3349	3384	3420	3455	3485	3515	3547	3576	3604	3631	3655	3682	3709	3730	3750	3774	3797	3821	3819	3686	
(thousands)																							
COST (1914=100)	921	888	1055	1033	1055	1099	1077	1088	1122	1111	1022	944	933	900	888	900	900	900	900	944	888	988	
Unemployment																							
B. o. Trade (m. MK)	-91	-700	-196	498	-208	255	54	-31	-62	-1768	-571	156	992	1129	1370								
B. o. P. (m. MK)					403	-247	229	91	19	33	-1603	-478	212	958	1161	1350	1571	1228	1318	818	528	880	
Urban Bankruptcies					321	524			597				934	1229	1401	1156	801	572		464	435		
Rural Bankruptcies					178	327			353				705	1069	1589	1118	687	349		173	143		
Lost working days					160	456	120	252	262	51	113	386	1528	502	75	12	0.1	2	10	90	61	35	
in mio.																							
Crisis Indicators																							
Ind. Prod																							
Cost of Living				100	98	98	100	104	102	103	106	105	97	89	88	85	84	85	85	85	89	84	94
NDP									100	112	119	115	107	94	93	99	113	119	132	158	164	166	
Stockmarket									100	100	124	114	109	97	123	142				192	192	190	
Strikes				100	210	218	43	94	322	1,273	418	63	10	0.1	2	8	75	51	29	153	93		

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 49f., 348); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 356, 743ff., 821); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 82); *Finlands Officiella Statistik XIII. Rättsstatistik 1921–40*.
 Note: MK (Markka) is US\$0.0252; NDP is at current market prices; Stock market = Index values of 12 major companies; Bankruptcies = Number of proceedings commenced.

concerned agricultural and economic policy and remained at all times within the realms of parliamentary democracy (Kuustera 1979: 132–40).

Obviously, the early years of the 1930s were a period of mass unemployment. Yet unemployment is a problematic crisis indicator in the Finnish case. Exact figures on the number of unemployed are simply unavailable; the registration of unemployed job applicants started at the local level in 1929, but it took many years until comprehensive statistics could be compiled with any degree of reliability (Kahra 1938: 9–10). Moreover, in a country where a considerable portion of the workforce are independent small farmers, the absolute figures on unemployment are always likely to be lower than in industrial countries. Also, the fact that collective agreements did not exist in the labour market made it possible for the employers to meet the crisis through reduced wages rather than by lay-offs. If the estimate by a government commission of some 90,000 unemployed in Finland in 1932 (corresponding to merely 5.3 per cent of the economically active population) seems low in an international comparison, it should be viewed against this background (Kahra 1938: 9; Meinander 1983: 43).

The working class did not mount any concerted protest against the depression despite unemployment and reduced real wages. By autumn 1930, communism and all communist-controlled organizations were outlawed, and social democracy had retreated to a defensive position. Thus, unemployment peaked and union membership hit rock-bottom at the same time. Between 1930 and 1939, the annual average number of work stoppages was 21 – as compared to an average of 62 in 1919–29. The weakness of the unions alleviated the position of Finnish industry during the years of the depression. In the years immediately following the depression, Finnish industry started on a spectacular upward trend, partly thanks to the low level of wages.

Government policies to counter the effects of the crisis had largely similar effects. The initial austerity measures applied during the early crisis (1928–31) were followed by a change in monetary policy in the fall of 1931. At that time, Finland along with the rest of Scandinavia followed Britain's abandonment of the gold standard. By 1933, the mark had been devalued by around 45 per cent in relation to its old par exchange rate and 15 per cent in relation to the pound. The competitiveness of Finnish export industry rose considerably and the wood-processing industry entered on an upward trend as early as 1932, with continuous expansion through most of the remaining interwar years (Beckman *et al.* 1974: 34).

Several protective measures were adopted to protect the agricultural industry. Tariffs on agricultural products were raised, the provisions of the distraint law were modified and moratoria on various agricultural debts were introduced. Protective tariffs alleviated the position of the grain-producing large and medium-sized farms but had limited effects for the small farmers who depended on income from dairying (Oittinen 1975: 66–74). Moreover, the farmers failed to persuade the government to lower the bank rate. This was probably the crisis measure they considered to be most crucial, which is why government crisis policy in 1930–6 never really satisfied the farmers (cf. Jasskelainen 1977: 508–510). By contrast, no comprehensive crisis policy was created to alleviate the

plight of wage earners. Relief works were introduced on a larger scale in 1933, but the peak of the crisis had already been passed at that time. Basically, a contractionary fiscal policy was applied throughout the crisis, which meant that the government was unable to increase relief to the unemployed and the poor decisively.

In sum, the effects of the economic depression were influenced by the organizational position of the various groups as well as by government policy. Finnish industry was also helped by its advantage over the labour unions. Agriculture received ample attention on the part of the government; nevertheless, all crucial demands were not met. Finally, the working class clearly had a weak and defensive position *vis-à-vis* the employers and receiving limited attention in governmental crisis policy.

5.5 The fascist threat: from Lapua to the IKL

The emergence of a fascist mass movement in Finland can be traced back to November 1929. At this time, a clash occurred between local people and a communist youth meeting in the rural community of Lapua in western Finland. The Lapuans – known for their clear-cut ‘White’ sympathies and profound religiosity – received enthusiastic applause from the entire country. An anti-communist meeting arranged in Lapua shortly thereafter assembled a massive crowd from all over the country and inspired similar meetings elsewhere. The meetings adopted anti-communist resolutions and sent deputations to Helsinki to present their demands to the government.

At first, the Lapua Movement explicitly backed parliamentary democracy and the legal form of government; its only objective was the eradication of communism. Consequently, it received support from the government as well as all bourgeois parties. The anti-communist legislation swiftly proposed by the Agrarian cabinet was blocked by the Social Democrats in Parliament. This sparked off a rapid radicalization of the Lapua Movement. They initiated a series of kidnappings and other acts of violence against communists and critics of the movement; at the same time, they became increasingly critical of parliamentary democracy and party government as well as social democracy, which was seen as communism in disguise. Communism was outlawed in 1930 after extraordinary elections guaranteed the two-thirds’ bourgeois majority in Parliament necessary for laws of constitutional status. Moreover, the Lapua Movement strongly influenced cabinet formation in 1930 and the presidential elections the year after. Despite these successes, the process of radicalization snowballed and the Lapua Movement acquired an increasingly clear fascist character. The Agrarians and the Liberals turned against Lapua, leaving the Conservatives as the only clearly pro-Lapua party. Finally in February 1932 the Lapua leadership became involved in what looked like an attempted coup d’état in Mantsala, north of Helsinki. For a few days, the nation seemed to be on the verge of a fascist dictatorship as it seemed possible that the Civil Guard organization would back the Lapuans. However, after considerable internal disagreement the Civil Guards decided to remain outside the Mantsala Revolt. President Svinhufvud, the man

whom the Lapuans had helped become president, resolutely denounced the action and threatened to send the army to Mantsala if the Lapuans did not give up. The Lapua Movement had gone too far; it was outlawed and its leaders jailed (Rintala 1962: 164–99; Karvonen 1988: 19–29).

A few months after Mantsala, an organization called the IKL (Patriotic People's Movement) was founded. Its explicit aim was to carry on the 'patriotic work of the Lapua Movement'. Despite this aim the IKL came to differ from Lapua in many respects. It adopted an explicit fascist ideology (Lapua had lacked a clear programme) and it created, with models from Germany, the most modern and efficient party organization in interwar Finland (Lapua was never a party, and its organization remained somewhat woolly). However, the IKL never exerted the kind of influence on Finnish politics that Lapua had done in 1930–1. Nevertheless, with its 8.3 per cent of the vote in 1936, it was a sizable fascist party and much larger than the other fascist parties in Scandinavia (Karvonen 1988: 25–9, 117–21).

The position of Finnish fascism and right-wing extremism was conditioned by its relationship with the political scene at large. As long as the Lapua Movement had the backing of more or less the entire bourgeois side in politics, it could achieve important political goals. The centrist parties backed it as long as it concentrated on eradicating communism. However, as soon as it turned against social democracy and the parliamentary system as a whole, both the Agrarians and the Liberals, as well as most of the Swedes, renounced Lapua. The Agrarian Party was particularly sensitive to attempts to limit the role of the Parliament. Its hard core of supporters, the small farmers, depended on those very decisions where Parliament had its prerogative: tariffs, prices and subsidies. By contrast, the Conservatives remained essentially pro-Lapua even after the Mantsala Revolt. In fact, they were to lose a considerable portion of their voters to the IKL, once this fascist alternative appeared at elections (see Tables 6.3 and 6.5). The traditional rural strongholds of conservatism in western Finland offered both Lapua and the IKL their most consistent sources of mass support (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 The electoral ecology of the Finnish Fascist Party (IKL), 1936, Pearson correlation coefficients

Primary sector	-0.12	N = 484
Industry	-0.06	N = 484
Tertiary sector	0.18	N = 484
% independent farms	-0.20	N = 449
Small farms	-0.18	N = 449
Medium-sized farms	0.01	N = 449
Large farms	0.20	N = 449
Communists 1927	-0.11	N = 490
Social Democrats 1927	0.05	N = 490
Agrarians 1927	-0.22	N = 487
Liberals 1927	0.15	N = 487
Conservatives 1927	0.44	N = 481

6 The resolution of the crisis

Finnish development from the nineteenth century up to the early 1920s contrasts to that elsewhere in Scandinavia in many important respects: the introduction of universal suffrage and parliamentarism, the Civil War, the language strife and strong indigenous fascism. When the Social Democratic-Agrarian compromise was reached in 1936–7 the general reaction in Sweden, Norway and Denmark was that Finland had come considerably closer to her Scandinavian neighbours in the general pattern of politics (cf. *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 17 March 1937).

After Mantsala, a political interregnum of sorts prevailed for nearly five years. Left and right were separated by the division of 1918. Right and centre were in profound disagreement concerning the Lapua Movement. Even the Liberals and Agrarians had serious differences over economic crisis policy. Eventually, President Svinhufvud appointed a very narrow Liberal cabinet, which had the explicit backing of only 11 MPs. Despite this, the cabinet lasted until 1936, as the Social Democrats refrained from destabilizing or even seriously criticizing it. Gradually, this tacit Liberal-Social Democratic cooperation compelled the Agrarians to reconsider their attitude towards an alliance with the Social Democrats. Importantly the Social Democrats made significant electoral gains during this period (see Table 6.3). In 1934, signs of this reorientation started to appear. Finally in September 1936 the Agrarians and the Social Democrats agreed on a joint programme. There was, however, still one obstacle left for their cooperation in cabinet. In Finland, the cabinets are dependent on the support of the Parliament in order to stay in office, but it is the President who appoints them. Svinhufvud, the Conservative incumbent, had certainly shown over Lapua that enough was enough; that, however, did not mean that he was willing to make compromises with the socialists. Consequently, he stubbornly refused to appoint a cabinet including Social Democratic ministers. In the 1937 presidential elections, therefore, the Agrarians and the Social Democrats joined forces to replace him with the Agrarian Kallio. In March 1937, Kallio took office and immediately appointed a Red–Green cabinet, presided over by a liberal prime minister as a compromise and a mediator between the ‘big two’.

The policies of the Red–Green cabinet were the result of compromises by both the Social Democrats and the Agrarians. A rapid introduction of old age and disability insurance as well as maternity insurance, a reduction of tariffs on food-stuffs leading to cheaper food prices, and the creation of a public works programme were among the Social Democratic benefits. On the other hand, they retreated from their previous positions by accepting increased defence spending and a postponement of plans for comprehensive unemployment insurance. The Agrarians could press for government price subsidies for agriculture, government support to indebted farmers and public subsidies to farm construction as their main gains. On the other hand, the reduction of protective tariffs represented a considerable concession on their part.

These are the basically 'zero-sum' aspects of the deal; the gains of one party were concessions on the part of the other. However, it is important to note that the parties strongly emphasized the common political basis of their alliance – the 'protection of democracy', the resistance against fascism in the form of the Lapua Movement and the IKL (*Hufvudstadsbladet*, 13 March 1937).

The Red–Green alliance of 1936–7 introduced a new element of parliamentary stability to Finnish politics. The cabinet had the support of between 65 and 70 per cent of the Parliament at all times. It is no wonder, therefore, that the 1939 elections brought about a cabinet which was largely identical with the one appointed in 1937.

7 Conclusions

The contrast between the late 1920s and the late 1930s is a striking feature of Finnish politics. Not only had a previously highly unlikely political cooperation been established; it also saw the demise of all major issues in interwar Finnish politics. Parliamentarism was stable, and the Conservative breach with the fascists meant that no major party actively opposed parliamentarism as such. Fascism had been allowed to crush communism, after which it was time for the fascists themselves to step back. Even the linguistic conflict had been mitigated through the compromise concerning the University of Helsinki in 1937. The labour market was fairly tranquil, and the employers were in control after their knockout victory over the communists in 1930. The Great Depression was followed by a prolonged boom in the Finnish economy.

Certainly, the dynamic interplay between these issues is an important key to understanding the final outcome, the Red–Green compromise. Most of the individual issues gave rise to reactions that either reinforced or served to bridge the socialist–nonsocialist gap. Those who stood up for parliamentary democracy found themselves in agreement with social democracy; those who opposed it would have preferred a strong 'White' executive leadership. The language conflict split the White front and pushed the Swedish Party into a tacit cooperation with the socialists. The labour conflicts clearly served to widen the gap. Those who saw the Great Depression primarily in political terms opted for the Lapua Movement and even for outright fascism, whereas an economic interpretation of the crisis led to demands for government regulation much in line with social democratic arguments. Finally, a persistent pro-Lapua stand implied a total rejection of social democracy as well, whereas a resistance to fascism entailed a rapprochement to the social democratic defence of parliamentary democracy.

The 'politics explains politics' approach goes a long way towards explaining any coalition. Still, the issues used as explanatory factors raise at least as many questions as they answer. Why the actors split on the various issues the way they did is the natural follow-up of any issue-related explanation. In the end, structural cleavages and organizational factors must be brought in to make the picture complete.

In interwar Europe, the combination of strong indigenous communism, a civil war experience, ethnic and nationalist conflicts and strong fascist movements usually proved to be fatal to pluralist democracy (Linz 1980). Finland scored high on all these dimensions. Nevertheless, the ban against communism was the only clear deviation from pluralism in interwar Finland. With the benefit of hindsight, one might have expected more dramatic or sombre political developments in the Finnish case. In a comparative European perspective, therefore, Finland represents a case in which 'the art of the possible' succeeded against considerable odds.

7.1 The preconditions of compromise I: bourgeois split

In terms of parliamentary politics, the precondition of the Red–Green alliance was the split of the bourgeois front which had been united by the 1918 Civil War experience. As soon as solid White alliances were impracticable, stable coalitions could only be achieved across the socialist–nonsocialist distinction.

It seems as if the theory developed by Georg Simmel might provide a key to understanding the various degrees of unity and division among bourgeois forces in interwar Finland. Simmel (1955: 91–3) seeks to explain the formation and cohesion of alliances in the face of an external threat. One of his most important assertions is that external conflict may bring together actors who would not otherwise have much to do with each other. This is precisely the way the 1918 attempt at a socialist revolution and the ensuing Civil War affected the various nonsocialist groups in Finland. The Finnish-speaking right wing, the Swedish Party and the Agrarians had been separated by cleavages related to language and the economic structure. '1918' became a new central dividing line in Finnish politics, largely bridging these earlier divisions. This White unity came to be embodied in the Civil Guards, which in turn provided an important organizational arena for right-wing extremism. However, the victorious White front contained the seeds of division as well. The outcome of the war was interpreted differently by the various bourgeois participants. For the right, it implied a chance to debilitate parliamentary democracy, which was seen as a major cause of the rise of socialism. For the moderate bourgeois forces, victory over the socialists meant a return to 'politics as usual'; the traditional disputes over language and economy resting on a strong organizational foundation could be reactivated.

If the Civil War experience was clearly on the wane as a major political cleavage in the immediate postwar years, it was reactivated because of other developments related to it. The outcome of the Civil War split the socialist front. Revisionist Social Democracy became the major working-class party in Parliament, but revolutionary communism took the lead in the unions. In the late 1920s the unions opted for a confrontational strategy in accordance with the line adopted by the Comintern (Siltala 1985: 43–7). The 'external threat' was clearly there again. Export Peace was both a manifestation of renewed bourgeois unity and another seed-bed of right-wing radicalism. It served as a prelude to the Lapua Movement, which in its first, strictly legal phase, stood out as a

reincarnation of the 1918 White front. When Lapua managed to have communism legislated out of Finnish politics, centrist groups again concluded that the external threat was no longer there. The increased moderation into which the Lapua experience forced the Social Democrats was part of this process. Lapua's snowballing radicalization met with resistance from centrist groups, whereas the Conservatives were seemingly prepared to go all the way with the movement. In less than two years, Lapua turned from a symbol of White unity to a cause of the bourgeois split.

Although conditioned by the varying effects of '1918', the other major cleavages at no time completely lost their importance in Finnish politics. This was largely due to the fact that political organization, to a great extent, followed economic and linguistic divisions. Throughout the period, linguistic conflict kept Finnish and Swedish nonsocialists wary of each other's intentions. The tacit cooperation with the left into which the Swedish Party was forced in Parliament was far from an outright coalition. Still, it was an important ingredient in the split among bourgeois parties. It added to the right-wing frustration with parliamentary democracy.

Even more importantly, the Great Depression revealed the economic cleavages among the various groups. The large class of independent small farmers represented by the Agrarian Party and a network of interest organizations, found itself in a more difficult position than the industrial employers. Industry was aided by the devaluation of 1931 as well as by the weakness of the labour union movement. Equally threatening from the point of view of the Agrarians was the creation of a separate Small Farmers' Party as a reaction to the crisis. Thus, the farmers had an interest in a much more far-reaching government crisis policy than the industrial employers.

7.2 The preconditions of compromise II: the role of the civil guards

The discussion above is based on the assumption that parliamentary politics was the major arena where crucial political outcomes were determined in interwar Finland. This analysis rests, of course, on the benefit of hindsight. An examination of other European countries tells us that the role of parliamentary politics certainly was not equally essential everywhere. Street fights and military intervention shaped the political future of many countries much more than did decisions and deals reached at the negotiating table. Throughout Europe, various political camps organized themselves militarily.

Political violence was certainly not unknown in Finland. However, it never replaced parliamentary dialogue as the chief channel of political action. None of the major parties retreated to their respective ghettos to reorganize themselves as a party-army and, subsequently, take to the streets in order to make short work of their political opponents. In explaining the absence of such paramilitary groupings, the position of the Civil Guard system emerges as a crucial factor.

To begin with, the symbolic role of the Civil Guards must be stressed. They were the ever-present reminder of the victorious White Army of 1918 and of the days

when peasant, burgher and baron stood shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy. This image put them beyond any severe criticism in bourgeois circles (Alapuro 1988: 206–7). This also meant that the threshold for separate military organizations within the framework of any political party was very high indeed. If, for instance, the right wing had created a party-army of its own it would have signified a *de facto* renunciation of the Civil Guards as a White symbol, and a challenge to the existing organization. So the Civil Guards produced a minimum of agreement among the bourgeois parties at all times.

Moreover, the position of the Civil Guard system *vis-à-vis* the state should be underlined. The Civil Guards were a semi-official part of the Finnish military forces; they were recognized by legislation and charged with certain tasks (Rintala 1962: 151–2). Naturally, they were supported by the state in various ways. They were directly subordinate to the president of the Republic. This made for a potential two-way influence. Nevertheless, with the benefit of hindsight it is safe to say that the government influence over the Guards proved a crucial factor for Finnish democracy.

The Mantsala Revolt of 1932 was the ultimate test. 1931 had been a period of rapid radicalization within the Lapua Movement, and it is beyond doubt that the leadership was looking for a chance to crush the democratic form of government once and for all. Still, the movement refrained from creating a military organization of its own. Practically all Lapua members were active in the Civil Guards, and it is obvious that the Lapua leaders expected to use the guards as their military arm. At the end of February 1932, the opportunity seemed to have arrived. A Social Democratic meeting in Mantsala north of Helsinki was to be held with Dr Mikko Erich, MP, as guest speaker. To the extreme right wing, this was a double provocation. On the one hand, Mantsala was a community with strong Lapua sympathies. On the other hand, Erich was a defector to social democracy from the Conservative Party; it did not make matters better that he was a Jew (Stjernschantz 1984: 190). Local Lapua men protested spontaneously against the meeting, and the national Lapua leaders sounded a mobilization order. Armed Lapua men and Civil Guard units started to gather in Mantsala and in several other towns. At Mantsala, they defied the order given to disperse by the Governor and the Minister of the Interior through the local chief of Police. Instead, they started firing shots at the Workers' Lodge. The Social Democratic meeting dissolved itself; no casualties occurred. The incident itself, however, was by no means over. The Lapuans demanded that the Cabinet resign immediately. The government responded by proclaiming a state of emergency (Rintala 1962: 193–4).

Everyone involved realized that the decision over the Cabinet would have far-reaching consequences: it was not just another cabinet the Lapuans were demanding but a system transition (Hyvämäki 1971: 280). It was equally obvious that the military position of the rebels as well as of the government depended on the stand taken by the Civil Guards. It would probably have been impossible to send the regular army against a united Civil Guard front, and it is not unlikely that the Army would have lost such a battle. The fact that no such confrontation took place was due to two interrelated factors. Firstly, the Civil Guards were divided

over their participation in the Mantsala Revolt, and this split ranged from the commanding officers all the way down to the rank and file. What evidence there is points clearly to the fact that this division largely rested on political differences. Centrist Civil Guardsmen refused to go along with the demands of the Lapua leadership, right-wingers considered it natural (Leinonen 1960: 184–93). Dramatic internal disagreement ensued, and the regional Civil Guard headquarters were in considerable disarray for several days in many parts of the country. At this stage, the second factor of importance intervened. Svinhufvud, the man whom the Lapuans had helped become president merely a year earlier, went on national radio and firmly forbade the Civil Guards to support the revolt and urged those guardsmen who had already left for Mantsala to return home. He underlined that he was acting in his capacity as supreme commander of both the armed forces and the Civil Guards (*ibid.*: 195–6). This intervention clearly tipped the balance in favour of the moderate wing. The deadlock in Mantsala was over in a week, no shots were fired between the rebels and Government troops. The Lapua leadership was jailed and the organization declared unlawful with reference to the very legislation the Lapuans had brought about when communism was crushed in 1930 (Ylikangas 1986: 180).

The Civil Guard system had never ceased to be the common property of all non-socialist Finns. It could not be turned into an instrument of the extreme right wing; at the same time, its role as the chief symbol of White unity worked against ghettoization among the conservatives. Having become a *de facto* part of the state apparatus, the guards were susceptible to influence from the government. The government which wishes to abolish itself is a rare species. The temptation of the ‘establishment’ in Helsinki to use its influence over the Civil Guards against the Mantsala Rebels is, in the final analysis, quite comprehensible.

8 Final remarks

According to a popular view, the interwar period was an era of ‘White Hegemony’ in Finnish politics (cf. Siltala 1985: 34). The victors of the 1918 Civil War were in power and the left-wing was forced into a defensive position, with some of its activities even driven underground.

Certainly, the weak and defensive position of the political left is a salient feature of interwar Finnish politics. At the same time, the theory of the ‘White Hegemony’ leaves the end result, the Red–Green coalition, not only unexplained but incomprehensible. In our view, it is necessary to view the complex interplay between structure, organization and issues in order to understand the path to that outcome. Issues, organizations and cleavages do not exist independently of each other. On the other hand, the way issues evolve and the effects they have on the political process is not evident from the structural and organizational facts alone. Politics is far from a conversion process where actions are simply products of structural inputs. But it would be equally one sided to view each issue as a game of chess where each player gets a fresh start.

The Red–Green compromise found a political niche in a situation which might well be called a paradox. On the one hand, there was enough disagreement – language, economic policy, parliamentarism – to make solid White coalitions difficult to achieve. Simultaneously, there was enough agreement to prevent the right from taking to the streets to crush not only socialism but the parliamentary system as a whole. The definitive ghettoization of Finnish conservatism was pre-empted thanks to the unquestioned role of the Civil Guards as a common symbol for entire bourgeois Finland. A paradox may indeed appear to be a feeble ground on which to build democracy, but paradoxes are part of the stuff of which politics is made.

7

France: An Ambiguous Survival

Michel Dobry

1 Introduction

There is no doubt that France's Third Republic is one of the political regimes that survived the intense anti-democratic movement which swept Europe between the two world wars. Indeed, the collapse of the system in 1940, and the instalment of the Vichy regime in its wake, seems to have resulted more from military defeat than from any endogenous political dynamic. To be sure, some – for example, the supporters of the Vichy regime – may see an indirect causality, attributing the military weakness of France, demonstrated by its defeat, to the Third Republic itself.

The standard history of France in the interwar period has taken this for granted. The historical intrigue it portrays tends to relate the survival of the Third Republic to an odd particularity attributed by many historians to the French society: its 'allergy', or its 'immunity' to fascist social movements, the ideologies, the practices and the 'solutions' associated with them.

One of our objectives here is to show the limits and the errors of this standard explanation. Though this will be done in detail further on, we must point out one of these limits from the outset, since it necessarily conditions any comparative research of the type undertaken in this book. In many cases it is somewhat careless to piece together a history based on the presumption that the outcome – or the apparent outcome – could not have been otherwise; for instance, the survival – or, in other cases, the demise – of democracy. Not only is such an approach careless, but also, as we shall see in the case of France, it can preclude the identification of a number of very pertinent historical phenomena.

In other words, it is risky to attempt to explain the survival or the demise of a democracy (or of an authoritarian system for that matter) by cutting out disparate facts and organizing them according to the known result to which they are assumed to lead – a result which, for the cases examined in this book, only was finalized by the defeat of fascism after the Second World War. This risk is, in other words, not specific to the case of France.

Because of this problem one of the challenges in this chapter will be to analyse the case of France without exaggerating the historical significance and the

France



inevitability of the survival of France's democratic system up until the Second World War. On this point, let us state explicitly that the author has no opinion as to whether or not democracy would have survived if there had been no war and no military defeat.

This chapter is organized in a similar way to the other case-studies in this book. It begins with a description of some elements characterizing French society, starting with fundamental social cleavages, and then moves on to the organizational forms adopted in France for the political representation of social groups and interests, and for political competition. The second part is devoted to a description of the political dynamics observed in France during the period between the First and Second World Wars – a time of great governmental instability. Political crises and changing coalitions occurred frequently, as did

social movements and unprecedented forms of government (such as the *Front Populaire*). Just as common, though largely undiscovered and unexplored, were the transformations of the political arena. By adopting this order for our analysis, we run the risk of being interpreted as suggesting a hierarchy or a causal relationship between the two sections, from supposedly 'deep' social cleavages to the 'surface' of political life, the political events. Despite this organizational choice, however, it is not our intention either to suggest or imply that structural factors have a causal superiority with respect to conjunctural factors; nor do we wish to imply that the basic cleavages bear such a relation to political events. In the third section, we evaluate the standard visions of French society's political itinerary between the two world wars. Among these, we will consider the rather surprising theory of 'immunity to fascism' mentioned above.

2 Cleavages, organizations and politics

The following observations are not intended as a full description of French society between First and Second World Wars. Rather, they are to serve as elementary reminders, and to draw the reader's attention to the evolutions and transformations that influenced the societal rifts that existed at the time and which bear some relevance to the object of this book. Our approach is gradual, beginning with a description of features seemingly unrelated to the political game, then examining the cleavages having a direct political impact. In the process, we will also consider some questions concerning the use of the term 'cleavage' in political sociology.

2.1 Fundamental cleavages

By the end of the First World War, France had long achieved nationhood. Linguistically, the country was more or less homogeneous, despite the reintegration of Alsace and Lorraine (although it is certainly worth noting here the emergence of a movement in favour of autonomy, based precisely on linguistic differences; the most radical elements of this movement were rapidly suppressed). Moreover, at this time, France was the centre of a colonial empire. The influence of this situation on the development of cleavages and their mobilisation in political confrontation has scarcely been studied for the period in question.

The opposition between Paris – the nation's capital and the great beneficiary of the French state's centralized organization – and the rest of France, was another centre – periphery type of cleavage. Indeed, it was a cleavage that became, at the time, common rhetorical fodder in political life. More important, however, was the visibility acquired by the Parisian political scene, which had multiplied. Indeed, next to the official scene, occupied by the public authorities and the parliamentary arena, a new scene – that of street demonstrations, mobilizations leading sometimes to confrontation – sprang up. This 'public' scene was, without doubt, most noticeable in Paris.

The visibility of the Parisian political scene became strangely aligned with another, more intentional characteristic of the day in France: the importance of the nation's rural sector was becoming more and more closely linked to the political weight attributed to it by the segmentation of electoral districts and voting procedures, generally favourable to the rural population. One might wonder, in light of this fact, whether it would be appropriate to consider France as a rural nation in the interwar period. Yet to do so would be careless. First, because it was during this very period that France's rural majority became a minority: the urban population (municipalities of more than 2000 inhabitants) came to represent more than 50 per cent of the total. To be sure, France's active population (around 20 million in 1920; slightly fewer after 1931, when France began to suffer the effects of the economic crisis) was still distributed among the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the proportions 37 per cent, 33 per cent, and 30 per cent, respectively. But these proportions do not allow a full appreciation of the extent of the rural exodus. Between 1919 and 1931, almost one million left the countryside for the towns. This phenomenon is probably also related to the exposure, and growing openness, of rural persons to other lifestyles – an exposure that was certainly facilitated by the First World War. However, for three-quarters of the farms at the time, agriculture was still a family-run operation, and in 1931 the entire agricultural sector employed fewer than 700,000 salaried workers.

By contrast, other socio-professional groups witnessed a great expansion. The number of industrial workers grew to its peak of 7 million in 1931, just before the setback resulting from economic crisis. Tertiary sector employment also grew considerably, particularly for the liberal professions, for employees in commercial distribution, and for public service employees and civil servants.

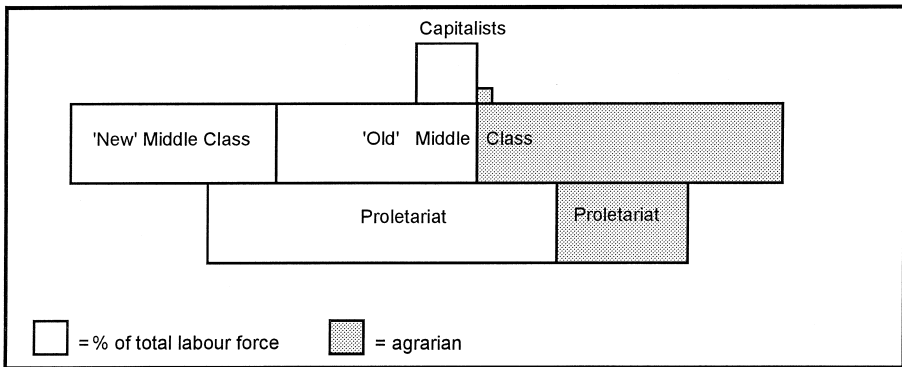
Table 7.1 France: class structure, 1929

Population (millions)	40.9 ^a
Employment rate	53.2 ^a
Rate of agrarian employment	38.4 ^a
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.2
Family farms	21.7
Agrarian proletariat	9.3
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	3.3
Old middle class	14.2
New middle class	14.6
Proletariat	24.7
Sub-proletariat	
Total	88

Sources: Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 91); Fischer (ed.) (1987: 354).

Note: The figure for landlords has been estimated according to the size of the holdings.
a Data for 1926.

Figure 7.1 France: class structure, 1929



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 7.1.

Though the structure of France's active population in the interwar period was comparable to those of other industrialized European nations – salaried persons accounting for more than half of the active population – we must point out here a distinguishing feature: namely, France's comparatively high proportion of self-employed persons (those not salaried), although even these were extremely heterogeneous in their social status.

But though we consider this point important, we feel that it would be a mistake to attribute too much political importance to this characteristic in itself. In the many attempts that were made during this period to rally the middle classes, for example, the importance of the self-employed was never in opposition to the emerging importance of the salaried managerial class. Both contributed to the development of a threefold representation of society, where the middle classes fell between the working class and the bourgeoisie. This representation was opposed to the dualist one which was used extensively by emerging social movements, notably in the strikes of 1936 (Boltanski 1982).

Beyond the need to guard the analysis of cleavages against essentialist schemas of interpretation, these observations already hint at other difficulties related to the use of the unassumingly ambiguous term 'cleavage' by contemporary practitioners of political sociology. As mentioned earlier, by taking a particular cleavage (or set of cleavages) as the point of departure in an analysis, one inevitably suggests a relation of mechanical and unequivocal causality between the cleavage and the system of political forces present. In addition to this problem, the term itself can have any of a number of meanings, depending on the context: a cleavage can designate a conflict that is *effectively observable* in a given society, but it can also designate the traces left by *past conflicts*; worse still, a cleavage can be defined by the observer on the basis of a social division he feels could constitute a *potential source of conflict*, or a resource for political mobilization. Then again, 'cleavages' can also indicate a simple border between bodies of political thought, any kind of

social division objectified by some institutions or organizations, a more or less elaborate representation of society, or even any 'objective' principle of segregation or differentiation constructed by the researcher. The resulting confusion is compounded by a common tendency to portray cleavages as stable and unequivocal, for instance, in making a clear distinction between 'social' cleavages and 'political' cleavages.

The relevance of these points can be more easily assessed by examining one of French society's most 'fundamental' cleavages – that of religion. In the period between First and Second World Wars, France was without doubt an overwhelmingly Catholic country. The Jewish and Protestant minorities were numerically insignificant – about 350,000 and 600,000, respectively. But this representation is no more than a rough approximation, for two reasons. First, because a very large part of the French population had already distanced themselves from the practices and the social universe of the Catholic Church. Many had opted for agnosticism (a phenomenon that affected a large number of regions, and touched the Protestant and Jewish minorities as well as the Catholics), or even a somewhat militant atheism. Second, but more importantly, because the nature of the cleavage is not quite clear: French society and politics were still heavily entrenched in the conflicts that had opposed the Church and its conservative allies against the republic at the turn of the century. The celebrated separation of Church and State (which left Alsace and Lorraine untouched) was only one of many elements that contributed strongly to the defeat of the Catholic Church in these matters.

In practical terms, the religious cleavage was clearly just as political as it was religious for a good proportion of the population. As legitimate as it might seem in this case to speak of a superimposition of cleavages, to do so would still be contestable, since it would imply two distinct realities, something perfectly fictional for many people. Nevertheless, for the period under consideration and despite the ambiguity of the term, it is not inappropriate to speak of a cleavage, insofar as the issue of religion was clearly the object – and was still a rhetorical weapon – of tactical manoeuvres carried out by the various political competitors. Indeed, beginning with the electoral success of the 'Cartel des gauches' in 1924, and the announcement by the new government that the Republican legislation would apply *en bloc* to Alsace and Lorraine, the different components of the *Catholic camp* began to rally vigorously in protest. The result of these efforts was a retreat by the government. It was during these actions that the powerful National Catholic Federation was established under the direction of General de Castelnau, in parallel with the appearance of a number of other anti-parliamentary *Ligues*.

For quite some time, the Catholic camp (which was certainly not representative of the true diversity of French Catholicism) remained a pillar of the anti-parliamentary pole of the regime. This is not to say, however, that there were not a few hesitations. For example, the condemnation by the Vatican of the 'Action Française' (with which a great deal of French catholicism – including the French clergy – sympathized, regardless of the religious content of its message) and of

the writings of Maurras clearly perturbed a number of Catholics and probably contributed to the shrinkage of the audience and of the social support given to the organization after 1926. (Please note that this was by no means the sole factor, nor even the most powerful: the return of Raymond Poincaré's government, after the failure of the *Cartel des gauches*, also had a weakening effect on the audience and the resources of the anti-parliamentary *Ligues*.) In many ways, the other religious cleavages – in particular, the hostility toward Protestants and the Freemasons, and the violent manifestations of antisemitism – might have only been elements, and in some cases only by-products, of this posture – which was not only religious – taken by the Catholic camp.

2.2 Social consequences of the war

To discuss seriously the difficulties connected with the analysis of these cleavages leads us back to the question of alleged causality which was mentioned above and which is overlooked each time one speaks so innocently about 'the social bases of politics'. The same question is raised, in the French case, by the analysis of the effects, on the one hand, of the First World War and, on the other hand, of those which are specifically linked to politics as, if one follows Max Weber's terminology (Weber 1978), a particular 'social sphere' or, if one prefers, a differentiated social 'field' or sector, more or less autonomous with regard to other social spheres, and following to a certain extent its own self-referential logic (Dobry 1986).

It is not possible to review here the multiple social and economic consequences of the First World War. Some of these consequences are none the less important for understanding the political confrontations that took place between the First World War and the Second World War. Consider, for instance, the population drain experienced by French society (and the various implications of that drain), or the mass impact on millions of persons of a long-term trench war. Other effects also deserve our attention, such as the formation of clusters of solidarity and of a number of veterans' groups backed by strong organizations. These veterans' groups were numerous, and their alignment could be traced to the cleavages in the political arena (like the *Union Nationale des Combattants*, very much to the right – if not the anti-parliamentary extreme right – which stood in opposition to the *Union Fédérale* – a bit more moderate – and to other organisations that were smaller but more politically active, such as the *ARAC*, linked to the Communist Party or the *FNRC*, an organization close to the radicals). But common to all the veterans' groups was a pronounced social legitimacy – a political resource of which these organisations made abundant use. One of these organizations – the *Croix de Feu*, which we will discuss in more detail later on – went through a succession of changes that transformed it into a very powerful political party by the end of the interwar period. Indeed, it was probably the most powerful and best organized party ever produced by the right before the Second World War. This was, nevertheless, a rather atypical example of organizational development.

Table 7.2 France: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
NDP (m. fr)	386	1330	1400	1460	1630	1880	1880	2080	2550	2590	2800	3000	3000	2900	2520	2440	2250	2210	2490	2940	3580	3580
NNP (m. RM)	3280	2700	2500	3040	3290	3810	3810	3840	4010	3870	4100	4530	4470	4280	3980	4000	3920	3750	3710	3840	3800	4070
NDP (m. US-\$)	781	643	595	724	784	908	915	955	922	977	1079	1065	1019	948	953	934	893	884	915	905	969	969
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	20	16	15	18	20	23	23	23	23	23	24	26	26	24	23	23	22	21	21	22	22	23
Population (thousands)	39770	38700	39000	39240	39420	39880	40310	40610	40870	40940	41050	41230	41610	41860	41860	41890	41950	41940	41910	41930	41960	41900
IND PROD (1913=100)	100	>56	61	54	77	87	108	107	125	109	126	140	140	119	103	112	104	100	108	114	104	104
COST (1913=100)	100	264	366	318	306	342	390	414	540	564	564	600	606	582	528	510	492	450	480	606	690	732
Unemployment (thousands)	13	28	13	10	10	10	12	11	11	47	16	10	13	64	301	305	368	464	470	380	402	418
B. o. Trade (m. fr)	-1541	-23010	-2982	-2896	-1993	2206	2040	-384	2200	-1540	-8082	-9697	-11770	-10102	-9957							
B. o. P. (m. fr)	6894	-27693	8789	5576	4742	10194	8428	9255	7746	5720	4489	308	-3012	-6315	-2950	-1250	-400	-2820	-3995	-120		
Lost working days (million)	15478	23112	7027	3935	4172	3863	2046	4072	1046	6377	2765	7209	950	1244	1199	2393	1182					
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.	100	143	161	200	198	231	202	233	259	259	233	259	259	220	191	207	193	185	200	211	193	193
Cost of Living	100	96	108	123	130	170	177	177	189	191	183	166	160	155	142	151	191	217	230			
Unemployment	100	46	36	36	43	39	168	57	36	46	229	1.075	1.089	1.314	1.657	1.679	1.357	1.436	1.493			
NNP	100	100	122	132	152	154	160	155	164	181	179	171	159	160	157	150	148	154	152	163		
Strikes	100	56	59	55	29	58	15	91	39	103	14	18	17	34	17							

Sources: Peter (ed.) (1983/1987: 53f., 349); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 166ff., 356, 743ff., 785, 818ff); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 93).

Note: RM (Reichsmark) is US\$0.2382; NDP is at current market prices in new Franc; NNP is at constant 1938 market prices in Reichsmark.

In fact, the so-called 'esprit ancien combattant' was also connected to another phenomenon related to the war, but seldom analysed by historians (for an exception, see Becker and Berstein, 1990): the reinsertion of the right into legitimate politics. From its outset, the War had the effect of grouping together the majority of political and social forces in the 'Union Sacrée', a clear affirmation of the time-out for political and social opposition. In other words, the Union Sacrée was a wartime consensus that manifested itself in the very presence of socialists in the government until September 1917 (even the radical Marxist Jules Guesde was a member of the government between August 1914 and December 1916). It is not without reason that this wartime consensus has been said to have provided the grounds for a conservative representation of society, condemning both social struggles and political cleavages. Just as this consensus made a number of socialists, CGT unionists and even some radicals ill-at-ease, so did it contribute to a reinsertion of the right into official politics – a forum from which it had been excluded for nearly 30 years. This is true not only of the Catholic right (even if its participation in government was limited), but also – in different ways – of the Action Française, which employed the tactical possibilities made available by the wartime consensus to systematically denounce the 'inner enemy'.

Though it is likely that this consensus facilitated the adhesion of some elements of the conservative right to the regime of the Third Republic, its most important consequence was the relegitimization of the different right-wing elements in official politics. The effects of this were visible from the end of the First World War, in the elections of 1919, with the emergence of the 'Bloc National', the axis of which seems to have been somewhere on the far right (in Parliament, the majorities fluctuated more freely). This axis corresponded to a heterogeneous group, but predominantly conservative, which counted a large portion of the Catholic right in its membership. Its formal name was the Entente Républicaine Démocratique, and it held 180 seats of its own. This 'Blue Horizon' Chamber (so called because the veterans were well-represented) rapidly came to symbolize not only a move to the right, but also a mistrust of partisan cleavages and, already, a valorization of the competence of 'technicians', as opposed to politicians (Mayeur 1984).

Another effect of the war (and its related upheavals) was the disintegration of the working-class movement, the split in the Socialist Party at the Tours Congress, and the subsequent birth of the Communist Party (and it is not necessary to describe them in detail here). It will be useful, however, to recall the main relevant points:

1. The split that took place at the Tours Congress did not completely reflect the cleavage that arose on the issue over the SFIO's attitude toward the Union Sacrée. Indeed, the Tours division also affected those who were opposed to the wartime consensus and had joined Jean Longuet in successfully taking the majority at the party's Paris Congress in October 1918. What was at stake in this fracture also determined the stance taken toward the Russian Revolution,

and even more delicate, the attitude adopted concerning the conditions that had been placed on the SFIO's adhesion to the Third International. Longuet himself deemed these conditions unacceptable.

2. These debates should not hide the enthusiasm felt by the grass-roots militants for the Russian Revolution. Support for the Third International was voted for by three-quarters of those represented at Tours; it would be too hasty to see the full explanation for this in the postwar influx of new adherents, most of whom were supposed to come from rural backgrounds.

3. In confirmation of this, the fracture was mirrored by that of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT). Indeed, at the time that they were excluded from the organization and proceeded to create the new CGT Unitaire, the 'minorities' – revolutionary unionists and partisans of the Russian Revolution – who advanced rapidly within the Confederation, controlled a considerable number of federations, including those of the metalworkers and the railroad employees, and probably the majority of the members. Just as the relations between the Communists and the traditional supporters of the 'old house' eventually broke down, so did this balance of power, and the CGT Unitaire witnessed a severe attrition until the 1930s, mostly due to the activist tactics instigated by the Communist Party (and Moscow): from almost 500,000 in 1922, membership fell to about 200,000 in 1930. During the same period, the CGT doubled its membership, reaching 700,000 in 1930. In the wake of this evolution of unionism, one can discern a tendency for unions to realign themselves along political cleavages (but one should note also the rise of a Catholic unionism, although it was not very strong in this period).

2.3 Political organizations

It would be a mistake to assume that these political cleavages in interwar France were a simple translation of deeper, more fundamental, or more primordial cleavages. As we have seen, their relation to the social structure is never completely unequivocal. The cleavage between left and right, the centrepiece of French politics, is no exception. At the beginning of the period under study, this cleavage was firmly established as a long-time opposition in the minds of the electors; it was the objectified result of past political confrontations – principally those that accompanied the gestation and the consolidation of the Third Republic; in retrospect this cleavage allowed political actors – as well as observers – to reinterpret these confrontations by ascribing to them, a posteriori, a significance that was, in fact, no more than one of their distant by-products. It would indeed be easy to show how heterogeneous are the segments of society that identify with the political left or right (which by no means implies that this type of identification is entirely haphazard); or how often these identifications are the result of a history that is much more chaotic than those who like retrospective coherence would have us believe; or, how many of the social actors are uncomfortable in feeling themselves to be prisoners of this cleavage.

What is important, though, is the *constraining effect* that this type of representation can have on electors as well as on politicians and militants, on those who

find their place in such an opposition and those who do not. It is also important to see how this constraint makes some alliances seem 'normal' (for instance, between radicals and Socialists, and even Communists: it had become a matter of 'republican discipline') while making others seem abnormal. These effects of constraint can be observed throughout the period between the First World War and the Second World War. They influence the tactical choices made during electoral campaigns and in elections; they often condemn politicians who would normally prefer to govern 'in the centre' to take on left-wing or right-wing allies, despite their own political views and social dispositions. For these reasons, one would often like to paralyse these constraints, at least partially: this was undoubtedly one of the objectives of the electoral law of 1919.

Once again, we can see how dangerous it is to accept a narrowly objectivist perspective: the cleavage left/right is also vulnerable to the tactical activities of political actors. This includes not only those actors who seek, via programmatic statements, to promote a 'third way' – in the 1930s, a fashionable posture – but, moreover, those who in a more pragmatic way discover here and there, in local situations, issues for which it might be to their advantage to cross the frontiers when it seems possible or riskless. Most importantly of all, it includes those who, once the elections have passed, reach out to create parliamentary coalitions and mixed governments. It is these cases that most marked France's political life in the interwar period; it is they that provoked a good number of its governmental crises; but it is also they that brought about solutions to the most serious crises of the period.

A second cleavage directly linked to the structure of the political space, though historians might seldom recognise it as such, finds its expression in the way that politics are 'made'. Beside the official scene, centred around the parliamentary arenas, the rituals of electoral consultation and the professionalization of political career, the political confrontations that marked the end of the nineteenth century resulted in the development of political organizations, the *Ligues*, using other forms of more militant mobilization in other places, often the streets, and cultivating other 'styles' of action expressing a visible distance from the ordinary practices of 'politicians' (that means, of course, expressing an openly violent anti-parliamentarism). The appearance of these organizations – for the most part right-wing – and their means of action contributed fully to the entry of the masses into politics. The end result of this was the introduction of universal suffrage, a paradox, given the anti-parliamentary origin of the *Ligues*.

In other words, the *Ligues* were a 'modern' form of political organization (Sternhell 1978) – this is true even for the monarchists of the Action Française. During the interwar period, the reactivation of the *Ligues* and, moreover, the birth of new organizations, together with the impact of these groups on the political life, seem to have been closely linked to the periods of leftist 'threat' and to the related conjunctures of political crisis: 1924–26 (the 'Cartel des gauches'), then 1932–4 and, of course, 1936–8 (the years of the 'Front Populaire'). During the whole period, and especially in the 1930s, the universe of the *Ligues* became a particular part of the political space characterized by a strong

internal concurrence. The extra-parliamentary posture of these organizations heavily contributed to the new configuration of the right of this space after the events of February 1934.

3 The era of ambiguity – the political games in interwar France

3.1 Governmental instability and political parties

Almost the entire interwar period was characterized by instability in government: over the twenty-year period, more than 40 cabinets succeeded one another, some lasting for no more than a few weeks. This instability is often seen as the major weakness of the Third Republic. However, caution should be taken in making such an attribution. One reason is that, despite the instability of the government, it was often the same men who constituted the membership – or even the leadership – of the different cabinets (Briand, Poincaré, Daladier, Chautemps, and even Tardieu and Laval). Another reason is that, as we will see later, the effects of this instability were ambiguous and the instability itself could be seen as a means for a significant part of the political establishment of the time to ‘manage’ the serious political crises – not to be confused with the numerous *ministerial* crises – encountered by the regime throughout this period. It is worth pointing out the importance of a particular institutional factor: in effect, the instability of the government was influenced by certain aspects of the compromise underlying the bicameralism of the Third Republic. The government could be overturned by either of the two parliamentary chambers, and the Senate played an important role throughout the period, the role of conservation of the regime in both its political and socioeconomic dimensions (significantly, it was in the Senate that the fates of the leftist experiments – the Cartel des Gauches and the Front Populaire – were played out, with the fall of the cabinets of Herriot in April 1925 and of Blum in June 1937, on financial issues). The instability of the government was thus certainly a contributory factor in the push toward anti-parliamentarianism in the interwar period.

Another factor explaining this instability lies in the groupings formed by the political parties, and the fluctuations in their relations to one another. In appearance, and despite its perceptible decline, the axis of these fluctuations was the Parti Radical. This party had been a dominant political force, in terms of its influence, since 1902, but it emerged from the First World War battered and torn. Some of its principal leaders, such as Caillaux and Malvy, had even been disqualified for a time due to their opposition to Clemenceau, that is, their inclination toward a peace compromise with Germany. Identified with the *synthèse républicaine* of the beginning of the century, and strongly attached to liberal economic principles while at the same time carrying the banner for representation of the middle classes, and incapable of establishing durable internal discipline, the radicals were continually fluctuating between parliamentary and governmental alliances with the ‘moderates’ of the right-wing groups (the ‘concentration’ formula mentioned above), and participation in left-wing electoral fronts with the socialists, in an

Table 7.3 France: electoral results, 1919–36

	16.11.1919		11.05.1924		22.04.1928		01.05.1932		26.04.1936	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Socialist Party	21.2	67	20.1	104	20.5	99	18.0	129	19.9	149
Radical Socialist Party	17.4	106	17.9	162	19.2	120	17.8	157	14.4	109
Socialist Republicans	5.3	22	0.0		5.4	33	5.2	37	7.6	56
Independent Radicals	6.2	51	0.0		10.0	52	0.0	62	0.0	
Left Republicans	10.9	79	11.7	53	0.0	74	23.2	72	0.0	
Republican Union	22.3	201	35.3	204	12.9	182	22.0	76	42.7	222
Liberal Popular Action	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Conservatives + Independents	14.0	88	4.2	25	6.1	26	2.3	33	0.0	
Communist Party	0.0		9.8	26	8.3	14	11.3	12	15.3	72
Popular Democratic Party	0.0		0.0		3.2		0.0	16	0.0	
Proletarian Unity	0.0		0.0		0.8		0.0	11	0.0	
Others	2.7	2	1.0		0.0	2	0.3		0.2	
Seats total		616		574		602		605		608

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 130).

attempt to preserve their weight in Parliament. Despite their efforts, the radicals were supplanted by the socialists, in terms of votes in 1928, and in terms of numbers of deputies in 1936. This decline was enhanced by the fact that even the communists managed to obtain more seats. As a result, the pacts with the socialists and the communists came under ever heavier criticism from a strong internal minority. Eventually, the experiment with the Front Populaire was ended, and from 1938, under Daladier, and using the pretext of the need to save the nation, the radicals tipped to the right.

We have already examined the cleavage that divided the left between communists and socialists at the end of the war. The SFIO succeeded in its reconstruction and, in ten years, had managed to more than double its membership (137,000 in 1932): moreover, beginning in 1924, it outclassed the communists in terms of votes, and had more than one hundred deputies in Parliament. The schism had facilitated an electoral association with the radicals. In 1936, the socialists were the most important left-wing party and their leader, Léon Blum, led the government of the Front Populaire: for some time, already, the subtle and ambiguous distinction elaborated by the socialist leader between the 'exercise' and the 'conquest' of power had laid the grounds for an opportunity to 'take responsibility' in government. This opportunity was clearly related to the internal conflicts of the SFIO. The break-away of the 'neo-socialists' reflected differences in ideology as much as an impatience to participate in the government. On the other hand, the respect of institutional constraints by the governments elected in 1936 had led to serious tensions with the left of the party.

As for the Communist Party, which counted 130,000 members at its birth, the postwar period was a time of decline: departures and exclusions combined with the progressive effects of political isolation (which was heavily accentuated by the 'class against class' approach adopted in 1928, and which resulted in a refusal by the Communist Party to support, in the second ballot of the elections, other left-wing candidates, mainly socialists). Reduced to fewer than 30,000 members around 1930 – and to just 12 deputies in 1932 – the Communist Party did succeed, however, in stabilizing a group of leaders and, most importantly, an apparatus of 'permanent' salaried militants. Both of these proved very important when the tactical switch of the Communist International led the Communist Party to open up to the *unité d'action* of the left wing (a more marginal, but in a way a congruent process: when the rightist cabinet leader Pierre Laval went to visit Stalin and obtained from him a declaration of approval of the 'national defence policy' of France, it made it easier for the Communist Party to construct a new, more 'patriotic' identity). In terms of social establishment and political weight, the Communist Party was the greatest beneficiary of the electoral victory of the *Front Populaire*.

One ambiguity characterizing the interwar period in France arose from the fact that the image of a 'radical republic' – the image first carried by the opponents of the regime of the Third Republic – had only a limited basis. For practically two-thirds of this period – 14 years – it was the 'moderates', i.e. the parliamentary right, that constituted the axis of governmental constellations.

The major component of the parliamentary right, designated under several denominations, was the Alliance Démocratique. An organization with a very relaxed structure, the *Alliance* only existed in the *Departments* where it held seats, and was often dispersed over several distinct parliamentary groups. It gave the members of Parliament freedom in their vote, and was constituted more of notables than of militants. Most significantly, it was a rallying-point for ambitious politicians and provided the regime with a large number of its ministerial personnel and cabinet presidents. Though the Alliance Démocratique certainly had no monopoly on relations with business and with the financial and economic decision-makers, its relations with this world were naturally strongest, and it was the Alliance that benefited most from the resources of these powers. The Alliance Démocratique was none the less not homogeneous in terms of the political orientations of its members, and this, too, was a contributory factor to governmental instability. The most visible segments and leaders of the Alliance (most of whom had entered politics before the First World War, as Poincaré had, during the consolidation of the so-called *synthèse républicaine*) tended to favour the 'concentration' approach, implying an association with the radicals. These members even shared with the latter a certain attachment to the laicisation of the French society. Other members of the Alliance Démocratique were more in favour of associating with the conservatives. Both those in favour of concentration and those in favour of a conservative alliance were none the less united in their resolute hostility, in particular in 1924, 1932 and 1936, to the emergence of any governmental majority centred to the left.

The other large component of the right in Parliament was the Fédération Républicaine. Though somewhat more structured than the Alliance Démocratique it was without a doubt just as heterogeneous. The conservative orientations of the Fédération were visibly displayed, but it is dubious that, as it is sometimes suggested, all its members accepted the regime of the Third Republic: it was the Fédération Républicaine that harboured most of the representatives in Parliament of the Catholic right. Also, it was inside the Fédération that the authoritarian leanings of politicians such as Philippe Henriot and Xavier Vallat first came to light. It was often the members of the Fédération who linked the *Ligues* to the political arena.

The Fédération Républicaine was undisciplined and torn by serious political differences: toward the end of the 1930s, few of its purportedly 'national' leaders were as ready as de Wendel and Marin to accord greater importance to the threat of a Nazi German power than to the social fears that arose in the wake of the Front Populaire. Because of its internal problems, the Fédération was relegated despite a strong electoral base to filling the gaps in governments dominated by the Union Démocratique, or, in the cabinets of the Union Nationale, for example, after 6 February 1934.

The description we have made so far only takes into account the political forces in the parliamentary arena. But the configuration of the political universe – and especially of the right – was greatly transformed by the second wave of the *Ligues* (Soucy, 1995). The influence of this factor took on importance throughout the

1930s, particularly intensifying after 1934, and reaching its height after 1936. In this period, new organizations sprang up next to the old (such as, for example, the Action Française) and other pre-existing organizations which had appeared with the first wave between 1924 and 1926 (for example, the Jeunesses Patriotes). Some of the new organizations had only a limited impact, as was the case for many of those groups advertising themselves as openly fascist or tending thereto (for example, Solidarité Française or Bucard's francisme). Other organizations were characterized by more ambiguous identities and evolutions, such as, at its origin, Doriot's Parti Populaire Français, which grew out of the communist *rayon* (local section) in Saint-Denis. The most important group, however, was that mentioned above, the Croix-de-feu of Colonel de La Rocque. This group began as a veterans' organization and witnessed explosive growth after 6 February 1934. Following the disbandment of the *Ligues* by the government of the Front Populaire, the Croix-de-feu became the Parti Social Français and sought entry into the competition for votes. Soon, it became a considerable political force, with an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 members at the end of 1937; this represented more than both the communists and socialists combined. We will return later to the interpretations that have been given to this spurt of the *Ligues*. It is important here to note that the *Ligues* phenomenon was not at all 'marginal'. This phenomenon clearly transformed the structure and the conditions of competition in this zone of the political universe. This was exemplified by what was essentially an attempted defensive alliance against the Parti Social Français (the Front de la Liberté of 1937 was only one episode of this attempt), extending from Doriot's Parti Populaire Français and the Action Française to large parts of the Fédération Républicaine.

3.2 Electoral results

Finally, ambiguity was present in the elections and in their results: of the five general legislative elections of the interwar period, two (1919 and 1928) were won by the right; but each of the times that left-wing coalitions won (in 1924, 1932 or 1936), it never took more than two years for the results obtained at the ballot box to be reversed in Parliament (or in the streets) and for the 'moderates' – and even the conservatives – to return to government.

The elections of 1919 and 1924 saw the replacement of the traditional *scrutin d'arrondissement* (a two rounds uninominal majoritarian system) by a 'mixed' ballot, where proportional representation was modified by an element of majority voting encouraging the formation of broad electoral alliances. In 1919 this strengthened the swing to the right – especially since the left was badly divided as it entered the elections and the radicals, even the independent socialists, quite often shared lists with 'moderates' or the conservative right: as we have seen, the victory of the 'Bloc National' was, nevertheless, beyond question. In 1924, somewhat surprisingly, this type of ballot favoured the Cartel des Gauches (an electoral alliance between the radicals and the socialists, undoubtedly facilitated by the secession of Tours (cf. Mayeur 1984), the communists being isolated: with a minority of votes the left managed to win a

majority of seats – but it could not count on the communist deputies and its parliamentary position was doubtful from the outset. Following from this experience, the elections of 1928 saw a return to the plurality ballot. In the wake of the collapse of the Cartel des Gauches and the swing of the parliamentary majority towards an association of the radicals with the right, under Poincaré, this modification of the electoral system had the expected effect; despite a slight majority of the votes for the left this time (at least on the first ballot), the victory of the right was decisive, with an overall majority in the Lower House and without need for support from the radicals who, despite Poincaré's desire to see them participate in government, were to gradually move into the opposition. The next two elections, in 1932 and 1936, heralded success for the left, although the outcomes were quite different. The 1932 elections saw what appeared to be a clear parliamentary majority by an alliance between the radicals and the socialists, the isolation of the communists continuing with a reduction in the number of their deputies to twelve and of their votes to less than 800,000, roughly one fifth less than in 1928. The 1936 elections, on the other hand, saw the emergence of a new form of alliance on the left, with the inclusion of the communists, who immediately reaped the benefits, increasing the number of their deputies sixfold and almost doubling the votes won. Although a strong minority of elected radicals was uneasy with this alliance, it should be pointed out that the success of the left, in terms of votes, represented only a limited advance compared to 1932 and that, most importantly, the radicals fell back – in terms of both votes and seats. Finally, the elections scheduled for 1940 did not take place because of the war; these elections were expected to see not only a significant retreat of the left but also an important breakthrough for the Parti Social Français under Colonel de la Rocque.

3.3 The crises and their 'solutions'

The three electoral victories of the left were followed by some vigorous political confrontations. We have seen how the success of the Cartel des Gauches led to mobilization of the right, particularly of the Catholic camp, and the first push – or 'wave' (Soucy 1986) – of the extreme right *Ligues* of the interwar period. The fate of the 'Cartel', however, would depend more on financial and monetary issues – it was at this time that first attacks on the 'Wall of Money', an obstacle in the way of any majority of the left (Jeanneney 1977), were launched. From 1926, the radicals, with their move towards a formula of 'national unity', provided a 'solution' to the crisis. One of the paradoxical effects of this outcome, and especially of the success of Poincaré's government in the years to follow, was the gradual weakening of the *Ligues*, which experienced a marked setback in terms of interest and support. In spite of appearances, conditions were never quite the same in subsequent crises. After the 1932 elections it was the scandals linked to the Stavisky affair that gave the opportunity to the *Ligues* and their allies (which early on were to include large veteran associations) to mount attacks on the 'République Radicale'. The crisis of February 1934, the most important episode in these mobilization, followed violent demonstrations which,

on 6 February 1934, had targeted the *Chambre des députés* (Lower House) and the response from the forces of order which resulted in 15 dead and more than 1,400 injured. The government formed by the radical leader Daladier – who that very evening of 6 February had received a clear majority of votes in the House as leader of the government – resigned and gave way to a government representing the ‘*Union Nationale*’, led by Gaston Doumergue and in which there was strong representation, alongside the radicals, of many leaders of the right, both ‘moderate’ and conservative (including Pétain). Even if the resignation was actually due to the failure of the high judiciary magistrates and other officials to enforce repressive measures – it is a remarkable example of the collapse of collusive transactions among the strategic sectors of the State (Dobry 1986) – and the vacillations of the radical leaders themselves, was seen by many as a capitulation to the uprising organized by the *Ligues*. This had two consequences: the immediate success of 6 February triggered a marked demobilization among protesters of the right and extreme right and it provoked a countermobilization of the left which suddenly found itself united in the street against what was considered at the time to have been a ‘fascist’ threat similar to that which had recently triumphed in Germany. This is seen by many as the origin of the *Front Populaire*. The reconciliation was, of course, encouraged by developments in the Communist International following the Nazi success. Parallel reconciliation was to be found at the level of the trade unions: negotiations begun in the autumn of 1934 culminated in March 1936 in a reunification of the CGT with the communist ‘*Unitaires*’.

The difficulties encountered by the left have often been associated with the economic recession of 1929, particularly its effects on the middle classes. However, such a conclusion must be treated with caution: today it appears that the effects of the recession in France were considerably out of step with those in other countries. Industrial growth continued into the middle of 1931 and, at that time, there were officially only about 55,000 unemployed receiving benefits in France (compared to 8 million in the United States, more than 4.5 million in Germany and more than 2.5 million in United Kingdom). Until 1932, the governments of the right generally responded to the recession with a series of deflationary measures, being obsessed by the aim of a balanced budget. After the 1932 elections, the governments of the left tended to follow the same policy, in spite of socialist reservations. The result, which can be attributed to this response to the crisis, was that the recession had a longer-lasting impact in France.

The effects of the recession are therefore more ambivalent: they might just as easily be identified as one of the causes of the electoral success of the ‘*Front Populaire*’. The specific character of the critical period which followed these elections can partly be seen in the telescoping of the ‘deferred’ effects of the economic crisis with widespread social and political confrontations. The ‘red threat’ was certainly one of the main components, the electoral victory of 1936 turning rapidly into a social movement without historical precedent in France, accompanied from 14 May, by strikes and, for the first time, factory occupations. Disoriented at first, employers were forced to make significant concessions;

reinforced by legislative measures (such as the introduction of a fortnight's paid holiday), they were to form the foundation of the image of the 'Front Populaire'. The repercussions of the 'social fear' were, in fact, to be drastic and long-lasting: not only did employers revise their positions and strategies but, as pointed out earlier, there were new advances made by the extreme right (certain segments of which veered towards terrorist activity – with 'the Cagoule' – or towards preparations for a potential coup) and a reorganization of the whole political universe of the right. The 'Front Populaire' experiment was not to hold out for long. Communist support for the government was wavering, although they did a great deal to channel and then end the strike movements. The socialists soon found themselves back in a situation similar to that of the radicals, and Léon Blum himself (also preoccupied with international developments) found himself tempted to establish governmental groupings broadly open to the right. This was to no avail; financial and economic problems, the obvious hostility of economic circles, and the gradual collapse of a number of social movements, all contributed to a further move of the radicals in April 1938 towards a governmental association with the right (excluding communist support, something Blum undoubtedly wished to avoid). But this time the regrouping would be carried out under a radical government leader, Edouard Daladier.

4 Problems of interpretation: a case against the 'immunization' theory

One is therefore not entirely incorrect in identifying in these parliamentary swings of the radicals, during the critical periods, a kind of homeostatic mechanism, contributing to the survival of the Third Republic until 1940. Although at first sight attractive, this picture requires considerable adjustment when looked at in detail. First of all, this mechanism never actually achieved a 'natural' or automatic 're-equilibration' of the system when it was confronted with difficulties and tensions: the changes were each time the result of hard political confrontations, both outside of and within the radical party. For example, the swing of 1926 was achieved only after a year of manoeuvring, six governments having 'demonstrated' the inability of the 'Cartel' to free itself of financial problems (Mayeur 1984). The picture is also slightly misleading because the effects of swings on the configurations of the political space were not uniform. Aside from the frustrations of the left's electorate, 'dispossessed' each time of their electoral victory, the consequences for the mobilization of the radical right were uneven: though the return of Poincaré in 1926 'absorbed' the dynamism of the *Ligues*, this was certainly not the case in 1934, even if, as we have seen, mobilization at the time was broken up temporarily. Nor was it the case after the failure of the Front Populaire; the idea of a 'restoration of stability' simply does not take into account the decisive transformations in the political space, particularly with respect to the right. Indeed it is difficult to determine whether these transformations were entirely 'functional' in ensuring

the survival of the Third Republic and it is possible that the relative ease with which, a short time later, the Vichy regime came into being should also be considered in this light.

The standard history of this period, at least in France since the 1950s, does not appreciate the importance of these transformations of the political space and the upheavals of the right in this space. As suggested from the beginning of this chapter, the standard history attributes the 'survival' of the Third Republic to an alleged 'allergy' or 'immunity' of French society to fascism. With specific reference to the interwar period, this interpretation – referred to, elsewhere, as the 'immunization theory' – developed around a series of disconnected elements which all lead to clear the radical right of any suspicion of affinity with 'authentic' fascism (see especially Rémond 1982; Bernstein 1984; Julliard 1984; Winock 1983; Sand 1983). Among the main elements, we find *the outcome*, the result, of the crisis of February 1934: the *Ligues* did not take power, the traditional parties were not destroyed, to all appearances the regime of the Third Republic survived the crisis. Another central component of the immunity theory is linked to the questionable argument that all the organizations and militants of the radical right represented only *marginal* phenomena within French society and its political landscape; and that, moreover, these marginal phenomena – and the ideologies they supported – lacked any seriousness.

Our historians' judgement is particularly true of the political venture of Colonel de la Rocque, including that of the Parti Social Français, reduced with hindsight – in spite of great difficulties in establishing that affiliation – to being merely a pale, inconsequential and rather whimsical forerunner of General de Gaulle's RPF of the postwar period. Another important component again raises the question of terminology, that of the 'nature', this time, of what emerged from the Third Republic in 1940, namely the Vichy regime. The immunization theory – taken up in large part by the partisans of Marshal Pétain – rests on the idea of 'two Vichys' (a good, or at least acceptable, Vichy – of Pétain; a bad Vichy, of which one can acknowledge the fascistoid character, of Laval), a theme which was somewhat shaken by the translation of Robert Paxton's *The France of Vichy* (Paxton 1973). Finally, there is the decisive element of the immunization theory – the ultimate 'explanation': the specific 'nature' of French society – in other words, its 'political culture' – an idea so elastic that it can be put to the most varied of uses. In sum, the theory considers France's 'allergy to fascism' as a determining factor of the outcome of the crisis of February 1934, of the so-called 'marginality' of the radical right, of the survival of the Third Republic and also, although we will leave this question out of the following discussion, of the very 'nature' of Vichy.

4.1 The logic of thinking from the outcome

The immunity theory was revived in the face of widely divergent historical interpretations offered by foreign authors, especially in opposition to the work of Zeev Sternhell on French ideological traditions and 'origins' of fascism (Sternhell 1983; Sternhell, Sznajder and Asheri 1989). The critical discussion of

the immunization theory that follows is **not** a debate around the interpretation of Sternhell. In fact this discussion does not deal at all with the ideological origins of fascism, nor does it aim to reclassify in another way the groups which, in the France of the interwar period, constituted the universe of the radical or 'fascistoid' right, nor to assimilate it with an 'authentic' fascism, or compare it with events in Italy or in Germany. Contrary to the intellectual approach of the defenders of the immunization theory, my aim is to separate the interpretation of this period from a *purely classifying logic*, opposing, in a binary fashion, the 'essences' or 'nature' of 'authentic' fascism to what is not fascism (and which, consequently, would either have a democratic essence or, at worst, be 'marginal', only 'authentic' fascism being worthy of the term 'serious'). The fallacies associated with a classifying logic are accentuated in the immunization theory by the construction of a 'historical intrigue', in a regressive mode, *starting from the outcome*, the result, of the processes to be analysed. This is particularly apparent in the interpretation of the crisis of February 1934 (but this is also one of the reasons why the standard history refuses to identify in the other 'outcome' – the advent of the Vichy regime – an authoritarian breakdown partly endogenous, and which foreign historians are more willing to highlight, more open towards comparative views). It is this intellectual posture that determines the way the standard history perceives its object, defines its problems and limits its field of vision; this posture means that the standard history simply *misses the specificities* of the object, tracking down the singular and the particular where they are least likely to be found and, at the same time, being unable to notice them when their presence should be obvious: it tends above all to confuse the understanding of how the paths of these 'authentic' or 'complete' fascisms – and we will see that our historians much prefer to find the authentic in the 'complete' – differ from the political processes at work in France between the wars, and also, more often than they would like, what they have in common.

The interpretation of February 1934 proposed by the defenders of the immunization theory highlights the effects of this opposition. The formation of the Doumergue government – the 'solution' to the crisis – is used to justify the classification, or in other words the elimination, previous to February 1934, of any intervention of an 'authentically fascist' element which could have really made its presence felt in the French political space. Since the result, the 'outcome', led to the survival of the Third Republic, it is deduced that nothing in the events and mobilizations that produced the result, or even in the sequence of these events and mobilizations, had any substantial link with processes which, in other countries, led to fascist success. By the same logic, one deduces the absence of radicalism – in the English sense of the word – of the French 'radical right', or if one prefers, the true blue conservatism of those, particularly the *Ligue* supporters, who took part in the mobilizations. With little attention to the ideas, intentions, opinions and deeds of the players, our historians tend to see in them motivations rather more in tune with the return of a 'practised parliamentarian' (Doumergue), while avoiding the players' own portrayal of events – for many of whom 6 February would nevertheless remain a great 'missed opportunity' to overthrow 'la Gueuse', a

hated regime, despised and vehemently opposed. As for the rest, namely what the players actually said, often with force, particularly during 1933–4 (see Soucy 1986, for details), this is depicted as nothing more than ‘pseudo-revolutionary language’. Indeed, it would seem that all these players, organizations and discourse were ‘lacking seriousness’. To prove its point, the standard history sets out to scrupulously demonstrate that, before 6 February, *there was no real plot* hatched jointly by the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Action Française and the Croix-de-feu (which, after all, is quite plausible); for, as common knowledge would have it, the plot is an unavoidable stage in any process of ‘serious’ political rupture! In fact the immunization theory does not stop there, and deduces many other ‘causes’ from the result of February 1934, of which the following are some examples: the inconsistency of the *Ligues’* programmes, the political weakness of their leaders, the absence of any coherent political strategy and structured ideology, the ‘unreality’ of their ambitions, the marginal nature of their social bases, the ‘simulated’ nature, no less, of their struggles (and, of course, as the final stage of the rereading of history, the specific ‘nature’ of French society, that is, its ‘immunity’ to fascism).

Strangely enough, the immunization theory plays on a surreptitious confusion: from questioning the label of ‘fascism’ or ‘authentic fascism’, from which the theory tries to exonerate the militants and organizations of the radical right, the theory constantly reverts to a quite different question: that of the alleged social and political ‘*marginality*’ of fascist movements in France, as if the plausibility of the response to the first question were to depend on the response given to the second. The origins of this error can also, however, be found elsewhere: the need to link the specific result which was the outcome of February 1934 to a *specific historical path* entirely unrelated to those historical paths that elsewhere had led to authoritarian systems and the success of ‘authentic fascisms’. What is at stake here is to show that, from the outset, from the very preconditions of its emergence, the process leading up to the outcome of February 1934 was endowed almost genetically with a ‘nature’ – the ‘immunity’ or ‘allergy’ of French society towards fascism – *which is accomplished in this result*. In other words: if the *Ligues* did not succeed in overthrowing the regime it was because they were not ‘serious’ and if the crisis of February 1934 resulted in the survival of the Third Republic, then it was simply because this was the only possible result. It is not surprising that when considering the immunization theory’s vision of ‘authentic’ fascisms, we are faced with definitions focused exclusively on the successes of fascist movements – their seizing of government power and the subsequent construction of original ‘power systems’ (for a detailed study of this issue, see Dobry 1989). As for the historical paths leading to such results in Italy and Germany, we shall see below that the proposed interpretation is in fact ... imaginary.

4.2 Ideological ‘vagueness’ and stratagems of distinction

Let us now look at an idea which, on the face of it, seems to lend credence to the immunization theory – that is the ambiguous, confused, and uncertain nature of

the ideological formulations of the interwar radical right. Let us acknowledge the reality of this 'vagueness', even if reservations are possible – the doctrinal systematizations of the Action Française or even those of the ephemeral Faisceau of Valois were not without a certain coherence and vigour. But it is true that, on the whole, the authoritarian movement failed to forge the well-developed ideological corpus from which Sternhell derives his ideal type of fascist ideology. We should still, though, avoid oversimplifications: can we really be sure that this *reactionary addiction to the past*, and against modernity, which we tend to suggest is peculiar to the radical right's ideological tenets was actually lacking, for example, in Germany's Nazi *Weltanschauung*? More important problems, however, lie elsewhere. Can we seriously contend that the intrinsic merit of the ideological haze was to block the radical right's road to power? Were the ideologies of 'authentic' fascisms, as in the case of Italy, *before* accession to power, necessarily less vague than in France? Indeed, the haze does not appear to have prevented certain ideological elements (a virulent anti-parliamentarianism, a hatred of democracy, a preference for the authoritarian 'solutions' of the Italian or even German neighbours, an anti-Semitism far more virulent than in Italy, 'anti-Marxism', and so on) being alive and forming the very 'hard core' of these ideological formulations, from which all supporters of the radical right (and often further afield) were regularly able to draw in spite of the 'symbolic' boundaries by which the *Ligues* attempted to assert their identities (such was the case of the Action Française whose doctrines, despite its monarchist banner, lend the whole of the radical right very valuable resources in terms of intellectual dignity). Similarly, it would be hasty to attribute the fierce struggle between the Action Française and Valois' Faisceau, to an unbridgeable gulf separating social conservatism from fascist radicalism. Valois' activities (although he asserted clear pro-fascist tendencies) were apparently covered by the leadership of the parent organization until it was clear his aim was to form a *rival organization*, threatening to poach the parent organization's clientele, cadres and financial support.

Here we touch on the biggest fallacy: defenders of the immunization theory painstakingly show the extent to which the radical right's ideological orientation tried to set itself apart from the German and Italian 'models'; they conclude that their 'nature' is completely different. Such an interpretation prevents an understanding of the conditions in which Italian fascism and German National Socialism were 'received' in France, the process of reappropriation, reformulation and reinvention involved in their 'importation'. Of course, no historian denies the 'attractiveness' of these 'models', such was the impact, at least of Italian fascism, on the discourse of the radical right. But at the same time the immunization theory ignores the fact that even the representations, ideologies and visions of the world are not compact ideal realities, completely independent from everyday tactics, interests, calculations, rivalries and positions held by those who use them. Our historians require the radical right not only to give a clearer definition of herself than the original – Italian – fascism, but also to take everything on immediately, lock, stock and barrel, and to wear the mantle openly, irrespective of the situations, political games and constraints within

which its various elements operate. Thus, they *ignore time* (and timing), such as the learning period over which the members of the *Ligues* (and others, notably their opponents) assimilated the Italian, and then the German, 'experiences'. In this way, they misunderstand the effects of one of the radical right's dilemmas in formulating its ideology, the *dilemma of the authoritarian nationalist*. Here are people who professed to be and believed they were nationalist, Germanophobic, and yet who were seduced by the authoritarian 'solutions' of those among France's neighbours who disputed the fruits of the 'victory' of 1918. This contributes directly to the building of a *difference of distinction* with regard to the ideological formulations of the Italian fascists and, to a far greater extent, the German National Socialists; leading, for example, to a whole range of 'francisizations' of these ideologies, including that of Valois who suggested that fascism had not been imported, that it in fact had firm roots in France (on this point, Sternhell (1983) may follow him a bit too easily). More banal ways of distinction do, however, exist: the Action Française and its leaders may well have been fascinated by the Italian 'example' – indeed they were to be among its most fervent defenders still late into the 1930s – but they were nevertheless to renounce their *claims* to paternity and to assert an original identity. It is therefore not so much the conservatism of the AF which is in question but rather the self-image promoted by the intellectuals who dominated the movement (and in a further attempt to distinguish themselves they would also cast doubt, among other things, on Mussolini's 'statolatry' and 'legalism').

4.3 The constraints of extra-parliamentary politics

Far from presenting us with a picture of an outmoded conservatism irrevocably isolated from a Fascist (and negligible) radicalism, the ideological 'vagueness' of the radical right actually reveals a kind of 'system of action' where stands were taken on one side in relation to the stands taken on the other. This was, therefore, a system of *interdependence*, conditioning and constraining the tactical choices and actions of each. One of the major weaknesses in the immunization theory is its failure to appreciate what is at stake in the extra-parliamentary location of the activities of the radical right's organizations. It is certainly a mistake to want at all costs to reduce the formation of paramilitary units, their parades, exercises and hierarchies, their uniforms, basically their whole *style of action*, to a surface froth, the outward appearance of supposed more deep-rooted phenomena (and therefore more in tune with the 'nature' attributed to these organizations). Just as it is naïve to try to absorb these transformations into the manipulative vision which, from the 1920s, appeared to be that of some conservative politicians and certain business circles, 'keeping in reserve' recourse to these extra-parliamentary resources for periods of visibly threatening 'collectivism'. Any historian who adopts this vision as an explanation of the radical right's 'weakness' should nevertheless remember that other politicians, in Italy and Germany, themselves believed also that they could 'contain' their native auxiliary forces. One of the principal factors undermining, in fact, this vision of the radical right's 'function' can be found in the internal rivalry within this par-

ticular zone of the political space: during the 'boom years' of the radical right (1924–6, and to a greater extent after 1932 and 1936), the dynamics of competition between its various groups tended to render illusory any fantasy of control of their activities by the conservatives (this competition moreover was to be one of the 'motors' in the mobilizations leading up to 6 February).

This extra-parliamentary location of the tactical activity is at the root of perhaps a more serious misconception concerning the presence of radical right elements and their activity within legitimate political arenas. In fact the immunization theory sees the manoeuvring of the political game towards legitimate arenas as a sign of the non-radical 'nature' of the players concerned. So it is then that the electoralist line adopted by de la Rocque – immediately after the dissolution of his movement by the Front Populaire government and its replacement by the Parti Social Français – and his open desire to participate in elections are seized upon by the immunization theory as ultimate 'proof' of the distance separating the new party from the radical right. With the imposed transformation of the paramilitary grouping into a political party, any ambiguity our historians still readily attribute to the Croix-de-feu of the preceding period is swept aside. We are now only one step away from seeing the PSF as nothing more than an adult scout club (Rémond, 1982: 213). Here we can appreciate how the intellectual posture of the immunization theory steered it towards finding a historical trend in fascism – Italian or German – which would assume that any electoral participation or resort to elective arenas and resources was excluded and in which action would be focused exclusively on violence in the street. Consequently, with this fanciful model of the course of fascism in mind, our historians ignore a crucial aspect of the political processes of this period: *the cost*, in terms of political effectiveness, of the outrageous extra-parliamentarianism of the French radical right before 1936, a phenomenon undoubtedly linked to the competitive nature of its structure. If there was a 'weakness' in the radical right, then it was due primarily to the difficulties of its components in introducing themselves in the electoral game (aside from the tactical decisions of the *Ligues*, it is likely that the characteristics of the electoral system were also largely responsible). It is this factor which helps to explain the inability of the *Ligues* to quickly 'exploit' or to 'convert' what, *at the time*, soon after 6 February, constituted a true success.

4.4 Political culture, values and calculations

There remains one blind spot in the immunization theory, related to the final mainspring of the 'allergy' attributed to French society: its 'political culture'. If we decide to put some order in the formulations of the immunity theory – which under the label 'political culture' group both political organizations and partisan ideologies and visions of various social groups – it is clear that uses of the term 'political culture' seek to designate those values, generally dear to radicalism, which can be found in people's convictions, modes of thought and habits and which are supposed to be rooted in the durability of the democratic regime in France and the existence of structures to organize the masses, particularly the middle classes (linked particularly to the radical party), directing their

supporters towards democratic values. As for these structures of mass organization, the hypothesis is that throughout the period that saw the development of the radical right's groups, the political space was already occupied and marked out and the potential clientele already captured. In this respect, no doubt without realizing it, the defenders of the immunization theory remind one of the observation that the 'authentic' fascisms were, to quote Linz (1980), 'latecomers'. At this stage the argument, which at least had the refreshing advantage of substituting a *relational* explanation for a classifying logic, turns against the immunization theory: there were clearly some 'latecomers' who *in spite of* their late arrival on the scene, succeeded in capturing some of the political arena and social support. Even if, prior to the advent of the Vichy regime, the French radical right did not reach power, it is not unreasonable to consider that, among its components, there were some which, in terms of the political space conquered, could be described as *successful* 'latecomers'.

This question brings us, in fact, to another difficulty, which almost certainly destroys the explanatory pretensions of the immunization theorists. Indeed we can be forgiven for being a little perplexed when we see that these very writers, and in passages often close to those in which they uphold this theory, present a vision of the 1930s in complete contrast to it. They painstakingly describe the acute, multifaceted and interminable *crisis of this* democratic 'political culture', the crisis in its values and institutions, particularly in the case of the radical party: the historical force of radicalism and of the '*synthèse républicaine*' of the early century seems to have collapsed. From now on it is another 'political culture', 'anti-parliamentarian and advocating strong authority', that tends to assert itself. And, this time, our historians have not got it wrong; but it is clear that what was supposed to have 'immunised' the French against authoritarian temptations actually collapsed just when those temptations were making themselves felt most!

There is at least some merit in this self-disqualification of the immunity theory: it brings us up against a good historical 'enigma'. What is interesting – unless of course we deprive ourselves of the delights of the explanation of events by simply saying that things could not have been otherwise – is that for a long time the Third Republic actually displayed real strength, often *in spite of the values* advocated by those who served it. In a sense, our historians are not far from the mark when they attach importance to the age of the democratic institutions. The task, however, is to understand *how* this durability exercised its influence. This requires that we revise somewhat the traditional visions of what is a 'political culture'. Durability does not work solely – nor even, in some cases, principally – through the values to which people ascribe. We can salvage the utility of the notion of 'political culture' only if we renounce thinking of it exclusively or even primarily in terms of values organizing the coherence of political representations of groups and individuals (and, moreover, the coherence of their acts). If, between the wars, the strategic sectors of the state remain 'loyal', it is because, besides democratic values, not always shared by their officials, there is another factor: *their calculations*. Alongside the ordinary

bureaucratic routines and logics, these calculations are influenced by representations and perceptions of what is feasible and what is not, what is risky, what is possible, what is probable. Some of these representations which *crystallized* from the great political confrontations of the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth (such as the General Boulanger episode, the Dreyfus affair and the 'separation' of Church and State) are relevant to our discussion, especially the fact that the *coup d'état* could not pay off, that it is impracticable in France, that it exposes its authors to considerable risks. For such representations to lose their hold on the calculations, conditions of broad political fluidity must emerge (Dobry 1986), as was the case, for a short time, during the winter of 1934. In this respect, once events had been sealed, it is perhaps not surprising that the radical right regretted the 'missed opportunity' of February 1934.

8

Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism

Folko Arends and Gerhard Kümmel

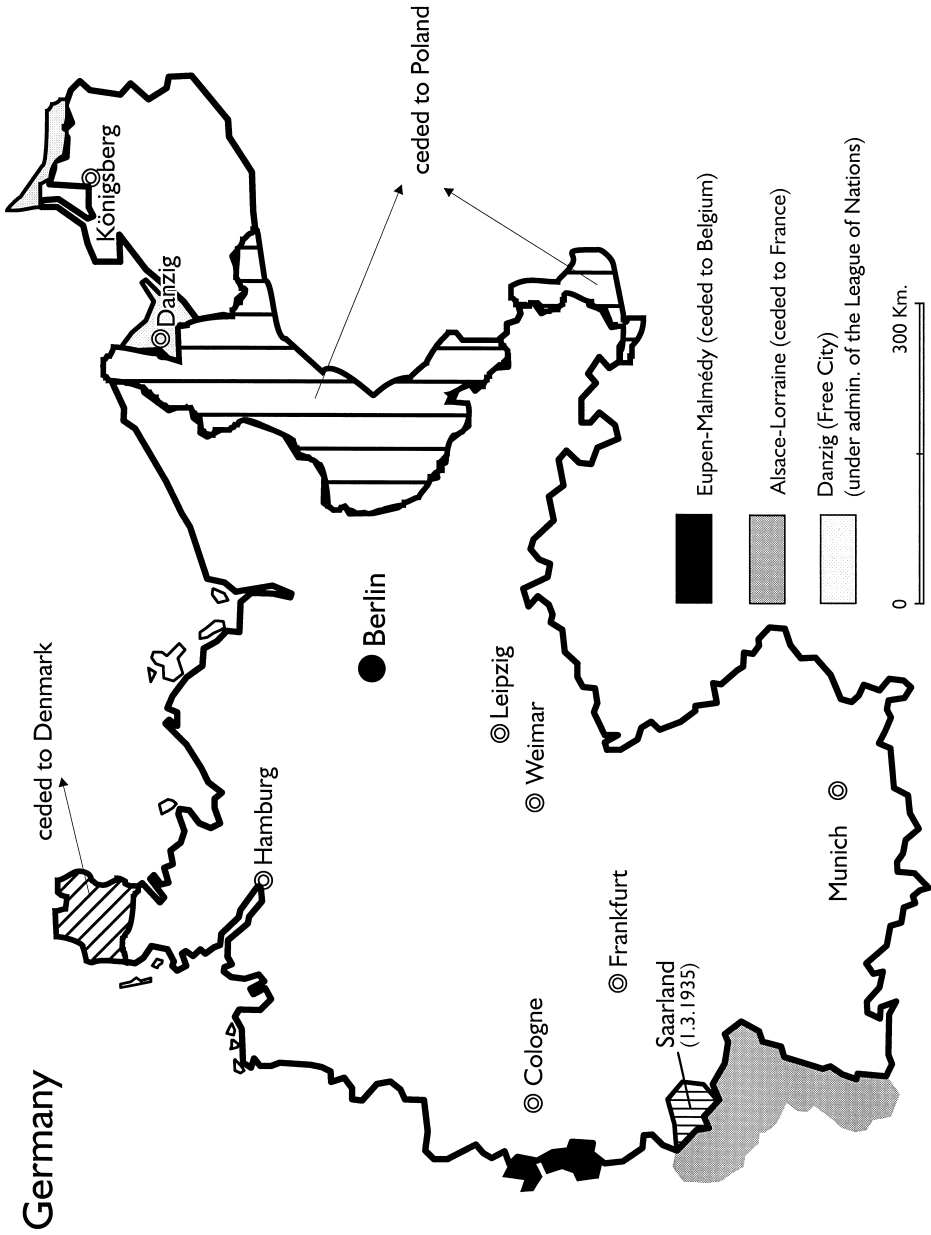
1 Introduction

Democracy did not survive in interwar Germany, the republican system broke down and was replaced by a fascist regime. How was it possible for the National Socialists to seize power in Germany and establish an all-pervasive totalitarian regime? Posing this question does not mean that all developments before 1933 can only be viewed from this perspective. This would amount to historical determinism, focussing all attention on the developments that took place and ignoring the fact that the future (and even an already past future) though influenced by the past is an open one. The moves of the relevant actors and groups have to be analysed with regard to their respective situations and perceptions. As Bracher writes: 'a carefully differentiating and comparative perspective can avoid the temptation of a mono-causal interpretation of history and fulfil the demands of an empirically oriented and truly open analysis of contemporary history' (1984: xv; our translation). It is clear that the reasons for the collapse of the Weimar regime are not just the world economic crisis but arise from additional historical factors. The rise of National Socialism cannot be separated from the political, economic, social and ideological context in which the National Socialists operated (Tyrell 1983: 98).

Here we do not aim to present a new or all-encompassing theory about fascism. This is more a summary synopsis in comparative perspective. As Lepsius has done, we 'discuss some dimensions of the complex process and propose a number of analytical accounts that will be neither exhaustive nor evaluated in regard to their relative weight for the explanation of the total historical phenomenon' (1978: 34f.). Some of the truly comparative questions assessing the relative weight of the separate factors may be answered at a later stage.

2 The social bases of politics

In Rokkan's 'Geopolitical Map of Europe' Germany, in the West–East dimension, is located as a 'Landward Empire Nation' of the European 'city belt'; it is also a religiously mixed Catholic–Protestant territory in the North–South dimension



Germany

(Rokkan 1975: 578f.) With late state-formation in Germany linguistic diversity and ethnic differences can be considered negligible and we will focus our analysis on the most relevant cleavages: region, religion and socioeconomic structures. (Plessner 1959; Rokkan 1987).

2.1 The regional cleavage

For hundreds of years German political boundaries looked very much like a patchwork. A late-comer to nation-building, the Second German Empire was eventually formed in 1871 under the leadership of Prussia. This was the realization of the 'small-German solution' with the exclusion of Austria. The area that was united had previously been partitioned into independent kingdoms, duchies and city states and this regional fragmentation remained an important factor throughout the rest of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Regional aspects had a considerable impact on political culture – Bavarians mistrusted the Prussians and vice versa – and various regional parties existed during the Weimar period

The previously fragmented geography caused different, sometimes divergent attitudes towards the structure of the state as well. While some argued strongly in favour of a federal architecture with strong *Länder* governments, others advocated a centralized state. Although the structure of the Reich looked federal, with the Reichstag as the counterweight to Prussian hegemony, Prussian centralist ideas prevailed (Stürmer 1983: 98–104; Deuerlein 1972: 135–48). In 1919, the debate about federalism and centralism flared up again. This time the new republican government conceded more rights to the *Länder*, but Prussian preponderance prevented a balanced federal structure for the Weimar Republic (Deuerlein 1972: 171–7, 192f).

2.2 The religious cleavage

The Reformation had divided Germany into two religious denominations. After the Peace of Augsburg (1555), it was up to the sovereign to decide about the denomination of his subjects. Accordingly, political fractionalization determined religious affiliation, but this religious differentiation in turn developed a considerable political significance.

In the Reich the Protestants (Lutherans) formed the majority. Only one-third of the population consisted of Catholics (Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 53). The Catholics lived in the south and west; the north and east were predominantly Protestant. The Catholics founded their own party, the 'Centre Party' ('Zentrum'). Of special importance is the so-called *Kulturkampf* initiated by Bismarck who aimed at the separation of state and church in order to minimize the influence of the Catholic Church as an institution and the Zentrum; the church was to be subordinated to the state. Bismarck saw the dogma of papal infallibility (outlined in 1870) as a potential threat to the autonomy and sovereignty of the state. In the end he failed; his move was interpreted as an infringement of the freedom of religion

not only by the Catholics but by many Protestants as well (Görtemaker 1986: 232–5). Thus, the Zentrum survived well into the first half of the twentieth century.

2.3 Socio-economic cleavages

By contrast with England and France, where the industrial revolution had already started by the end of the eighteenth century, German industrialization started later, but more vigorously and was not accompanied by a comparable liberalization and democratization. This was also influenced by late state-building which entailed greater intervention by the state in the process of economic modernization (Gerschenkron 1943). In a basically rural Germany the ‘take-off’ did not start until the middle of the nineteenth century, bringing population growth, urbanization and secularization. In 1871 the population was 41 million, in 1911 65 million, and, after recovering from the war, in 1925 62 million (Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 22f; Petzina *et al.* 1978: 22). Changing land area is also relevant – in 1871 Germany consisted of 0.54 million square kilometres, in 1925 only 0.47 million. After the formation of the Reich in 1871 the process of urbanization and industrialization accelerated. In 1870 the index of industrial production was 18 compared to 1913 = 100 (Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 78f.). The production of pig iron increased from 1.4 million tons in 1870 to 14.8 million tons in 1910 (Görtemaker 1986: 133).

By 1914 the transformation from an agrarian to an industrial state was essentially complete. It had taken place in three phases. The first phase, the Industrial Revolution (1835/41–1873), was characterized by high growth rates in the basic industries, such as textiles, iron, mining, machinery and railways. In the second period, 1873–95, the growth rate slowed and industrial concentration accelerated. The third phase (from 1896) is often characterized as ‘organized capitalism’ which meant that industry sought to organize production by means of cartels and agreements to gain predictable markets, stable growth and secure profits. This phase was very dynamic and Germany surpassed other countries like Britain. Thus the growing imbalance between economic and political power became a factor contributing to the outbreak of the First World War.

With industrialization the relative proportions of the population in the respective economic sectors changed, increasing the rural–urban contrast and creating a more uneven distribution of wealth. In 1849/58 55 per cent of the population were employed in agriculture, in 1910/13 35 per cent and in 1933 the percentage was 29 per cent. Over the same period the percentage of people in the secondary sector rose from 25 to 40 per cent and in the tertiary sector from 20 to 31 per cent. The changes in the economic structure became even more apparent when compared to the sectors’ share of the gross national product (Tormin 1980: 272; see also Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 66, 88f.; and Petzina *et al.* 1978: 55).

Nevertheless, agriculture remained an important factor in the German economy. Although its role was declining relatively, the absolute number of people employed in this sector increased by more than one million to 9.3 million between 1882 and 1933 – a period during which the number of people employed in industry,

however, roughly doubled to 13 million (Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 66; Petzina *et al.* 1978: 57). Moreover, the political influence of farming interests remained considerable. This clashed with the growing role of the employees in the secondary and tertiary sectors both economically and politically. The conflict between capital and labour, in particular, remained severe and was only interrupted by a short phase of limited cooperation during the war and the first years of the Republic. Industrialization initiated socioeconomic processes which led to changes in the social structure. Workers improved their living standards, the old middle classes largely lost their economic importance, and a heterogeneous new middle class emerged. These processes had a psychological impact in the relationship between the objective economic situation and the subjective social self-image which found some expression in elections. Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1 show German society around 1925 in terms of Geiger's (1967) categories.

2.4 Interactions of cleavages

Regional cleavages in German politics mainly became relevant over issues of federalism and centralism. In Bavaria this led to the emergence of an influential regional party in the 1920s. Apart from this regional factors were of only minor importance, belonging more to the sphere of culture and folklore than to competitive politics. To some extent they interacted with the religious cleavage with the Catholics living mainly in the south and the west and the Protestants in the east and the north.

In contrast, the socioeconomic cleavages were a product of the uneven pace of industrialization and economic growth and proved to be the most important dividing line. They also reinforced certain regional rivalries because in an

Table 8.1 Germany: class structure, 1925

Population (millions)	65.1 ^a
Employment rate	49.5 ^b
Rate of agrarian employment	28.9 ^b
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.02
Family farms	9.2
Agrarian proletariat	13
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	0.9
Old middle class	14.6
New middle class	18
Proletariat	44.3
Sub-proletariat	
Total	100.02

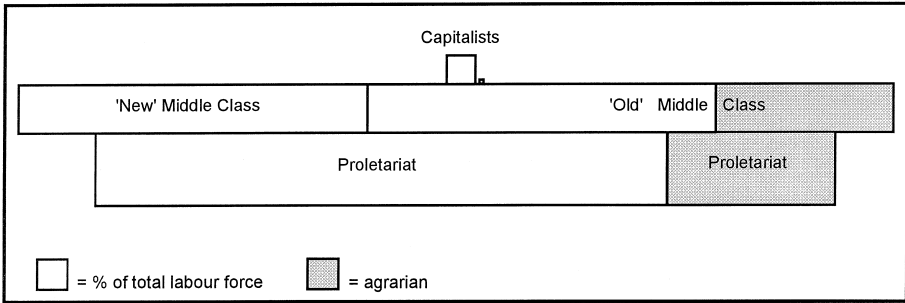
Sources: *Statistisches Reichsamt* (1936: 11); Geiger (1967).

Notes:

a Data for 1930.

b Data for 1933.

Figure 8.1 Germany: class structure, 1925



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 8.1.

essentially rural Germany, at least in the middle of the nineteenth century, the centres of industrial growth were located in the northern Rhineland, Saxony and Silesia. So the industrial revolution created zones of uneven wealth and increased the contrast between the city and the countryside. Furthermore, the religious cleavage between Catholics and Protestants cut across the socioeconomic cleavage and contributed to the heterogeneity of the labour movement with the emergence of Christian, mostly Catholic unions, and by creating a distinctly Catholic party.

3 Intermediate structures and identifications

3.1 Interest groups

3.1.1 Rural interests

Until about 1890, there were various, mostly small-scale rural organizations – no united interest group encompassing the small peasants as well as large-scale farmers existed. This situation changed after the end of the Great Depression when Caprivi, Bismarck's successor, pursued a policy favouring the export of finished and semi-finished products and the importation of agricultural products. This undermined the influence of rural interests, the prices of whose products were declining. Under the leadership of the large-scale farmers of middle and east Germany, the 'Farmers' Association' (BDL) was founded in 1893 (Ullmann 1988: 85–94). It had 200,000 members in 1894 and 330,000 by the outbreak of the First World War.

The BDL turned out to be one of the most influential interest groups, successfully trying to retain the influence of agriculture in society and government and vigorously demanding subsidies and a protectionist trade policy (the Bülow-Tariff 1902). Not only did it have a significant impact on foreign trade policy, but it influenced conservative politics as well. In its overall policies the BDL was conservative, monarchic, Christian, anti-socialist, anti-liberal, extremely nationalistic, racist and antisemitic. Ninety-seven per cent of its members were

small and middle-scale farmers (Ullmann 1988: 89f.). Despite this, the organizational structure as well as the association's policies were completely determined by the East-Elbian large landowners. In addition to the BDL, there were other associations such as groups of Christian farmers in the Rhineland and Westphalia and various farmers' organizations in Bavaria. At the end of the century 'Chambers of Agriculture' were founded as well. However, these groups were all dominated by the BDL.

Rural interests had less influence in the Weimar Republic than they had experienced under the monarchy. In 1920 the BDL formed a confederation with other associations called the 'Reichslandbund' (RLB) which was the most important of several farmers' organizations. The East-Elbian farmers remained the dominant force. The RLB also maintained a close relationship with the German National People's Party (DNVP), although this relationship weakened in 1928 when the DNVP came under the influence of big industry. The mounting economic difficulties in agriculture from 1928 onwards provided the basis for a closer cooperation of the various organizations and led to the formation of the 'Green Front' in 1929 which called for government subsidies and a protectionist trade policy. The plight of the farming sector induced a radicalization of the Protestant owners of small and medium-sized farms which became more and more inclined towards the NSDAP. In the last years of Weimar the influence of rural interest groups, especially of the large landowners organized in the RLB, increased considerably and helped to undermine the political system (Ullmann 1988: 144–53; see also Gerschenkron 1943).

3.1.2 *Trade unions*

The formation of employees' organizations (see Schönhoven 1987) in the course of the industrial revolution was influenced partly by the guild system of the late Middle Ages and by craftsmen's associations and workers' educational associations in the years 1840–60 (Grebing 1985: 45f.) These first efforts remained vocation-oriented. With the acceleration of industrialization, the demand for groups to express the interests of the workers rose rapidly.

The unions were split in three wings, of which the socialist or free unions were the most important. These were closely connected with the Social Democrats without, however, copying their Marxist rhetoric and programme. In order to undermine these organizations Bismarck pursued a dual policy with the creation of the welfare state as the 'carrot' and the 'Sozialistengesetz', which declared the free unions and the SPD to be illegal, as the 'stick'. This law, however, could not prevent the unions from becoming mass organizations and in 1890 this policy was abandoned (Stürmer 1983: 220–8). In 1890 the 'General Commission for the German Trade Unions' with Legien as chairman was founded as the central organization for the socialist unions (Grebing 1985: 98). They expanded from 294,551 members in 1890 to 2,573,718 in 1913 (Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 135f.).

A second group of unions were the liberal ones ('*Hirsch-Dunckersche Gewerkvereine*') that had been founded by Max Hirsch and Franz Duncker. These more moderate unions had 30,000 members in 1869 and 106,618 in 1913

(Hohorst *et al.* 1978: 135f.); they were not outlawed in the years of the *Sozialistengesetz* between 1878 and 1890.

After the 1890s the Christian unions became the strongest competitors to the socialist trade union movement. They aimed to integrate workers into the emerging industrial society order which they sought to modify according to their Christian principles (Mielke 1982: 340; Grebing 1985: 99). They were influenced by ideas of social partnership and had strong support among the mining and textile workers in the Catholic areas.

At the outbreak of the First World War the unions joined in the nationalist euphoria. Together with the majority of the SPD, they were influenced by an ideology of expansionism and agreed to the 'national coalition of consensus' by giving up the right to strike. After two years of war, however, they had become disillusioned and mass strikes and demonstrations occurred. The tensions in the unions reflected the loss of a great deal both of members and capital during the war.

The first German Republic, as an offspring of the revolution in 1918–19, created completely different conditions. Article 159 of the Weimar Constitution granted the right of free formation of associations; the eight-hour day was introduced and Article 165 allowed the creation of workers' councils. So, the revolution widened the mass basis of the unions considerably. Clerks and civil servants joined in great numbers. The free unions had 2.9 million members in 1918 and 8 million in 1922. After a reorganization the General German Association of Unions (ADGB) was founded, the General Free Association of Clerks (AFA) and the General German Association of Civil Servants (ADB) were affiliated. The Hirsch–Duncker unions merged with other organizations to become the Ring of Unions of German Workers, Clerks and Civil Servants. It represented about 200,000 members in 1922. The rural labour force of about 3 million employees had not been organized until 1919 because they had not been allowed to become involved with unions (Luebbert 1987: 473). At the end of 1918 there were 20,000 organized farmworkers, in 1920 about 1 million. Hereafter the membership figures dropped again and for the remaining years of the Republic they remained at about 200,000. The Christian unions had founded the German Association of Unions (DGB) with a total membership of 1 million.

Under the conditions and requirements of a war economy there had been close cooperation between employers and employees during the years 1914–18. This idea was reincarnated in November 1918 when a formal agreement was signed to form the Central Community of Work (ZAG). This willingness of the employers to cooperate stemmed from their fear of expropriation and socialization which had been demanded by the socialists during the unrest at the end of the war. The free unions stuck to the ZAG agreement until 1924, although the employers then considered it no longer to be in their interest to maintain it (Feldman and Steinisch 1985).

The attempted right-wing *coup d'état* in 1920 (the Kapp–Lüttwitz Putsch) was successfully countered by a general strike. However, inflation – which turned into hyper-inflation from summer 1922 onwards – and rising unemployment

weakened the position of the unions. Between 1922 and 1924 they lost one-half of their about 8 million members (see Table 8.3). This weakness encouraged the employers to gradually revoke the eight-hour-day and other rights that had been acquired after the end of the war.

After several comparatively stable years between 1924 and 1928 the world economic crisis had an impact on the unions. More social benefits were curbed and the number of members decreased (see Table 8.3). The economic crisis and the resulting high level of unemployment left the unions rather defenceless. Like the political wing of the working-class movement the unions were also split into different factions and were unable to get together to oppose fascism. The free unions and the SPD also initiated the 'iron front', a paramilitary republican organization that never became really active and was banned in 1933 (Schönhoven 1987).

3.1.3 *Employers' organizations*

In the course of the Great Depression of the 1870s the coal, iron and steel industries, which until then had been organized in several smaller associations, increased their cooperation in order to influence trade policy towards protectionism. Thus the 'Central Association of German Industrialists' (CDI) was created under the direction of the metal industries in 1876 (Ullmann 1988: 77–85).

After the introduction of the protectionist tariff in 1878–19 the CDI increased its activity to an overall articulation of their interests in society and politics. The Social Democrats and the unions were considered as enemies and its policies were directed against the spread of workers' rights. The relationship between the more regional organizations, the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, and the CDI was based on a division of labour rather than on competition.

These protectionist policies were vigorously criticized by the more export-oriented chemical and electrical industries, a clash of interests which led to the creation of the 'Association of Industrialists' (BDI) in 1895. From this time industry was split into two different camps, one representing mainly manufacturing industries, the other the mining, iron and steel sectors. This found a regional expression, too, because the CDI had its focus in the Prussian Ruhr area and the BDI in Saxony, Thuringia, Central Germany, Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg.

In the wake of the revolutionary unrest of 1918–9 the employers found it appropriate to merge the two organizations into the Reich Association of German Industry (RDI) to increase their influence. During this period the industrialists also showed a willingness to cooperate with the unions in the ZAG. The internal differences between the old and the new industries, however, could never be overcome entirely.

The RDI and its associations represented the interests of between 70 and 80 per cent of industry; there was no specific organization to represent the small business sector. Closely affiliated to the RDI were the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the Association of German Employers (VdA) that

represented just about every employer. In parliament the RDI was most strongly represented by the German People's Party (DVP) which received the bulk of industrial donations (Ullmann 1988: 133–44).

After the currency reforms in 1923/4 the concentration process in German industry accelerated again. In heavy industry there was the formation of the United Steel Works and in 1925 all the important chemical plants merged into the IG Farbenindustrie AG. From then on the IG Farben together with the electrical industry had a greater political influence than the old heavy industry (Hallgarten 1981: 182), a situation that, in the years following 1929, was reversed to some extent when the older industries connected to agriculture gained political influence (Neebe 1981).

3.2 Parties and political sub-milieus

Predecessors of modern parties had developed in the context of the struggle for an all-German parliament during the revolutionary events of 1848/49. The first parties emerged out of the working-class movement and the liberals in 1861. One very early organization was the General Fraternization of German Workers in 1848, the predecessor of Lasalle's General Association of German Workers (ADAV) founded in 1863. After the Social Democrats joined the ADAV in 1875, the party became the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SPD) in 1889. These developments in turn produced a counteracting movement to defend the privileges of the absolute monarchy and preserve the status quo.

The Weimar political parties had strong links to the old parties of the monarchical system. The only real newcomer was the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), which was established in 1919 following the Soviet pattern. Whereas the conservative, national and national-liberal parties had been the supporters of the Empire and the Socialists, the Catholic centre party and the liberals had been opposed, this situation was now reversed. The 'rooting' of the various parties in specific politico-cultural milieus dating back to the monarchy was characteristic of the Weimar political system and constrained the functioning of democracy. This resulted in a high degree of sociocultural fragmentation between the respective camps with hardly any coherent overarching structures (Lehnert and Megerle 1989, 1990).

3.2.1 *The Catholic milieu*

3.2.1.1 *The Centre Party (Zentrum).* The Zentrum and the SPD had more in common than appeared at first sight. Both were founded as opponents of the Bismarck state. The SPD had become even stronger after the 'Sozialistengesetz', and similarly the Zentrum had gained strength after the 'Kulturkampf'. The Zentrum favoured a larger Germany including Catholic Austria, in contrast to the 'small-German' solution of 1871. Its partial opposition to the German Reich promoted the acceptance of political and governmental responsibility in an SPD-led coalition in 1919. The Zentrum was a party of compromise, a Christian-national and a social party. After Kaas was elected chairman at the end of 1928 it moved more to the right, adopting a strongly conservative stance with a

distinct policy for a moderate-authoritarian reform of the constitution and a strengthening of the position of the President (Neumann 1965: 41–8; Becker 1986; Ruppert 1992).

3.2.1.2 The Bavarian People's Party (BVP). Until 1919–20 the Zentrum also included the Bavarian Catholics. Worried that in the Weimar Coalition the Zentrum would be too weak to secure Bavaria's autonomy, since the SPD and the liberal German Democratic Party (DDP) both represented strong centralizing tendencies, the BVP split from the Zentrum in 1920. In many aspects they remained quite close, but on the whole the BVP was more conservative, and favoured the restoration of the monarchy, the adoption of a federal system similar to that of the Bismarck era, and strongly resented cooperation with the SPD. In Munich the BVP cooperated with the DNVP – an alliance which indicated their political leanings. Accordingly, it did not belong to the bourgeois centre but to the political right. Sociologically (Schönhoven 1972), it was a party of the rural and to some extent the bourgeois middle classes. (A detailed illustration of the geographical strongholds of the BVP and the Zentrum in July 1932, the regional concentration of Catholicism, and the relative cohesiveness of the Catholic milieu in the face of the national-socialist support can be found in Falter (1986: 224f.).

3.2.2 The Socialist milieu

The socialist milieu consisted of two rival parties – the Social Democrats and the Communists. This division of the working-class movement into a group which vigorously supported the democratic republic and cooperated with bourgeois political parties, and a section which fundamentally opposed the system and was inclined towards violent upheaval, imposed a strain on the Weimar system from the beginning.

3.2.2.1 The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The war marked a turning-point for the SPD. By approving war loans in 1914 the SPD had shaken off the image of traitors of the fatherland. In 1917 its attitude to the war led to a split into the moderate Majority-SPD (M)SPD and the more left-wing Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) which later merged with the Communists. After the revolution in 1918–19 the (M)SPD was by far the largest party in the national assembly and accepted political responsibility for the first German Republic. This was not a matter of choice but simply a political necessity. Their ultimate goal in these revolutionary times was the stabilization of the democratic system. To achieve this they even cooperated with some pillars of the old system – as in the agreement with the military. Until the elections in 1920 the SPD remained the leading party in government; chancellor and president were Social Democrats (Winkler 1984).

In the prewar SPD only 10 per cent of its members did not belong to the working class. In 1930 the membership consisted of 60 per cent working class, 10 per cent employees, 3 per cent civil servants and 17 per cent housewives. This

process of 'de-proletarianization' accelerated in the course of the Weimar Republic. Before the war about 25 per cent of the electorate were 'bourgeois'; in 1930 this percentage had gone up to 40 per cent (Neumann 1965: 33). A wide subculture of sports, cultural and educational organizations were affiliated to the SPD and formed a clearly perceptible Social Democratic milieu. Accordingly, its members were involved in party ideology from the cradle to the grave.

After the set-back to the Weimar coalition in the elections of 1920 and the stabilization of the currency in 1924, the SPD was again in a strong position. From 1928 to 1930 the party led the great coalition under Chancellor Müller (Winkler 1988). In 1931 the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP) broke away from the SPD. Its 30,000 members, however, were of no great importance. The 'Iron Front' between SPD, the 'Banner of the Reich' and the free unions remained largely inactive.

3.2.2.2 The Communist Party (KPD). In the revolution of 1918–19 neither the USPD nor later the communists had played a significant role. Initially, the communists tried unsuccessfully to create a situation suitable for the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat by means of civil unrest and strikes. Later the organization of economic and social struggles at the factory level became the central element in communist strategy. After the ultra-left Communist Workers' Party (KAP) had split from the KPD in 1919, and the left of the USPD had joined the KPD in 1920, the party gained greater mass support. In the elections of May 1924 it obtained 3.7 million (12.6 per cent) votes and in December 1924 2.7 million (9 per cent) (Falter *et al.* 1986: 41, 44). The attitude towards the SPD was mixed; for a short period the KPD even formed a coalition with the SPD in Saxony and Thuringia, but the federal government dissolved this coalition. In the course of these events Thälmann became chairman and from then on the party followed a strictly Soviet-dictated policy along the lines of the Third Communist International. Fighting the SPD became a central concern, which was only interrupted in 1925 when there were demands for a united popular front. But this remained an episode; later the SPD was condemned as 'social fascist'.

After the merger with parts of the USPD in 1922 the KPD had 380,000 members, but in 1928 the number had decreased to about 130,000 (Flechtheim 1973: 347). The fluctuation in party membership was enormous. In 1929 the party pursued the idea of a so-called 'Red Union Opposition' (RGO). However, these communist unions were not accepted by the workers at all. The KPD as a revolutionary cadre party reflected its social structural basis more than any other party in Germany. 80 per cent were working class, 70 per cent of which were industrial workers. Unemployed workers also formed a significant segment of the party (Winkler 1988: 446ff.; see also Neumann 1965: 87–95; and Flechtheim 1973).

3.2.3 The Liberal milieu

The liberal milieu was strongly influenced by the split of liberalism into a right-wing and a left-wing liberal party in the early years of the German Reich

(Langewiesche 1988: 101–11). This split continued during the Weimar Republic. Both liberal parties were mainly electoral parties, not membership parties (Jones 1988).

3.2.3.1 The German People's Party (DVP). The DVP was founded in December 1918 and can be characterized as the party of the national liberal bourgeoisie, predominantly the educated bourgeoisie but also the propertied classes. It considered the revolution to be a national catastrophe, and, particularly during the early days of the Republic, propagated monarchist beliefs and aimed at the restoration of the monarchy. The DVP was the parliamentary bulwark of big industry with well-known industrialists as its representatives in the Reichstag. Under the leadership of Stresemann the DVP became a party of republicans by reason, but not by conviction. Programmatically they were very close to the DNVP, but less radical and antisemitic. Although Stresemann served as an integrative force between the liberal and the industrial factions of the party, he was not able to bridge the gap permanently. Consequently, after his death in 1929 the industrial part dominated the liberal wing and transformed the DVP from a bourgeois centre party into a party of large industrial corporations (Döhn 1970).

3.2.3.2 The German Democratic Party (DDP). In November 1918 the DDP emerged as the successor of the Progressive People's Party of the German Reich. The DDP strongly supported the new Weimar Republic, became a member of the Weimar Coalition and had considerable influence in drafting the Weimar Constitution. The party opposed the socialization of industry, favoured agrarian reforms and the separation of church and state, and called for a revision of the Treaty of Versailles. In the early elections it achieved considerable success – 18.5 per cent of the votes in 1919, and 8.3 per cent in 1920 (Falter *et al.* 1986: 44). Later a high proportion of the party's electorate moved to the right. In 1930 the 'German Party of the State' (DStP) was founded as the successor of the DDP, but this, too, could not prevent the dissolution of the liberal milieu (Stephan 1973; Neumann 1965: 48–54).

3.2.4 The Conservative milieu

The conservatives were split into various groups and parties. These included, among others, a 'Christian National Farmers' Party', a 'Party of the Economy', a 'party for the victims of inflation', a 'Conservative Peoples Party', a 'Christian Social Peoples Service' to mention but a few (Neumann 1965: 65–72). However, the main conservative force was the DNVP.

3.2.4.1 The German National People's Party (DNVP). The DNVP was founded in 1919 to assemble the conservative and national elements of the Kaiserreich. From its very beginning it strongly opposed democracy, the republican system, the Weimar Constitution and demanded the restoration of the monarchy. Moreover, it had a strong antisemitic and racist character. It favoured a strong

state and a revision of the Versailles Treaty and supported radical militias and various other organizations fighting the Republic by terrorist means (Vogt 1987: 145). Its foreign policy was militantly revisionist and its economic policies resembled the old Manchester-style liberal capitalism.

After the assassinations of Erzberger (Zentrum, former minister of Finance) in 1921 and Walter Rathenau (DDP, minister of Reconstruction and Foreign Affairs) in 1922, both of whom advocated the fulfilment of the reparations' obligations, the radical antisemitic wing split from the DNVP in October 1922. In 1925 the national hero of the German right, Field Marshal Hindenburg, was elected president of the Reich. This led to some reconciliation with the new political system, but this apparent accord proved to be only temporary. In the elections in 1928 the party lost considerable ground which led to the election of Hugenberg, the German Hearst, as chairman in October 1928. Under his leadership the party became even more radical. He vehemently fought against the Republic by using his media trust for demagogic attacks on the democratic parties. The DNVP lost some of its importance (Holzbach 1981; Neumann 1965: 61–5) when a considerable number of members split to form the 'People's Conservative Association' at the end of 1928 and the 'Christian-Social People's Service' at the end of 1929. (A detailed map for the electoral strongholds of the DNVP in 1928 can be found in Falter (1986: 228f.) which shows the situation in the eastern parts of Germany, the main base for the DNVP, where not only the large landowners, but also their employees voted for the German-Nationals.)

3.2.5 Other political groups

3.2.5.1 The National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). The NSDAP experienced its first sudden growth during the years of hyperinflation (1922–3). Before it had been one protest movement among many. Former soldiers, together with members of the urban and rural middle classes, formed its social base. The party programme was vague, a confusing conglomerate of different ideas: antisemitic, social-darwinist and quasi-socialist demands mixed with anti-parliamentary, anti-democratic, anti-liberal and anti-Marxist slogans; nationalistic protest against the military defeat in the war, the revolution of 1918–9 and the Treaty of Versailles; protest against western rationalism, an appeal to 'folk' sentiments and an inclination towards violence. Hitler became chairman in 1921 and a paramilitary force called 'Storm Division' (SA) was formed as well. The size of this militia later grew from 77,000 in 1931 to 470,000 in 1932. Until 1923 the regional focus of the party was Bavaria. After Hitler's failed *coup d'état* in Munich in 1923 the NSDAP was outlawed, but was declared legal again in 1925. In the same year the party was reorganized and it publicly committed itself to strive for power only by legal means.

Between 1924 and 1928 the party was of minor importance. In the elections of May 1928 it received 810,127 votes (2.6 per cent of the electorate). At the end of 1928 it had 80,000 members. In the following years the NSDAP gained strength in several local and state elections (Falter *et al.* 1986: 86–118). In September 1930, during the economic crisis NSDAP support jumped to 6.4 million (18 per cent) of

the votes cast (Falter *et al.* 1986: 41, 44) and it became respectable by joining the referendum against the Young Plan and the Harzburg Front, the national opposition to the Brüning government.

The economic crisis alone, however, is not a sufficient explanation for the success of the Nazi party. The focus on action, the appeal to sentiments, the use of symbolic and figurative means of expression, the messianistic-eschatological promise of a national reincarnation and a future Reich based on the conviction of racial superiority, all had a share as well as the multiple faults of the other political groups. The description as a peoples' party with a slight overrepresentation of the middle classes, and one which was able to bridge the fragmented cultures of the Weimar Republic and present itself as the people's party of protest, seems to be quite accurate (Falter 1991: 371f.).

The electorate and the members were largely, but not completely members of the old and new middle classes. In addition, 20 per cent of the working class voted for the NSDAP (see Falter 1991 and Kater 1983).

4 Dynamic factors of the interwar period

4.1 The political setting

The Weimar Republic was a child of the First World War; the war both shaped its birth and constrained its future. Political developments are usually divided into three phases. The first (1919–23) is characterized by the lost war, the revolution, the breakdown of the monarchy, the Treaty of Versailles, attempted coups, civil unrest and hyperinflation – in short by severe political and economic instability.

Table 8.2 The social composition of the electorate of the NSDAP (%)

Category	1928	1930	1932	1932	1933	Pos
I	26	27	31	30	31	24
II	12	13	11	12	12	15
III	30	26	25	26	26	32
IV	13	17	17	17	16	13
V	17	17	16	16	16	17
Total	98	100	100	100	101	101

Source: Falter (1991: 288).

Abbreviations:

Pos	Percentage of society
I	Self-employed, helpers
II	White-collar workers, civil servants
III	Workers
IV	Unemployed
V	Housewives
Total	Totals deviating from 100 because of roundings.

Note: This table is somewhat ambiguous because some categories are too broad. The socioeconomic status within one category, for example the self-employed or the civil servants, differs to a considerable extent. By adopting Geiger's categories one could reach a more accurate description.

During this first phase the Weimar Coalition, led by the SPD, was more or less forced to cooperate with the social forces and institutions of the monarchy. To create political stability they relied on the military, the bureaucracy and other institutions which had been among the main pillars of the old system. This heritage sometimes proved to be fateful. The armed forces made the new democratic regime publicly accept political responsibility for military defeat. This was the central point of right-wing propaganda against the Republic and supported the myth that the Reich was not defeated by the allied forces, but had been stabbed in the back from within.

The structure of Weimar was a compromise between federalism and centralism, but with Prussian preponderance. This produced a dualism between the Reich and Prussia (Deuerlein 1972: 193). After initial electoral successes the Weimar Coalition soon found itself opposed from both the left and the right. In this period the survival of the Republic was repeatedly at risk, but nevertheless the regime survived.

The second phase (1924–9), the so-called ‘golden years’, began with the stabilization of the currency in 1924 after the turbulent years of hyperinflation. This was the Stresemann era of political and economic consolidation, when the burning issue of reparations was settled by the Dawes Plan. This regulated the interest rates for Germany, the dates of payments and the financial scope of reparations.

The third and last phase (1929–33) was overshadowed by the world economic crisis. During this period the economy deteriorated and unemployment rose sharply. The opponents of the Republic on the left and right gained increasing support. In 1930 the so-called presidential cabinets were installed under Brüning, Papen and Schleicher who ruled with the help of Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution without having to rely on parliamentary majorities. After the national election in 1932, the NSDAP formed the strongest parliamentary group (Bracher *et al.* 1987).

4.2 Economic developments

Economic developments were closely linked to these three phases. The first years, 1919–23, were years of crisis. The economy suffered from the consequences of the war. The Treaty of Versailles resulted in the loss of 13 per cent of the previous land area, 10 per cent of the population, 15 per cent of the cultivated rural land, 44 per cent of the pig iron production, 38 per cent of the steel production, 26 per cent of the coal production and 75 per cent of the resources of iron ore. Furthermore, most of the bigger rivers were internationalized. Holdings, patents and licenses abroad were seized; Germany lost almost all of its merchant fleet and was obliged to grant unilateral most-favoured nation status to the Allies. In effect, this called for an increased importation of foodstuffs and raw materials (Hardach 1976: 24). In addition, high reparation demands, and exploding inflation, created severe economic problems. Inflation was caused primarily by the financing of the war by loans rather than by raising taxes, but in the face of the problems of demobilization and reconstruction the first Weimar governments also financed

their expenditure through increased debt. A further source of inflation was the balance-of-payments deficit. Both the deficit and inflation contributed to high rates of employment until 1922, and inflation was a means of avoiding a severe postwar depression as in Great Britain. The rapidly rising inflation rates in 1923, however, led to speculative gains, massive shifts of income and property and contributed to the alienation of the middle classes from the Republic. The population also became more susceptible to risky and adventurous policies during the second economic crisis after 1929. Thus, hyperinflation sent shockwaves into the political culture with considerable economic and political consequences (Berg-Schlosser 1987: 338f., 1988; Feldman 1985).

The second phase (1924–9) was a honeymoon with regard to economic development. GNP per capita increased at an average annual rate of 4 per cent, mainly based on investments and less on domestic consumption or exports (Henning 1975: 88–90). The influx of 21 billion reichsmarks of foreign loans in the wake of the Dawes Plan of 1924 was instrumental in this development, but also led to an overestimate of the level of economic prosperity in Germany at the time (Henning 1975: 90). Despite the overall positive economic development and a higher standard of living, the unemployment rate remained at an average of 10 per cent. In 1928–9 a level of prosperity had been reached which partially surpassed the level that had existed before the war. For the industrial sector the second half of the 1920s meant rationalization and concentration. The agricultural sector, however, experienced serious problems because of falling prices for agricultural products on the world market.

The world economic crisis determined the developments in the third phase (1929–33). In these years the collapse of the world economy, and especially the depression in the United States severely affected the economy because large amounts of capital were now withdrawn. The crisis, however, was not only imported from abroad, but had its internal origins too (Hardach 1976: 50). If we index the last depression-free year (1928 = 100) and compare it to 1932 as the worst year, the following picture emerges: the gross national product decreased to 62, industrial production to 61, and gross investments in current prices to 30. The unemployment rate rose to 30.8 per cent in 1932 (Hardach 1976: 51).

A financial and banking crisis, which seriously affected the farming sector and particularly the influential East-Elbian large landowners, aggravated these problems as well as the deflationary policies of the Brüning government from March 1930 to May 1932. During these years unemployment rose from 2.3 million to about 6 million. The unstable Papen and Schleicher governments tried a different economic strategy, introducing a reflationary, anti-cyclical policy as was then demanded by the trade unions and was later continued by the NSDAP (see Petzina 1977).

4.3 Electoral results

In the elections to the National Assembly in January 1919 the Weimar Coalition parties (SPD, Zentrum and the DDP) received more than three-quarters of the

Table 8.3 Germany: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939				
GDP (m. RM)	57764							70400	73700	82300	88100	88400	82400	69000	56700	58400	65500	73100	81200	90900	100200	109300				
NDP (m. RM)	51870							64800	67800	75900	81400	81400	75500	62600	50900	52600	59700	66700	74200	83500	92400	101200				
in 1938 prices	51870							58320	60471	64781	67725	67163	64439	58468	53608	55993	62213	68781	74957	84352	92400	101200				
NDP/cap. (RM)	774							1038	1078	1200	1280	1273	1174	969	784	807	910	997	1102	1231	1354	1460				
NDP (m. US-\$)	12355							15435	16150	18079	19389	19389	17984	14911	12124	12529	14221	15888	17674	19890	22010	24106				
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	184							247	257	286	305	303	280	231	187	192	217	238	262	293	323	348				
Population (thousands)	66978	62897	61794	62473	61185	61577	61953	62411	62866	63252	63618	63957	64294	64631	64911	65218	65595	66687	67349	67831	68242	69314				
IND PROD (1925=100)								100	90	115	115	116	101	82	71	79	99	116	132	147	162					
COST (1913=100)	100	414	1017	1338	150251	15883077	100	110	111	116	119	120	116	106	94	93	95	96	98	98	99	99				
Unemployment (%)	2.9	3.7	3.8	2.8	1.5	9.6	13.5	6.7	18.0	8.8	8.4	13.1	15.3	23.3	30.1	26.3	14.9	11.6	8.3	4.6	2.1					
B. o. Trade (m. RM)	-673							-3072	414	-3427	-1725	36	1643	2872	1072	667										
B. o. P. (m. RM)	939							-1988	1152	-2660	-1202	-132	1096	2038	417	281	-534	-108								
ADGB (m. members)	2.5	7.3	8	7.8	7.8	5.8	4	4.2	3.9	4.4	4.9	.9	4.7	4.1												
GCGD, VD	0.4	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	1	1	1	1	0.9											
Tot. Indebtedness (m. members)																										
(b. RM)								3	3.3	7.9	7.8	7.9	9.4	9.6	11.3	11.4	11.8	12	12.8	15.5	16.9	22.4	34.1			
Lost working days (million)								33083	167552	5874	27734	12344	36198	2936	1222	6144	20339	4251	4029	1890	1130	96				
Crisis Indicators																										
Ind. Prod.								100	90	115	115	116	101	82	71	79	99	116	132	147	162					
Cost of Living								100	111	116	119	120	116	106	94	93	95	96	98	98	99	99				
Unemployment								100	74	39	253	355	176	474	232	221	345	403	613	792	692	392	305	218	121	55
NDP								100	105	117	126	126	117	97	79	81	92	103	115	129	143	156				
Strikes								100	107	48	140	11	5	24	79	16	16	7	4	0.4						

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 57–8, 350); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 167ff., 356, 743ff., 818ff); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 14); Petrina *et al.* (eds) (1978: 111); *Wirtschaft und Statistik*.

Note: RM (Reichsmark) is US\$0.2382; GDP and NDP are at current market prices. ADGB = Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (General German Association of Unions); GCGD = Gesamtverband der Christlichen Gewerkschaften (General Association of Christian Unions in Germany); VDG = Verband der Deutschen Gewerkschaften (Association of German Unions/Hirsch-Duncker Unions).

seats with the SPD being the largest party. Women had been allowed to vote for the first time and the voting age was reduced to 20 years of age. The voting turnout was 83 per cent. On the right, the monarchists received 15 per cent of the seats; the left – then only the USPD – 8 per cent. The first republican government, however, did not last very long. In the first Reichstag elections of June 1920 the Weimar Coalition lost its dominance, giving way to a variety of centre-right and ‘Weimar’ cabinets. In Prussia a Weimar Coalition government remained in power from 1920 to 1932. During the golden age of the Republic a downward trend in voting turnout can be noticed; however, the relative shares of the parties remained basically stable. But a landslide occurred in the Reichstag elections of September 1930 and the two radical anti-system parties, the NSDAP and the KPD, achieved enormous gains (see Table 8.4).

In the course of the depression, almost one-third of the electorate turned to the extremist parties. Numerous agrarian and middle-class splinter groups also gained, but these splinter parties tended to function as intermediate hosts on the way towards the NSDAP (Falter 1991: 30). The social context, the milieu of liberals, conservatives, SPD and Catholics had vanished leaving only the NSDAP as a people’s party.

4.4 The formation of coalitions

The formation of coalitions can also be split into three phases, with a slightly different timing for the second and third phase. In the first phase (1919–23),

Figure 8.2 The development of the political blocs in Germany between 1912 and 1933

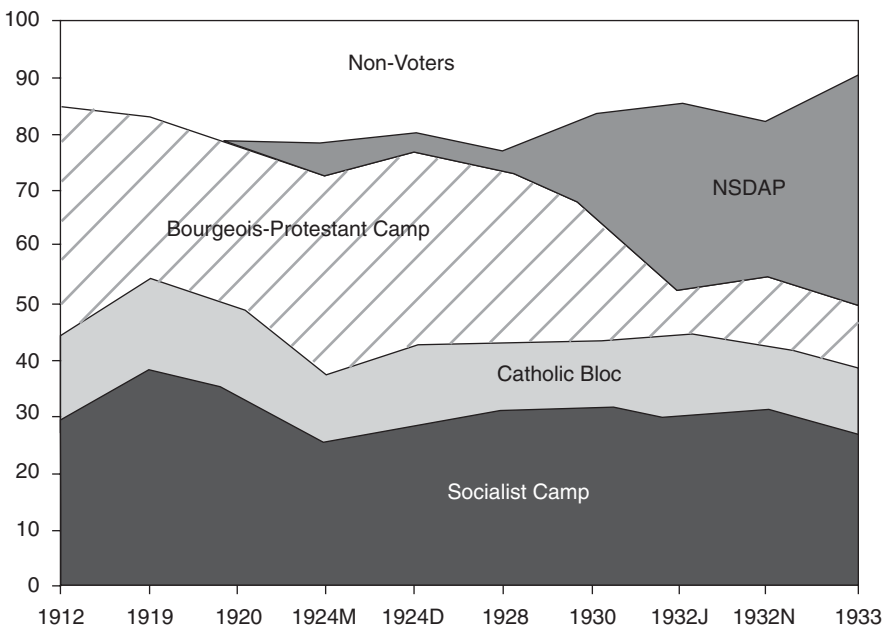


Table 8.4 Germany: electoral results, 1919–33

	19.01.1919		06.06.1920		04.05.1924		07.12.1924		20.05.1928		14.09.1930		31.07.1932		06.11.1932		05.03.1933	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Communist Party (KPD)			2.1	4	12.6	62	8.9	45	10.6	54	13.1	77	14.6	89	16.9	100	12.3	81
Independent Social Democrats (USPD)	7.6	22	17.9	84	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.1									
Social Democrats (SPD)	37.9	165	21.6	102	20.5	100	26.0	131	29.8	153	24.5	143	21.6	133	20.4	121	18.3	120
German Democratic Party (DDP)	18.6	75	8.3	39	5.7	28	6.3	32	4.9	25	3.8	20	1.0	4	1.0	2	0.8	5
Centre Party (Zentrum)	19.0	91	13.6	64	13.4	65	13.6	69	12.1	62	11.8	68	12.4	75	11.9	70	11.2	74
Bavarian People's Party (BVP)			4.4	21	3.2	16	3.7	19	3.1	16	3.0	19	3.2	22	3.1	20	2.7	18
German People's Party (DVP)	4.4	19	13.9	65	9.2	45	10.1	51	8.7	45	4.5	30	1.2	7	1.9	11	1.1	2
German National People's Party (DNVP)	10.3	44	15.1	71	19.5	95	20.5	103	14.2	73	7.0	41	5.9	37	8.3	52	8.0	52
National Socialists (NSDAP)					6.6	32	3.0	14	2.6	12	18.3	107	37.3	230	33.1	196	43.9	288
Others	1.6	7	3.3	9	8.6	29	7.5	29	13.9	51	13.8	72	2	11	2.6	12	1.6	7
Seats total		423		459		472		493		491		588		608		584		647

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 156).

during the restless and critical years of revolution, inflation and the occupation of the Ruhr, the Weimar Coalition remained largely intact. After it lost its absolute majority in 1920, there were governments with changing coalitions or minority governments, mostly with the DVP joining the Coalition.

In the second period (1924–30), centre-right coalitions dominated, occasionally with the inclusion of the DNVP and the BVP. During this time basically two forms of political alliances could be found: minority cabinets – as in 1924 and 1926 – and broader-based coalitions including the parliamentary right such as the Luther government of 1925 or the Marx government of 1927–8. From 1928–30 a grand coalition led by Müller (SPD) and consisting of SPD, Zentrum, DDP, DVP and BVP attempted to maintain political stability. But during the times of the economic crisis and increasing anti-republican agitation on the right and the extreme left, this proved to be a Herculean task. In March 1930 the conservative crisis management of the grand coalition failed because of divergent views on financing the social security system. For some observers this marked the end of the Weimar Republic (Rosenberg 1980).

In the third phase (1930–32/3), the republican system was gradually transformed into an authoritarian, presidential regime under Brüning (Zentrum), Papen and Schleicher. This paved the way for Hitler's accession to power as chancellor in January 1933 (Stürmer 1985).

4.5 International interactions

The location of Germany in the middle of Europe was important. For long periods most German states had not been subjects of international politics, but mere objects. With late German state-building this situation changed dramatically. The unified Reich under the leadership of Prussia became the 'restless Empire' (Stürmer 1983) in the middle of Europe vigorously demanding its place in international politics, and was supported in this effort by an economic upturn in the second half of the nineteenth century which was surpassed only by the United States. In 1918 these dreams of a 'place in the sun' had burst like a bubble.

4.5.1 Foreign policies

Weimar foreign policy can again be separated into three phases. An initial phase of orientation (1918/19–1923/4) was followed by Stresemann's rapprochement policy in the years 1924–1929/30. The third phase (1930–3) saw a transition to a more conflictual and aggressive foreign policy.

The immediate postwar period posed severe problems which were closely connected with the outcome of the war. In these years foreign policy looked for orientation and lacked a coherent direction. The only focus at that time was the issue of reparations.

In the second phase a cohesive foreign policy was formulated. As foreign secretary Stresemann (DVP) pursued a policy of rapprochement in particular towards the west although there were certain elements of more independent power politics towards the east. On the whole Germany was committed to peaceful means

Table 8.5 Germany: government composition, 1919–33

Date	Parties in Government	Chancellor
2/13/1919	SPD-Zentrum-DDP	Scheidemann (SPD)
6/21/1919	SPD-Zentrum	Bauer (SPD)
3/27/1920	SPD-Zentrum-DDP	H. Müller (SPD)
6/21/1920	Zentrum-DDP-DVP	Fehrenbach (Zentrum)
5/10/1921	SPD-Zentrum-DDP	Wirth (Zentrum)
10/26/1921	SPD-Zentrum-DDP	Wirth (Zentrum)
11/22/1922	DVP-Zentrum-DDP	Cuno (npm)
8/13/1923	SPD-Zentrum-DDP-DVP	Stresemann (DVP)
10/6/1923	SPD-Zentrum-DDP-DVP	Stresemann (DVP)
11/30/1923	Zentrum-BVP-DVP-DDP	Marx (Zentrum)
6/3/1924	Zentrum-DDP-DVP	Marx (Zentrum)
1/15/1925	Zentrum-DDP-DVP-DNVP	Luther (npm)
1/20/1926	Zentrum-BVP-DVP-DDP	Luther (npm)
5/17/1926	Zentrum-DVP-DDP	Marx (Zentrum)
1/29/1927	Zentrum-BVP-DVP-DNVP	Marx (Zentrum)
6/29/1928	SPD-Zentrum-BVP-DDP-DVP	H. Müller (SPD)
3/30/1930	Presidential Cabinet	Brüning (Zentrum)
6/1/1932	Presidential Cabinet	von Papen (npm)
12/3/1932	Presidential Cabinet	von Schleicher (npm)
1/30/1933	NSDAP-DNVP	Hitler (NSDAP)

Source: Tormin (ed.) (1980: 268–71).

Abbreviations (and Translations):

- BVP = Bavarian People's Party
 DDP = German Democratic Party
 DNVP = German National People's Party
 SPD = Social Democrats
 npm = non-party member.

in international politics and now aimed at overcoming international political isolation, at the revision of the Treaty of Versailles and economic reconstruction. The restoration of the economy, and in due course political equality, on the international scene was the primary concern. To reach these goals the Weimar Government emphasized foreign economic policy using it sometimes as a substitute for a more comprehensive foreign policy. Here the most-favoured nation clause was of particular importance because the economy was well-g geared towards a liberalization of foreign trade and because this coincided with the American interest in free trade and a liberal world economy (Link 1970). With the 'Treaty of Friendship and Commerce' in 1923 and the Dawes Plan in 1924 this close American–German linkage was accomplished and proved to be of positive influence for German goals. In essence this strategy brought the recognition of German international status as a great power.

In the third phase (1930–3) foreign policy was characterized by the absence of a grand design. In general, Stresemann's multilaterally oriented concept of rapprochement was gradually abandoned and a more unilateral policy ensued. The project of a tariff union with Austria already hinted at this development. After the

solution of the reparations question in Lausanne in 1932 these tendencies intensified dramatically. This trend towards unilateralism became even more apparent in the armament negotiations, with the eventual withdrawal from the League of Nations. There was a parallel in the field of foreign economic policy, too, where trade policy successively focussed on bilateral approaches, particularly with regard to southeastern Europe (see Krüger 1985).

4.5.2 *Economic relations*

The development of exports was rather unsatisfactory up to the middle of the nineteenth century, but an internationally expansionist, if uneven development had begun. The reason for this slow development was the relative backwardness of the economy (Borchardt 1972: 35). With the rise in industrial production the export of goods increased, too. Export volume rose by 60 per cent in the booming years between 1908 and 1913. More than half consisted of manufactured goods (Milward 1977: 61). During the war foreign trade had been dramatically reduced due to the allied blockade. The levels of 1913 were reached again in the second half of the 1920's (Henning 1975: 114f.). In 1928 nearly 70 per cent of German exports consisted of finished products. If one adds the semi-finished products, the figure rises to 80 per cent (see Petzina *et al.* 1978: 73).

Before the war the balance of trade had been negative. The value of investments abroad rose from 16 billion marks in 1905 to 30 billion in 1913 (Milward and Saul 1977: 63). The lost war and the Treaty of Versailles imposed a heavy burden on trade. Germany had lost just about her complete merchant fleet (Kellenbenz 1988: 425). At first after the war imports increased while exports decreased. Then, however, exports went up, until they plunged again in 1929. Imports had already decreased from 1927 onwards. The main export partners of this period were France, the Netherlands and Britain. The export quota, i.e. the export measured by the net product in current prices in those years, lay between 14 and 17 per cent (Henning 1975: 116). The regional development of foreign trade is shown in Table 8.6.

4.5.3 *Cultural relations*

German literature, music and painting were highly respected and had considerable influence on European culture. During the Weimar Republic a certain cultural split into an 'official' culture and a kind of subculture that became the cultural avant-garde in the 1920s intensified. Although the 'official' culture also had its impact on the international cultural arena, the main impulses came from the cultural avant-garde, the 'New Functionalism'. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the avant-garde from being seen as 'un-German' in some sections of society (Peukert 1987: 166–75).

Because of its geographical location Weimar absorbed cultural influences of all kinds from her neighbours, but perhaps the most decisive influence came from the newly emerging American mass culture. This was not surprising; economic

Table 8.6 Regional development of German foreign trade, 1913–38

Regions/States	Percentage of imports			Percentage of exports		
	1913	1929	1938	1913	1929	1938
Southeast Europe	1 (a)	3.8	9.8	2.1a	4.3	10.3
Russia/Soviet Union	13.2	6.9	4.4	8.7	6.5	4.2
Egypt, Turkey, Near East	1.8	1.4	3.8	1.4	1.4	5.4
Latin America	11.0	11.4	14.9	7.4	7.3	11.7
Northern Europe	5.1	7.3	11.4	6.7	10.2	12.9
Western Europe	13.7	15.7	11.9	25.5	26.2	20.8
Great Britain	8.1	6.4	5.2	14.2	9.7	6.7
USA	15.9	13.3	7.4	7.1	7.4	2.8
others	43.4	40.7	35.8	35.6	33.5	29.4

Source: Petzina *et al.* (eds) (1978).

Note:

(a) Excluding the Habsburg Monarchy.

and, in part, political penetration of Germany by the United States (Link 1970) paved the way for cultural influences as well (Costigliola 1984; Berg 1963; Peukert 1987: 175–90).

With the apparent triumph of the American system of technology and mass production, Germany and Europe perceived the American model as the future in terms of technology, economic structure and social relations promising permanent progress and wealth for all strata of society. The writings of Henry Ford became a best-seller in Germany and the unions praised the blessings of the American organization of industrial production.

This focus on the United States extended to American culture as well, with American literature, movies and music spreading across the Atlantic. In some quarters the perceived threat of US economic imperialism fostered a rejection of what was considered to be American cultural hegemony and this merged with political anti-American tendencies on the right. There was a genuine conservative criticism of American mass culture based on pre-industrial and bourgeois-individualistic ideas about society and economy. This anti-Americanism could be, and was, used to chastise the Republic for its strong linkage to the US. With the onset of the economic crisis the American 'Factory on the Hill' (Costigliola 1984) lost its appeal. In the more nationalist perception, which became increasingly dominant and intensified after 1933, American culture was despised.

5 Actions and reactions during the period of crisis

The postwar crisis had already led to severe social, economic and political turmoil which came to a head in the period of hyperinflation and several attempted *coups d'état*. The political situation had then been consolidated after the economic reforms and international agreements and this resulted in a period of relative prosperity. Nevertheless, some of the foundations of society, in

particular the old middle classes, had been affected so severely that the onslaught of the world economic crisis led to the relatively rapid collapse of the regime.

5.1 Principal actors and arenas

5.1.1 The economic arena

The world economic crisis, together with internal problems, dealt a heavy blow to the German economy: exports plummeted from 12.3 to 5.7 billion reichsmark, between 1928 and 1932; the rate of unemployment grew from 7.0 per cent to 30.8 per cent (Hardach 1976: 51). The Great Depression had started as a cyclical crisis of overproduction which coincided with a severe crisis in agriculture, but it had a long genesis reaching back to the consequences of the war and to the mistakes made in the period of world economic stabilization. The collapse of the New York Stock Exchange on 'black Thursday' then triggered further events (v. Bredow and Brocke 1981: 51–4; Aldcroft 1978; Kindleberger 1984). The decrease in American exports of capital to Germany (and other countries) which had already begun in 1928 led to a shortage of capital, causing a need to reduce imports and to increase exports. This initiated short-term and protectionist policies of 'beggar-your-neighbour' which led to a disintegration of the world economy. This failure of the multilateral and liberal world economy inaugurated a regionalization of world trade and the emergence of trading blocs (Hardach 1977; Kindleberger 1984).

In Germany, as elsewhere, the crisis was initially interpreted as the usual cyclical contraction which would sooner or later be followed by an economic upturn. But with the deepening of the recession, and with no sign of an improvement on the horizon, people began to wonder whether this crisis was exceptional and whether its exceptionality demanded unconventional means to cope with it. Furthermore, the past cast a shadow upon events through the fear of inflation created during the years of hyperinflation and this influenced political decision-making, especially in the Brüning era. He pursued a strictly deflationary policy of reducing federal spending and the level of prices and wages in connection, and a protectionist agricultural policy. Under Papen and Schleicher, there were signs of an anti-cyclical economic policy with stronger federal intervention and an employment programme proposed by the trade unions and individuals like Ludwig Erhard. But it was only the National Socialist government which finally put an end to the crisis by implementing large-scale employment and infrastructural programmes and by transforming the economy to one preparing for war (Petzina 1977).

5.1.2 The sociopolitical arena

The entire society was affected by the economic depression which eroded basic social, political and economic convictions. The increasing instability in the political system and the intensification of the economic recession created a

prevailing atmosphere of discontent that could not be defused even by the presidential cabinets ruling through emergency decrees. Political confrontations were taken out of the parliamentary arena to the streets where they were decided by force and violence. Politically inspired crimes and assassinations increased markedly. Here the SA turned out to be a very useful instrument for the NSDAP.

To fight the depression the SPD, together with the free unions, in May 1932 tentatively proposed the so-called WTP plan that promoted an employment scheme and sought to preserve the republican system. Most of the liberal and conservative parties followed orthodox economic policies but with regard to politics they recommended various types of authoritarian regime. The Communists, by contrast, advocated nationalizing the means of production and establishing a proletarian dictatorship. The National Socialists profited from their position of fundamental opposition in the years 1930–32/3, blaming other parties' policies and promising to apply the appropriate policies when in power. They heralded the advent of the Third Reich as the solution to all problems. Thus, they appealingly conveyed the image of a dynamic and fresh party with a vision. The bottom of the crisis had already passed when they came to power, so favouring their anti-cyclical economic programme (Petzina 1977; see also Bracher 1984 and Bracher *et al.* 1987).

5.1.3 *The parliamentary arena*

From the beginning of the Republic there were hardly any overarching institutions to lend stability to the system's overall structure, nor was there a basic consensus. The parties on the right fought vigorously against the republic and tried to restore the monarchy or to install an authoritarian regime. Anti-democratic thinking was widespread (Sontheimer 1962) and these parties were disloyal or semi-loyal, at best, to the democratic system (Lepsius 1978: 45). The extreme left also turned against the system and sought to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. The only political forces in support of Weimar were the moderate left, the left-wing liberals and the Catholic Party. But the democratic camp suffered from internal fragmentation and support for these parties declined during the economic and political crisis. In the years after 1929 the historical compromise between the social democratic labour movement and the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie crumbled, and Germany watched the dissolution of the liberal milieu caused by the 'de-liberalization' of the bourgeois centre (Langewiesche 1988: 233, 240).

In the years of the presidential cabinets parliament lost its importance and prestige. Instead, political power shifted to a small number of people around the aging Hindenburg. The classical analysis of the dissolution and destruction of the Weimar Republic during that period by Bracher (1984) describes it in terms of three distinct steps. The first two steps, the period of the loss of power and the following period of a power vacuum (1930–32/3) describe a process leading from the dissolution of a more or less stable and pro-Weimar coalition which commanded a political majority, to a situation in which the authoritarian

presidential cabinets were desperately looking for social and political support. Brüning was quite successful because he was tolerated by the SPD. His successor, Papen, did not even try this. Instead, he illegally removed the Social Democrat government in Prussia. His government had no major social support at all. Schleicher, by contrast, favoured the idea of a sociopolitical front across the political spectrum, including the unions. They would support a presidential cabinet which in addition had the approval of the armed forces (Muth 1981). But he also failed. As a result, the only party that could support an authoritarian regime, and that at the same time had a mass base, was the NSDAP. The elites in politics, industry and agriculture were in favour of an authoritarian solution and the elimination of the SPD as a political force. They thought they could use the social support of the NSDAP for the establishment of an authoritarian system without conceding considerable political influence to Hitler; they thought they could 'tame' and 'frame' Hitler (see Jasper 1986). Thus, at the end of the period of a power vacuum they offered governmental participation. This was used by the NSDAP to seize power which constitutes the third period in Bracher's scheme. In fact, the strategy of those hoping for an authoritarian solution failed entirely; they consciously or unconsciously set the fox to guard the geese, and the way towards a totalitarian regime was open (Bracher 1984; Matthias and Morsey 1984; see also Winkler 1992).

Overall, the strong differences between the various fragmented sub-milieus prevented the formation of a desperately needed basic consensus and gradually undermined the political system. This helped the rise of the NSDAP as the only party that could be described as a mass-based party (Falter 1991) which in part integrated these fragmented sub-milieus but which, as an anti-system party, then took the opportunity to overthrow democracy. (The geographical clusters of national-socialist electoral successes in July 1932 can be found in Falter (1986: 230).)

5.2 The 'resolution' of the crisis

After the NSDAP entered government they sought to expand their influence and power via elections. Hitler actually tried to obtain a plebiscite for his monopoly of political power, and the atmosphere of optimism and the feeling of innovation lent considerable credit to the new system (Frei 1987: 41).

In pursuing this policy he first cooperated with his coalition partners to destroy the organizations of the labour movement. Then he used the positions which the NSDAP occupied in the executive to force the remaining parties in the coalition to surrender their sovereignty. This seizure of power by the Nazis met with the fascistization of public life, which led to the political desensitization of large segments of society (Broszat 1986: 83). The Enabling Act of 28 February 1933, promulgated after the fire in the Reichstag to persecute the Communists, in the end constituted the 'legal' basis for the NSDAP monopoly of political power and their liquidation of political adversaries. At the same time Hitler ensured the support of influential circles in the elite, such as the Reichswehr, by suggesting an expansion of the Reich; to the industrialists he promised not to

alter the capitalist foundations of the economy. He also sided with large-scale agriculture by promising subsidies (Frei 1987; Broszat 1986).

The establishment of the Nazi dictatorship was accompanied by slow but perceptible economic growth; the bottom of the crisis had already been passed. The reduction of unemployment through the implementation of large-scale employment programmes was seen as a means of generating overall social support for the 'Third Reich'. By the end of 1934 the number of unemployed was reduced by 2 million and in 1936/7 full employment was reached. This was accomplished by transforming the economy to one based on the production of armaments and preparation for war. At the same time there was a large increase in public debt causing a (concealed) inflation. But the state had overall control over the currency as well as foreign trade (Petzina 1977).

6 Conclusions

In a comparative analysis of democratic regimes in the interwar period Weimar is a case of breakdown. The parliamentary-republican system was destroyed by influential anti-democratic and authoritarian segments of society and the Nazis established a totalitarian dictatorship. Germany fits Moore's category of industrial modernization along the reactionary-capitalist route, with late nation-building requiring economic modernization by the way of a revolution from above (Moore 1969). This in turn prevented a move towards liberalization and democratization in society and fostered a mass psychological predisposition towards a strong or even authoritarian government reinforced by a repressive agricultural system and an inclination towards militarism to generate social support. In the crucial years after 1929 this favoured the fascist solution to the crisis.

A closer look, however, reveals that this was only one among several possible alternatives. The establishment of a kind of popular front government consisting of the SPD and KPD, however, was not attainable since the Communists despised the Social Democrats as 'Social Fascists' and fought them vehemently. The SPD in turn disliked the violent character of the KPD. A government consisting of the parties of the Weimar Coalition was impossible too, for they had lost the support of the political majority and in times of crisis a government is needed which possesses strength and cohesion.

But a presidential cabinet, even one with an authoritarian character tolerated by the SPD, was a real possibility. In fact, Brüning followed this policy. Unfortunately, he was not skilful enough because he declined the SPD offer of close cooperation between the Prussian *Länder* government and the federal government (Broszat 1987: 127). He did so not only because of Hindenburg's well-known anti-socialist stance, but also because of his own wish to restore the monarchy (Brüning 1970). By contrast, the ambition of Papen, Brüning's successor, to form a conservative-authoritarian 'New State' had almost no social basis at all, although he was strongly supported by Hindenburg.

There was even some slight 'political space' available for a 're-parliamentarization' or 're-republicanization' of the political system under Schleicher. His advocacy of an alliance right across the parties and the unions – a corporatist-authoritarian solution which could have led to modest democratic system later on – was rejected too quickly by the labour movement. In addition it did not take into account the strong dislike of the 'reds' by those on the right of the political spectrum (Muth 1982; Broszat 1987: 158).

At last, in 1930, there was a slim chance of re-establishing a kind of ZAG – that is, cooperation between the labour movement and the employers' organizations – providing a certain amount of stability in times of economic and political crisis. This possibility, however, was not pursued enthusiastically enough by either side (Wengst 1977).

To summarize, the alternative solutions show that there was some 'political leeway' which could have produced a different outcome. But historical, social, economic, political, ideological and cultural constraints narrowed the opportunity set and the probability of their successful implementation. The alternative – of including the NSDAP and forming an authoritarian government – seemed to be the simpler and more obvious solution at that time. The results of taking this political path are now all too familiar.

9

Greece: Political Crisis and Authoritarian Takeover

Allan Zink

1 Introduction

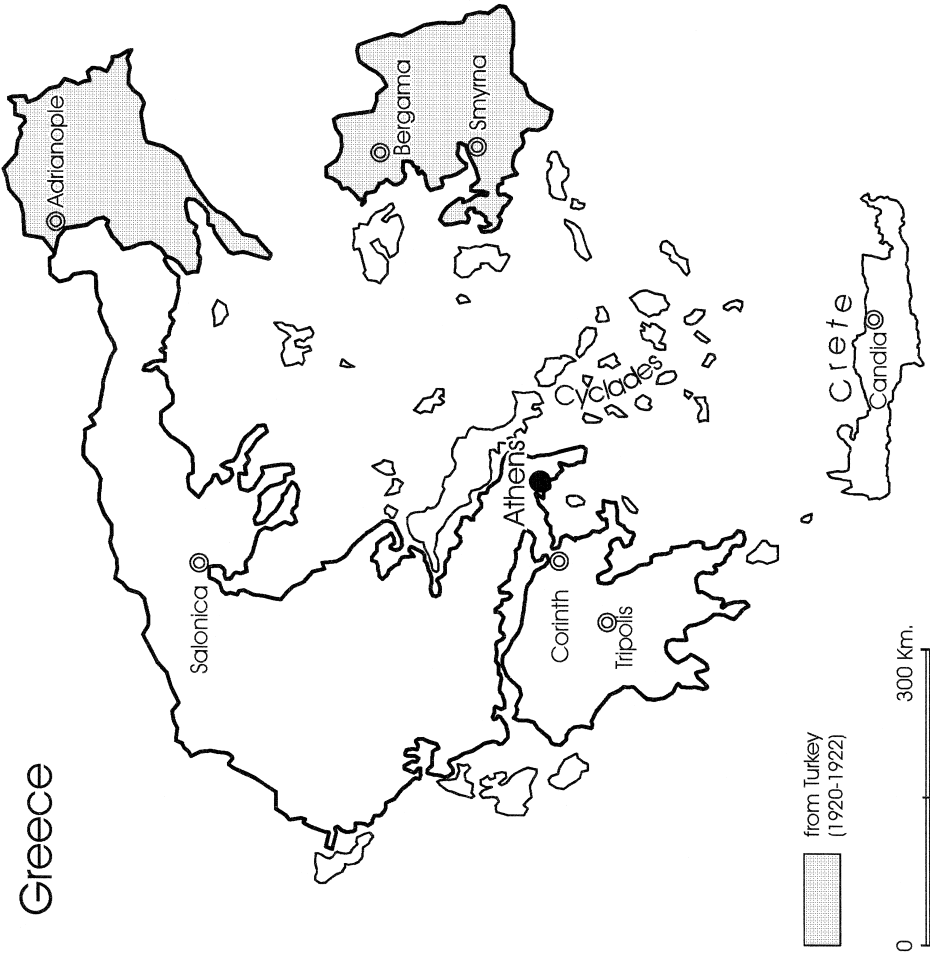
Greece, situated historically and geographically on the borderline between the 'West' and the 'East', is in many ways a marginal case within the context of Europe. Certain underlying structures and processes of Greek politics appear to differ significantly from those in Western and Central European polities. Thus, while on the surface the Greek Republic of 1924 was a parliamentary democracy with a multi-party system, important deviations from 'classical' democratic patterns can be detected on a more basic level. The role and function of the state and military apparati, the character of the country's intermediary associations and essential aspects of Greek political culture all exhibit unmistakably '(semi) peripheral' characteristics which set them apart from their 'metropolitan' European counterparts. Even with regard to a distinctly 'Southern European' pattern discernible in Italy, Spain and Portugal, interwar Greece was a 'deviant' case: there was not a 'strong landed upper class ... confronted with a relatively weak state organization' nor had 'the rural proletariat ... [been] organized by a socialist party which led to the establishment of an authoritarian ... or Fascist ... regime' (Berg-Schlosser 1990: 20). All these particularities suggest the need for closer consideration of the socioeconomic and political-cultural dimensions of Greek political development.

2 The structural context of Greek politics during the interwar period

The century separating the birth of the modern Greek state from the interwar period was of central importance for the evolution of the context within which the political crisis of 1935–6 took place. Political developments over this period will be discussed in the sections below.

2.1 The dependent character of the Greek state

After an initial period of reticence dictated by the status quo policy of the Holy Alliance, the European powers lent active – and arguably, decisive – support to



the Greeks in their War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire from 1821 to 1828. The proclamation of a sovereign Greek state with a republican constitution in 1828 was followed by nearly one and a half years of civil war (1831–3), after which Athens was compelled by France, Great Britain and Russia to accept the imposition of an absolute monarchy in exchange for the recognition of its independence within much restricted borders. In so doing, the three powers established an informal protectorate over Greece in which the monarchy served as a bridgehead. With the accession of King George I in 1863 Great Britain was able to assume the role of sole dominant power – a position it retained until superseded by the United States in 1947.

2.2 The division of the Greek bourgeoisie

In the absence of an indigenous Greek aristocracy the role of a national political elite fell more or less naturally to the Greek bourgeoisie at the time of independence. Until the country obtained its final land borders in 1923, however, Greece's bourgeoisie was split geographically into two distinct factions. Its economically most active and best educated elements were to be found mainly outside the kingdom in Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria, Odessa and various other European locations. In contrast, the traditional class of landlords and notables (*kodzabásides*), most prominent families (*tzákia*) and many shipowners and shipbuilders were situated within the borders of the kingdom. While the diaspora bourgeoisie was less involved in Greek national politics, the more traditional bourgeois elements within Greece itself soon began to abandon their rural economic base and develop into an oligarchical 'state bourgeoisie' with growing interests in the financial sector.

Table 9.1 Greece: class structure, 1928

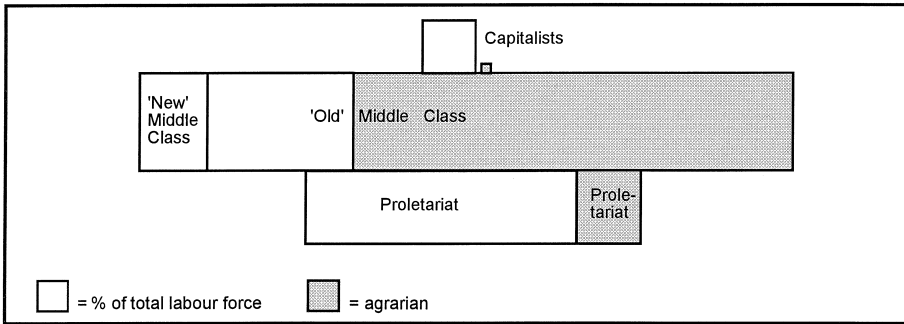
Population (millions)	6.2
Employment rate	44.2
Rate of agrarian employment	53.7
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.1
Family farms	45.4
Agrarian proletariat	5
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	3 ^a
Old middle class	15
New middle class	7
Proletariat	21
Sub-proletariat	
Total	96.5

Sources: Statistisches Reichsamts (1936: 110); Mavrogordatos (1983: 13); Voyatis (1968: 13).

Note:

a The figure for capitalists is too high, but there is no possibility to define it more accurately.

Figure 9.1 Greece: class structure, 1928



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 9.1.

Between 1909 and 1922 three events altered the macro-political situation in Greece and the composition of the national political elite. First, a revolt of young officers in August 1909 succeeded in breaking the 80-year-old power monopoly of the 'old parties' dominated by the *tzákia* and swept the leader of the liberal bourgeoisie, Eleftherios Venizelos, to power. As prime minister Venizelos pursued a policy of radical constitutional, legal and socioeconomic reform. His main opponent during these early years was King Constantine I who had acceded to the throne in 1913 after the assassination of his father, George I.

Secondly, a civil war between the supporters of Venizelos and King Constantine erupted in 1916–17 over the issue of Greece's policy towards the Entente in the First World War. This provoked a 'National Schism' which divided the Greek nation into two hostile camps until the Italian invasion of 1940.

Finally, the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor in 1922 led to the expulsion of 1.2 million ethnic Greeks from Turkey and the definitive fixation of Greece's land borders by the Treaty of Lausanne the following year. These two events had important consequences for the structure of Greek society during the interwar period. On the one hand, the final delimitation of Greek national territory ended nearly a century of Greek irredentism and compelled the Greeks of the diaspora either to migrate to the motherland or accept the definitive nature of their diaspora status. This in effect ended the division of the Greek bourgeoisie along geographical lines. On the other hand, the resettlement of the Asia Minor refugees in Greece laid the basis for the rapid development of a genuine Greek proletariat and the appearance of a trade union movement together with a small but energetic Communist Party.

These developments split the Greek bourgeoisie and the nation as a whole along new lines. Now, Republicans opposed Royalists or, more correctly, Venizelists were pitted against anti-Venizelists in a prolonged clash of two great blocs centred around Venizelos' Liberal Party and the People's Party of Panayis Tsaldaris. The distinction between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists had less to do with the regime form as such and was not primarily determined by class-based

antagonisms, opposing social ideologies or fundamental differences in economic or foreign policy. Rather, the two camps were essentially national coalitions, rooted in regional loyalties and bound to the pursuit of particularistic interests according to the rules of patronage politics, the main task of which was to gain or retain control over the state apparatus and its main locus of power, the officers' corps.

2.3 The evolution of the Greek party system from 1833 to 1909

The first phase in the evolution of the Greek party system, stretching from the establishment of the monarchy in 1833 until the Crimean War (1864–6), was characterized by a unique form of political organisation which reflected the dependent nature of nineteenth century Greek politics. During this period there were three intermediary political groupings, parties of sorts, each of which was headed by a prominent figure of the revolutionary period and oriented towards one of the three protecting powers. These were the 'English Party' under Mavrokordatos, the 'French Party' headed by Kolettis and the 'Russian Party' of Kolokotronis. This form of political organization, firmly rooted in old-style patronage, precluded the emergence of both issue-oriented and class-oriented politics, bringing instead 'personalistic struggles over the distribution of spoils' (Mouzelis 1978: 16) into the forefront of Greek political life.

The second phase from 1864 to 1909 saw the emergence of domestically oriented parties of a strongly clientelistic character centred around 'personalities'. Two main groupings dominated the political arena: the moderately progressive party of Trikoupis, later to take the name 'Liberal', and the basically conservative 'People's Party' of Koumoundouros. Although the general character of these 'personalistic' parties in no way differed from that of their 'outward-oriented' predecessors, the end of great power rivalries within the context of Greek domestic politics together with the expansion of the state bureaucracy towards the close of the nineteenth century allowed the state to become the unmediated focus of party activity. Since control of the state apparatus provided access to the resources whose distribution was so essential to the functioning of the clientelistic system, the occupation of the state now became the primary goal of party politics in Greece.

Both the 'outward-oriented' and 'personalistic' parties of nineteenth-century Greece can be regarded as adaptations of traditional Greek clientelist structures to the political realities of the independent Greek state. In the first instance this occurred under the supreme patronage of the protecting powers and in the second with a view to instrumentalizing the state apparatus for purposes of domestic patronage.

2.4 Greek economic development before 1931

The 'semi-peripheral' context of interwar Greek politics is also rooted in the country's early economic development. Having been part of the Ottoman Empire until 1821–8, Greece was affected by the 'peripheralization' of the Ottoman economy which resulted from the gradual penetration of Turkish

markets by the European mercantilist powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (cf. Zink 1980: 15–16). During the 50 years which preceded its statehood, the areas of Greek settlement experienced an exceptionally rapid decline in trade and artisan production, especially textiles, to which was added the widespread destruction of Greek agriculture during the War of Independence. As a result, the country's economy was both materially and structurally destitute when the Monarchy was proclaimed in 1833.

Moreover, a series of foreign loans granted to the Greek insurgents during and immediately following the War of Independence plunged Greece into debt and rendered it financially dependent from independence onwards. Since most of these loans were used to finance the unproductive and increasingly inflated public sector and to service previous debts, the state suffered from a perennial lack of funds which prompted it to pursue a tax policy geared almost exclusively to the maximisation of public revenue. Consequently, Greece was plagued by underdevelopment (especially in the all-important agricultural sector), chronic indebtedness and the need for ever more foreign loans during the whole of the nineteenth century and was ultimately forced to declare public bankruptcy in 1893. In the 1920s the country's foreign debt sky-rocketed once again – this time as a result of the financial burden brought about by the resettlement of the Asia Minor refugees and a series of reconstruction and public works programmes. During the decade following 1922 Greek governments once again felt themselves compelled to subordinate their economic policies to the imperative of maximizing state revenues, thereby compromising the potential success of their developmental efforts from the outset.

Although Greece was a predominantly agricultural country, the state's promotion of luxury crops for export and the tendency towards monoculture led to the necessity of importing wheat and other vital foodstuffs by the end of the nineteenth century. During this period between 40 per cent and 70 per cent of Greece's agricultural exports consisted of currants, the rest being largely wine, olives and, after 1913, tobacco. Accordingly, the 'currant crisis' of the late 1890s – an export crisis resulting from France's recovery from the phylloxera epidemic of 1878 – proved disastrous both to the state and to the small farmers of the Peloponnesus. The unprofitability of the agricultural sector in the nineteenth century not only prevented the adequate capitalization of Greek agriculture, but also prompted the traditional landowning oligarchy to abandon its economic base in the countryside and assume the role of an urbanized 'state bourgeoisie' with increasing ties to the financial sector. At the same time the continued impoverishment of the peasantry drove large portions of the rural population to migrate abroad, especially to the United States, or to the big cities – Athens and, to a lesser extent, Thessaloniki.

It was against this background that Venizelos promulgated his land reform of 1917. This scheme abolished the vast majority of large landholdings (with the exception of land held by the Orthodox Church) and established small family farms as the backbone of Greek agriculture. It also ushered in a period of active state involvement in agricultural development which, being funded mainly by

foreign loans, contrasted sharply with the *laissez-faire* doctrine governing Venizelos' financial and commercial policies. On the political level, the land reform not only secured the Venizelists a vast reservoir of support among the new smallholders of northern Greece, but also reinforced bourgeois political hegemony by helping to forestall the emergence of a radical peasant movement or a peasant-worker alliance (Mazower 1991: 74–6, 296).

Striking a further blow at the landed elements of the conservative bourgeoisie faction was not a primary goal of land reform. Although the compensation paid to large landowners expropriated by the reform was far below the real value of their property, it also facilitated their absorption into the urbanized professional world and effectively brought to an end the 'sectoral resettlement' of the landed oligarchy which had begun in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the mid-1920s the smallholder had become the numerically largest element of Greek society while both the landlord class and the landless peasantry had ceased to exist as relevant sociopolitical forces. In this way, the agrarian question, one of the great unresolved problems of the nineteenth century, was brought to a viable conclusion well before the political crisis of 1935–6 erupted.

The first systematic attempt at promoting industrial development in Greece was undertaken by Trikoupis in the 1880s and 1890s. His policy was based on a programme of state-sponsored infrastructure projects which were intended to encourage domestic and foreign investment in productive enterprises. Despite sizeable investments from abroad, however, numerous problems were encountered which ultimately led to the failure of this effort. Chief among these were the rudimentary internal transport system, the inability of the Greek economy to absorb large amounts of foreign capital, the weak internal demand for industrial products and the lack of a sizeable proletariat in the cities. These difficulties were further reinforced by the weakness of the liberal bourgeoisie, lack of support from other segments of the population and frequent changes of government between Trikoupis' party and the opposition which often reversed his reform measures upon taking office.

Venizelos initiated a similar development policy, though with somewhat different intentions, during his term of office from 1928 to 1932. In an attempt to create what he termed a 'modern state' he launched a comprehensive modernization programme which included the promotion of agricultural growth, protectionist tariffs for industry and large-scale public works projects. These projects, like the land reform and refugee settlement programmes, were to be financed primarily by foreign loans. Due largely to the abundance of cheap labour, low capital taxes and a rise in import tariffs, the industrial sector had already been expanding with unprecedented speed during the 1920s. By the end of the decade gross manufacturing output was increasing twice as fast as agricultural output and the relative importance of manufacturing to the Greek economy had become greater than in any other Balkan country (Mazower 1991: 93). But, despite this rapid growth, Greek industry on the whole remained backward and confined to a relatively small number of mostly 'traditional' branches. Aside from a few larger and technologically more sophisticated enterprises in the

main city areas the sector was comprised of a plethora of small, inefficient and largely self-financing firms which attracted little investment and provided minimal employment opportunities for the rapidly growing army of job-seekers. As for the larger firms, their strength appears to have derived less from superior efficiency than from their proprietors' connections to the country's political and financial elites.

In contrast to Trikoupis' project, the Venizelos modernization programme gave agricultural development clear priority over industrialization and left industrial investment almost entirely to the private sector. Although Venizelos' tariffs and taxation policy had the effect of protecting and promoting the development of Greek industry, his attitude towards industrialization was in fact ambiguous. He favoured industrial expansion to the extent that it would help alleviate unemployment – especially among the refugee population – and contribute to combatting the state's chronic debt problem. However, he also feared the destabilising effects that rapid industrialisation would have on the bourgeois order. Since wages and capital taxes had to be kept low in order to attract investment, little could be done to improve the generally poor living and working conditions of Greek labour. Uncontrolled industrial development brought with it the ever-present danger of labour and social unrest.

It can be argued that the rapid development of Greek industry during the 1920s was less due to a conscious effort on the part of the government than to the existence of a favourable industrial environment (Mazower 1991: 74). Whatever the reason, both the agricultural and industrial components of Venizelos' modernization policy began to run into difficulties towards the end of the decade. Hampered at first by a series of bad harvests and then by a growing climate of political and social tension, the liberal government's development programme finally collapsed in 1932 under the financial and social repercussions of the world economic crisis. This failure signalled the end of Liberalism as a major force in Greek politics and the close of the Venizelist era which had witnessed some of the most radical socioeconomic and political change in the history of modern Greece.

The Great Depression of October 1929 did not directly affect the Greek economy for nearly two years. During this period the effects of the crisis were largely confined to the export sectors, notably tobacco, and to various secondary phenomena such as a fall in domestic agricultural prices and an accelerated balance of payments problem. In September 1931, however, the full weight of the crisis was felt when Great Britain abandoned the gold standard, devalued the pound sterling, introduced protectionist measures and greatly restricted the export of foreign exchange. Within several weeks 25 countries followed suit, thus effectively ending the postwar era of free trade. The Greek economy, dependent on foreign loans, was plunged into a serious financial crisis by the sudden withdrawal of short-term credits from abroad. In April 1932, after a protracted but vain attempt to uphold the value of the drachma, the Liberal government saw no alternative but to take Greece off the gold standard and permit a radical devaluation of its currency. The government also felt compelled

to default on a high percentage of the country's foreign debt, seeing that its drachma value had dramatically increased as a result of devaluation.

The financial crisis of 1931–2 terminated the Venizelist experiment of funding economic development through foreign loans. Since both Greece's default and the effects of the world crisis barred Athens from receiving new large-scale loans from abroad, Venizelos' successors were confronted with the task of redefining their country's position with regard to the world economy. For the immediate future, it was clear that funds for economic development could only be obtained from domestic sources. That meant that the only realistic option open to policy-makers was the one actually followed: a policy of economic autarky and import substitution in both the agricultural and industrial sectors combined with a revival of foreign trade on the basis of clearing agreements (cf. Mazower 1991: 1, 16, 143, 274). Seen from the stand-point of short-term economic growth, this reconstruction strategy was highly successful; in fact, Greece was able to recover from the most serious effects of the depression by as early as 1935. Such a pattern of development none the less had its drawbacks: the Greek economy, although expanding, exhibited numerous structural deficiencies, and industrial development was taking place within a largely obsolete framework. In addition, the gross socioeconomic inequalities which were rapidly emerging led to a heightening of social tensions and these soon began to fuel a climate of political instability.

3 Political mobilization and political culture: the formation of intermediary associations during the interwar period

Political-cultural factors played a major role in the formation and non-formation of intermediary political associations in Greece both before and after 1909. This was largely due to the fact that the Greek political system had originally been constructed on the foundations of a 'traditional' pre-capitalist society with a very fluid class structure and a predominantly clientelistic political culture. Although it would be simplistic to reduce Greek political culture at any given moment to the sole phenomenon of clientelism and patronage politics, it is hardly an exaggeration to maintain that the clientelistic *approach* to politics still dominated the entire spectrum of intermediary political organisation during the interwar period with the sole exception of the trade unions and the Communist Party. The Communist Party of Greece, founded in 1918, and the trade union movement, united the same year in the General Association of Greek Workers, remained largely marginal phenomena until the crisis of 1935–6. The bulk of their support was drawn from the young urban proletariat whose members, mainly Asia Minor refugees and migrants from the countryside, had been effectively cut off from traditional clientelistic relationships. All other parties, however, were essentially clientelistic in orientation. Whereas the anti-Venizelists tended to continue in the tradition of the 'old' (i.e. pre-1909) parties, the Venizelists combined charismatic leadership and the clientelistic approach to politics with a populist ideology and programme. (For a list of the major political parties in interwar Greece see Table 9.4.1. and 9.4.2.)

Table 9.2 Greece: economic and social indicators, 1913-39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939				
NNP (m. Dr)										47000	47000	45000	49000	45000	48000	49000	52000	54000	56000	61000	59000	60000				
NNP (m. Dr) ^a										44000	46000	45000	43000	39000	44000	49000	53000	55000	59000	68000	67000	67000				
in 1938 prices										53469	53595	50855	55857	50661	54050	55933	59302	60935	63496	68605	67000	67596				
NNP/cap. (Dr)										7305	7413	7171	6771	6055	6753	7438	7934	8112	8576	9742	9463	9331				
NNP (m. US-\$)										572	598	585	559	507	572	637	689	715	767	884	871	871				
NNP/cap. (US-\$)										95	96	93	88	79	88	97	103	105	111	127	123	121				
Population (thousands)	4820			5531	5568	4844	5720	5532	5819	5910	6023	6205	6275	6351	6441	6516	6588	6680	6780	6880	6980	7080	7180			
IND PROD (1925=100)										100	96	107	114	116	119	125	118	128	146	163	161	175	191	204		
COST (1914=100)		340	360	420	660	1220	1280	1480	1700	1860	1940	2000	1740	1740	1840	1980	2020	2040	2100	2240	2240	2260	2240			
B. o. Trade (m. Dr)			-1492	-820	-681	-3532	-4773	-5603	-4527	-6560	-6068	-6316	-4539	-4559	-3113	-3290										
B. o. P. (m. gold-£)												-9.2	-7	-7.6	-2.4	0.6	-1.3	-1.3	-3.3	-3.1	-2.4					
Crisis Indicators																										
Ind. Prod.									100	96	107	114	116	119	125	118	128	146	163	161	175	191	204			
Cost of Living									100	157	290	305	352	405	443	462	476	414	414	438	471	481	486	500	533	538
NDP										100	105	102	98	89	100	111	120	125	134	155	152					

Sources: Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 21, 356, 743, 786, 822); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 110-11).

Note: Dr (Drachmae) is US\$0.013; NNP is at current market prices; NNP^a is at constant 1929 market prices; interpolated estimates for the number of population.

It is significant that the main constituencies of the anti-Venizelists were to be found in the 'older' areas of Greece (Peloponnesus, Central Greece and Thessaly) where traditional clientelistic networks had remained more or less intact. The Venizelists, in contrast, were strongest in the cities and the 'new' territories acquired after 1912/13 where clientelism at the grass-roots level had been severely disrupted by the massive population shifts of the early 1920s.

Despite the processes of industrialization, urbanization, market expansion and gradual class consolidation which began after the Asia Minor defeat of 1922, the underdeveloped character of the Greek social formation did not enable a genuine transcendence of clientelistic politics and interest intermediation to take place. Consequently, the nineteenth-century system of clientelistic networks, monopolized by and centred around the traditional regional oligarchies, gradually evolved into a more centralized, flexible and 'party-oriented' form of clientelism (Mouzelis 1986: 48). The parties of the post-1922 period were led and held together by leaders who were capable of mobilizing broad segments of the population at the national level. Although their new mass following, especially in the larger cities and the recently acquired territories of northern Greece, were no longer directly connected with the traditional clientelistic networks, the personalistic orientation of these parties effectively prevented the articulation and pursuit of broad class interests. Greek politics thus retained its strongly clientelistic and personalistic character throughout the interwar period despite the fact that the integrative function of clientelism as a 'vertical' form of organization was being weakened by the emergence of 'horizontal' forms of political integration, especially in the cities. In general, while clientelism had begun a gradual decline in the larger cities, it remained strong in the pre-1912 territories, in rural areas and within the anti-Venizelist bloc. Of the bourgeois parties, the Venizelists were unquestionably the least clientelistic in character. Still, Venizelos' attempts to create a truly modern mass bourgeois party were repeatedly subverted by the machinations of the clientelistic bosses within its ranks. As a result, the central organizational structures of both the Venizelist and anti-Venizelist parties remained in the hands of powerful clientelistic factions who were able to resist all attempts at modernizing and 'formalizing' their respective parties (cf. Mavrogordatos 1983: 273–302; Mouzelis 1978: 27, 134, 169 n.153, 209–10 n.28; Mouzelis 1986: 46–8).

It should be noted that the concept of 'clientelism' as used here does not distinguish fundamentally between 'traditional' clientelism (i.e. clientelism in the narrower sense) and the historically more recent phenomenon of patronage politics. With reference to the role of political culture these terms can be used more or less interchangeably. Since we are dealing with clientelism primarily as a cultural orientation and as a principle of political organization, i.e. not as a concrete institution, it is the general approach to politics (motivation, attitudes, expectations and objectives, organizational patterns, etc.) rather than the specific institutional structure with which we are concerned. Hence, in order to stress the continuity of clientelistic values and orientations from the 'dyadic and personal' client–patron relationship (Mavrogordatos 1983: 5) of the Ottoman period down

to the party patronage of the Venizelists, the term 'clientelistic' is used to describe all specific historical manifestations of this one basic relational model. In this sense, the clientelistic approach to politics, together with its principle of vertical political mobilization, dominated the sphere of intermediary political organization in interwar Greece with only very few exceptions. Aside from the trade unions, examples of horizontal political mobilization (interest groups, social movements, etc.) were few and mostly irrelevant to the course of Greek politics during the Republican period. Such conditions tend to validate the general rule formulated by Graziano with respect to 'all secondary associations operating in a clientelistic context', namely, that '*any clientelistic system undermines the autonomy of social groups and their organizations and tends to absorb them in a political game directed by the groups in power*' (Graziano 1973: 26).

4 The political origins of the system-threatening conflict

The origins of the political conflict which came to threaten, and eventually overturn, the system of parliamentary democracy in Greece can, at least in part, be traced back to the specific pattern of cleavages which divided the Greek polity during the interwar years. This system of cleavages was a main co-determining factor behind the regime and government instability of the period and helped to perpetuate the polarization of political forces which had emerged during the National Schism.

4.1 Regime and government instability in the aftermath of the National Schism

The National Schism, initially a manifestation of the civil war of 1916–17, had its origins in the liberal bourgeoisie's breaking of the power monopoly of the *tzákia* and the 'old parties' in 1909. This division of the Greek nation persisted more or less overtly into the interwar period and was symmetrically reinforced by four additional cleavages which developed in the wake of the Balkan and Asia Minor Wars. As Mavrogardatos (1983: 296–302) demonstrates, the political cleavage between anti-Venizelism and Venizelism (or, in principle, between Monarchism and Republicanism) largely coincided with (1) the geographical division of the country into old (pre-1913) and new territories as well as with the cleavages between (2) privileged and deprived areas, (3) old and new small-holders and (4) natives and refugees. This new fivefold cleavage took the place of the short-lived ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages which had existed since 1913 but had disappeared as a result of the Balkan population exchange of the early 1920s. The strength of the new cleavage pattern lay in its symmetrical, reinforcing character and was compounded by the fact that the Greek polity was devoid of overarching structures which might have been able to counteract its divisive effects. The overall regime and government instability of the interwar period (see Table 9.3) bears witness to the lack of mechanisms within Greece capable of bridging these cleavages and achieving a stable consensus with respect to the political system. Accordingly, despite the short-term stability of the

Venizelos government of 1928–32 (see Table 9.4 for the results of the 1928 election), Greek society and politics were already highly polarized when the full effects of the depression were felt in 1931. The economic crisis must thus be seen as the trigger and not as the cause of the political polarization which resurfaced in 1933 and escalated to the point where, in 1936, a viable compromise in favour of democracy on the level of the political elites was no longer possible.

4.2 The events leading up to the crisis (September 1931–March 1935)

The programme of reforms enacted by the Venizelos government from 1928 to 1932 furthered the development of both capitalism and bourgeois democracy in Greece. At the same time supposed communist elements – often merely ordinary trade unionists – were subjected to repressive measures on the basis of a ‘Special Law’ (*Idiónymon*) enacted in 1929. Venizelos’ autocratic style of government gained him an increasing number of adversaries, but until the financial crisis of September 1931 he still commanded a respectable measure of popularity. All this changed in the course of the seven months separating Britain’s abandoning of the gold standard and the government’s decision to devalue the drachma in April 1932. Venizelos’ inability to cope with the deteriorating economic situation resulted in

Table 9.3 Greece: regimes and governments, 1910–41

<i>1 Constitutional Monarchy (1910–1924)</i>	
1910–1915	First Venizelist reform period
1915–1917	National Schism and civil war
1917–1920	Second Venizelist reform period
1920–1922	Gounaris government
1922–1924	Plastiras’ Revolutionary Committee
<i>2 Republic (1924–1925)</i>	
1924–1925	Venizelist governments (Papanastasiou, Sofoulis, Michalakopoulos)
<i>3 Authoritarian intermezzo (1925–1926)</i>	
1925–1926	Pangalos regime (formally republic)
<i>4 Republic (1926–1935)</i>	
1926–1928	Grand Coalition government.
1928–1932	Third Venizelist reform period
1932–1933	Venizelos’ ‘National Coalition’
1933–1935	Tsaldaris government (two attempted Venizelist coups)
<i>5 Constitutional Monarchy (1935–1936)</i>	
1935	Kondylis dictatorship and restoration of the Monarchy under King George II
1935–1936	Demertzis government
1936	Metaxas government
<i>6 Authoritarian regime (1936–1941)</i>	
1936–1941	Metaxas dictatorship (so-called ‘New State’; formally Monarchy under King George II until 1944)

heavy losses for his Liberal Party in the municipal elections of February 1932. In addition, the cohesion of the Venizelist bloc was showing signs of strain. To the right of the Liberals the conservative-Venizelist Progressive Party of Kafandaris had begun to present itself as a bourgeois 'third force' between the anti-Venizelists and the Venizelist centre-right. On the left, Papanastasiou's Farmer-Labour Party was challenging the Liberals by openly addressing the grievances of the working classes and the disaffected smallholders of northern Greece. On the popular level, it was becoming increasingly evident that the highly heterogeneous Venizelist electorate could no longer be held together by Venizelos' personal charisma alone. Since the Liberal government had alienated many traditional supporters as a result of its recent economic policies, it found itself unable to provide all its clientele with the kind of patronage expected. Thus, while labour tended to respond to the growing wave of unemployment with a drift to the Left, the merchants (as proponents of *laissez-faire*) were becoming ever more outspoken in their criticism of the government's trade control policy. Even the refugee farmers from northern Greece, traditionally among Venizelos' staunchest supporters, began to voice their disillusionment with the government for its apparent unwillingness to shoulder the debts which they had incurred in the wake of the tobacco export crisis (Mazower 1991: 299).

Fearing the erosion of his electoral base, Venizelos resorted to a series of tactical manoeuvres. In the attempt to pass on a share of the responsibility for the country's adverse situation to the opposition, he first made an unsuccessful bid to draw the main anti-Venizelist party, Tsaldaris' Populists, into a grand coalition. Failing in this, he undertook a futile attempt at bringing the other Venizelist parties into his cabinet. Finally, in the hope of diverting attention from his government's all-too-evident failures, he embarked upon a strategy of unmitigated political polarization, conjuring up the spirit of the National Schism and reviving the memory of the anti-Venizelists' responsibility for the Asia Minor *débâcle* of 1922. From this point onward relations between the two blocs became increasingly hostile. In addition to his polemical offensive, Venizelos used the formal non-recognition of the Republic by the anti-Venizelist parties as a means of projecting the regime issue on to the forefront of the public mind in anticipation of the forthcoming elections. Parallel to this, the Liberal government made generous use of the *Idiónymon* in an attempt to restore the unity of the Venizelist camp in the face of a purported threat to the bourgeois order from the Left.

Venizelos' demagogic strategy was only partially successful. The elections of September 1932 proved inconclusive, giving the Venizelists a slight numerical advantage but not permitting either bloc to govern with a secure parliamentary majority (see Table 9.5). Rejecting Venizelos' offer to form an 'ecumenical cabinet', Tsaldaris, a moderate conservative, proceeded to take the steam out of the regime issue by explicitly recognising the Republic. He then went on to form a minority government composed of ministers from the several anti-Venizelist parties. His government was initially tolerated by the Venizelists but was toppled after only two months when its extreme right-wing members, centred around

generals Kondylis and Metaxas, attempted to alter the Republican composition of the officers' corps and state apparatus, which threatened the very foundations of Venizelist power (cf. Andricopoulos 1980: 572). This warning proved sufficient to mend the divisions within the Venizelist camp. In January 1933 Venizelos formed a coalition government consisting of his Liberal Party, the Progressive Party, the Conservative-Republican Party of Michalakopoulos, the Farmer-Labour-Party and a segment of the Agrarian Party under Mylonas. A further segment of the Agrarians pledged the coalition its parliamentary support. Not wanting to govern with a parliamentary majority of only six seats, though, Venizelos immediately dissolved the Chamber and called for new elections which he expected to win by a large margin.

The campaign leading up to the March 1933 elections was characterized by strong bloc cohesiveness and a high degree of polarization. Only the Communist Party and various smaller groups remained outside this confrontational pattern. Although this was the first time that such a polarization had occurred since the elections of 1920, it was also the first campaign since then in which the Republic was not at issue, the main matter of contention being the economic crisis and the means of overcoming it. The Republican parties which had participated in the last Venizelos government presented themselves to the electorate as the 'National Coalition', an alliance representing the entire Venizelist bloc under the leadership of the Liberal Party. Standing against them was the anti-Venizelist 'United Opposition' consisting of Tsaldaris' People's Party, Ioannis Metaxas' Free Opinion Party, Kondylis' National Radical Party and the remainder of the Agrarians (see Table 9.4 and Mavrogordatos 1983: 43–4). The elections resulted in each bloc receiving approximately 46 per cent of the votes, but the plurality electoral system gave the anti-Venizelists a clear parliamentary majority of 54 per cent of the seats (see Table 9.4). Immediately after the elections General Plastiras staged a *coup d'état*, thereby reviving the tradition of military intervention in politics which had accompanied the birth of the Greek Republic in the first half of the 1920s. Although a Venizelist, Plastiras had in fact acted without Venizelos' knowledge and his undertaking soon petered out for want of support.

A few days later Tsaldaris formed a coalition which, in matters of economic and social policy, did not differ significantly from its Venizelist predecessors. Tsaldaris, like Venizelos, was mistrustful of excessive industrial development and assumed an equally 'nationalist' stance on the question of Greece's foreign debt. He also resisted calls for further state intervention in trade so as not to alienate merchant and petty bourgeois voters, but retained most of the mechanisms of state regulation which he had inherited from the Venizelists. With regard to labour relations, the Tsaldaris government proved no more imaginative than the Liberals had been, feeling workers' grievances to be less a matter for state arbitration and reform legislation than for the strong arm of the police (Mazower 1991: 265). Still, despite this remarkable agreement in matters of policy, the political climate in Greece was rapidly approaching crisis proportions. On 6 June 1933 an attempt was made on the life of Venizelos and his wife: an incident which poisoned the relations between

Table 9.4 Greece: electoral results, 1928–32

	19.08.1928 ^a		25.09.1932 ^b	
	%	Seats	%	Seats
<i>1. Venizelist Parties</i>				
Liberal Party (E. Venizelos; centre)	63.6	226	52.7	131
Conservative Republican Party ^c (A. Michalakopoulos; right)	49.9	178	34	98
Progressive Party (G. Kafandaris; right)	1.6	5	0.6	2
Farmer-Labour-Party (A. Papanastasiou; left)	2.5	3	8.4	15
National Radical Party (G. Kondylis; right)	6.7	20	5.9	8
Progressive Union	2.7	9	3.8	6
Independent Republicans	1.3	5		
Independent Venizelists ^e	1.8	6	0.3	2
Other Venizelists ^e				
<i>2. Anti-Venizelist Parties</i>				
People's Party (P. Tsaldaris; right)	33	24	35.5	98
Free Opion Party (I. Metaxas; extreme right)	23.9	19	33.8	95
Independent Royalists	5.3	1	1.6	3
Independent anti-Venizelists ^e	3.8	4		
			0.1	--
<i>3. Non-Venizelist Parties of the Left</i>				
Agrarian Party (I. Sofianopoulos; left)	3.1	--	11.1	21
Communist Party (since 1931; N. Zachariadis; left, non-clientelistic)	1.7	--	6.2	11
	1.4	--	5	10
<i>4. Other Parties</i>				
Miscellaneous Independents	0.3	--	0.6	--
National Union (Th. Pangalos; right)	0.1	--	0.5	--
Minor Parties	0.2	--		
			0.1	--
Total Seats		250		250

Notes: see Table 9.5

Table 9.5 Greece: electoral results, 1933–6

	05.03.1933 ^a		26.01.1936 ^b	
	%	Seats	%	Seats
1. <i>Venizelist Parties</i> (1933: 'National Coalition')	46.3	110	44.2	141
Liberal Party (E. Venizelos; centre)	33.3	80	37.3	126
Conservative Republican Party ^c (A. Michalakopoulos; right)	0.9	2		
Republican Coalition (1936):			5.2	11
a) Progressive Party ^c (G. Kafandar; right)	6.8	10		
b) Farmer-Labour-Party (A. Papanastasiou; left)	4.2	13		
c) Agrarian Republican Party (A. Mylonas; left)	1.3	5		
d) Republican Party (G. Papandreou; centre)				
Other Venizelists ^e			1.7	4
2. <i>Anti-Venizelist Parties</i> (1933: 'United Opposition')	46.2	136	47.6	143
People's Party (P. Tsaldaris; right)	38.1	118	22.1	72
Free Opion Party (I. Metaxas; extreme right)	2.3	6	3.9	7
General People's Radical Union (1936):			19.9	60
a) National Radical Party ^f (G. Kondylis; extreme right)	4.1	11		
b) National People's Party ^g (I. Theotokis; right / royalist)				
Agrarians	1.8	1		
Reformist National Party			1.4	4
Other anti-Venizelists ^e			0.3	—
3. <i>Non-Venizelist Parties of the Left</i> (no coalition)	6.5	2	6.8	16
Agrarian Party (I. Sofianopoulos; left)	2	2	1	1
Communist Party (since 1931: N. Zachariadis; left, non-clientelistic)	4.5	—	5.8	15
4. <i>Other Parties</i>	1	—	1.5	—
Miscellaneous Independents			0.3	—
National Unity Party (P. Kanellopoulos; Republican)			1	—
Minor Parties			0.2	—
Total Seats		248		300

Sources: République Hellénique, Ministère de l'Économie Nationale (1935); Royaume de Grèce, Ministère de l'Économie Nationale (1938); (both quoted in Mavrogordatos, G. Th. (1983). pp. 38, 42, 45, 52).

Notes:

a plurality electoral system

b proportional representation

c the Conservative Republican and Progressive Parties split from the Liberal Party in 1924

d Kondylis' party bore the name National Republican Party in 1928

e Local and regional tickets

f G. Kondylis switched from the Venizelis to the anti-Venizelist camp in 1933

g I. Theotokis' National People's Party split from P. Tsaldaris People's Party in 1935.

the government and the opposition for the next 20 months. During this period several attempts by Venizelist and anti-Venizelist moderates to reach some sort of understanding broke down in the face of the prevailing atmosphere of confrontation, while at the same time Tsaldaris, in keeping with his reputation for weak and indecisive leadership, proved ever less capable of controlling the radical elements within his own camp. Finally, on 1 March 1935, a second Venizelist coup, this time sanctioned by Venizelos himself, was launched in the hope of being able to check the further erosion of Venizelist power. Although it had been planned since July 1933, the illconceived insurrection was swiftly crushed by Kondylis who invoked emergency measures in order to move against the Venizelists. During the

ensuing period of repression Venizelos was forced into exile and later sentenced to death *in absentia*. At the same time, large numbers of Republican officers were ousted from the army and replaced with cadres sympathetic to Kondylis and his faction. This latter move virtually eliminated the Venizelists' power base within the military apparatus and paved the way for the demise of both Venizelism and the Republic itself.

5 Crisis and collapse: the actualization of the conflict and the forces involved

Just as the crisis of Venizelism marked the beginning of the end of the Republic, so the abolition of the Republic constituted the first phase in the crisis of Greek democracy. The actual crisis period spanned the 14 months which lay between the first moves undertaken towards the restoration of the monarchy in June 1935 and the collapse of parliamentary democracy in August 1936. On the surface, this period was characterized by (1) the removal of the Venizelists from the centres of political and military power, (2) the displacement of the moderates by the extremists as leaders of the anti-Venizelist bloc, (3) the further intensification of the National Schism, (4) the restoration of the Monarchy, (5) the growing appeal of authoritarian ideologies among right-wing forces, (6) increased social tension resulting from the social inequalities engendered by Greece's economic recovery, and (7) continuing state repression of social and labour protest. On a more fundamental level, this period of crisis can be seen as a process in which the intensification of the intra-bourgeois struggle for dominance within the hegemonic bloc (encompassing both Venizelists and anti-Venizelists) developed into a crisis of the traditional political structures and instruments of bourgeois hegemony itself.

The crisis of Greek democracy thus began with the consolidation of power by the extremist anti-Venizelist forces after the abortive Venizelist coup of March 1935. Having purged the military of Venizelist influence, Kondylis and his sympathizers engineered the mass dismissal of Venizelists from the public service as a first step towards gaining control of the state apparatus. At the same time, emergency measures were invoked so as to ensure the suppression of any and all resistance. In a move to provide an institutional framework for this newly-won power base, elections to a Constituent Assembly were called for 9 June 1935. The Assembly was to decide upon a new constitutional order, and although only Metaxas campaigned openly for an immediate restoration of the monarchy, it was obvious that the Assembly would be bound by the recent changes in the country's *de facto* power structure. The elections were held under the plurality system and were accompanied by widespread fraud and government pressure. In protest against the continuing repression directed against them, the Venizelists abstained. It was thus hardly surprising that a landslide victory was won by the anti-Venizelist government coalition. In their attempts to outbid each other, Kondylis and Metaxas, the two great rivals for the leadership of the extreme right, soon succeeded in forcing Tsaldaris and his moderates onto the defensive.

Shortly after the convening of the Assembly, Kondylis announced publicly that he now supported restoration of the monarchy and demanded that a referendum be held to decide the issue. Although the People's Party had won a majority of seats in the Assembly, a sizeable segment of the Populist delegates sided with Kondylis, thus enabling the passage of a resolution calling for a plebiscite on the regime issue by mid-November at the latest. Unable to withstand the combined pressure of the radicals and the defectors from within his own ranks, Tsaldaris was obliged to abandon his party's acceptance of the Republic and join forces with the Royalist majority. In so doing, he further weakened the position of the moderates within the anti-Venizelist elite.

In retrospect, the Constituent Assembly appears to have marked an important turning-point in the power struggle within the anti-Venizelist camp. Although Tsaldaris had never commanded the authority that Venizelos wielded within his own bloc, the Populist leader's position had been decisively shattered as a result of the new majority within the Assembly. Although he had become a verbal advocate of restoration, Tsaldaris had in fact manoeuvred himself into a fully untenable position between the Royalists and Republicans. So he no longer had the power base necessary to withstand the challenge of the radicals. In October 1935 Tsaldaris was overthrown by the Royalist military, whereupon Kondylis proclaimed a dictatorship, declaring the abolition of the Republic and the restoration of the monarchy. Accusing the Venizelists of collusion with the communists in defence of the Republic, he summarily deported Papanastasiou and Papandreou while at the same time intensifying the brutality of the repression against the Venizelists at home. Parallel to these measures, the provisions of the *Idiónymon* were sharpened so as to make almost any open criticism of the regime punishable by law. Finally, in November 1935, a grossly falsified plebiscite was held which restored King George II to the Greek throne.

The king, though hardly a protagonist of genuine democracy, seems to have recognised far more than Kondylis that regime stability in the long run requires a certain measure of popular legitimacy. Upon returning to Greece, he openly expressed his wish to reign as constitutional monarch and then proceeded to dispose of both Kondylis and Tsaldaris, appointing in their stead a supposedly 'neutral' cabinet under Demertzis. The Republican bloc initially refused to recognise the new regime, but the Liberal Party soon broke ranks and proposed recognition of the monarchy in exchange for the restoration of parliamentary rule and a general amnesty for all those involved in the attempted coup of March 1935. After the conclusion of an agreement between the Liberals and the Populists, the king agreed to a general amnesty or, in the case of the Venizelist officers, a pardon so that they would not have to be reinstated. Then, in December, he dissolved what had remained of the Constituent Assembly and called for new parliamentary elections to be held in January.

The ensuing electoral campaign saw much violence and the widespread intimidation of Republican voters. Both blocs, especially the anti-Venizelists, were badly split. Tsaldaris was challenged by Kondylis and the Royalist Theotokis

on the one hand, and by Metaxas on the other. Among the Venizelists, the Liberal Party succeeded in remaining the dominant political force but was challenged by a coalition of the Progressive Party, the Farmer-Labour Party, Papandreou's Republican Party and Mylonas' Agrarian Republican Party. In the end, the elections of January 1936 brought another stalemate. This time, though, the use of proportional representation allowed the Communist Party – with 15 seats – to hold the parliamentary balance (see Table 9.5).

After secret negotiations between both blocs and the communists proved inconclusive, the possibility of a bourgeois coalition between the Liberal and People's Parties gradually began to take shape during the period from February to April. The process got under way when Sofoulis, Venizelos' successor as leader of the Liberal Party, openly conceded that the Liberals no longer considered the regime question to be a matter of contention. Despite the readiness of both blocs to talk with the communists, it appears that elements within the bourgeois parties had begun to close ranks against what they perceived as a communist threat from below, and that anti-Communism was gradually becoming a 'new unifying motif for bourgeois politics' (Mazower 1991: 300). None the less, subsequent negotiations became deadlocked over two controversial points: first, in February, over the occupation of the all-powerful ministry of the Interior and then, in April, over the question of the reinstatement of Venizelist officers in the armed forces. An agreement on the partial return of Republican officers was nearly concluded, despite strong resistance on the part of the Royalists within the officers' corps. However, Venizelos' unexpected death on 18 March not only dealt a serious blow to the Liberals and the already fragile cohesiveness of the Venizelist bloc, but also proved a complicating factor in the coalition talks. The rivalry which subsequently arose between Sofoulis and Kafandaris led the latter to reject the reinstatement compromise and this, for the moment at least, ruled out any possibility of a coalition agreement being reached.

As a result of this impasse – and despite the fact that Sofoulis was elected president of the Chamber with communist support in March – the Demertzis government continued in office until the latter's death on 13 April. At the re-convening of the Chamber on 22 April Sofoulis received a vote of confidence of 165 to 88, which suggests, as Mavragordatos (1983: 53) argues, that he might well have been able to form a cabinet at this time, with or without the participation of the People's Party, on the basis of the support or tolerance of smaller groups in parliament. In failing to recognise this opportunity Sofoulis missed his second and final chance of forming a Liberal-Populist coalition government. Instead, King George asked Metaxas to succeed Demertzis as prime minister, conferring upon him the task of leading Greece out of the continuing parliamentary deadlock. Kondylis' death at the end of January had left Metaxas the undisputed leader of the extreme right and he now emerged as the strong man of the moment, ever less mindful of concealing his authoritarian leanings. Metaxas was able to secure a parliamentary vote of confidence on 25 April, having pledged – deceitfully, as it turned out – to uphold the parliamentary system and reinstate a number of Venizelist officers. In this way, he was able to present himself to the majority of

deputies as an acceptable transition solution pending the settlement of those issues which still divided the Liberal and People's Parties. Five days later, following Metaxas' proposal, the Chamber recessed until 30 September, fully trusting that it would be reconvened in the Autumn. For the interim period, its legislative powers were delegated to the executive – i.e. to Metaxas – and to a parliamentary committee of 40 deputies.

The final phase of the political crisis took place against the background of social and labour unrest which erupted in northern Greece in the spring of 1936. It should be remembered that it was not so much the effects of the world economic crisis itself, but rather the growing social inequalities and urban poverty generated by the process of economic recovery which had led to the intensification of social tensions in the course of the early 1930s. The renewed clashes of 1936 also appear to have been essentially economically motivated, seeing that the situation of workers all over Greece had become intolerable with little or no assistance being provided by the state. None the less, most Greek politicians – and, above all, Metaxas – insisted that the disturbances had been politically engineered by the Communist Party and were swift to react with police and military violence.

Towards the end of April the wave of unrest gathered momentum, culminating in May in the outbreak of open riots in Thessaloniki which were put down with uncompromising severity. Tsaldaris' death on 17 May aggravated the already tense situation by depriving the People's Party of its leader, thus leaving the anti-Venizelist camp at the mercy of its extremist elements. On 22 July a way out of the crisis appeared to have been reached when the King announced the conclusion of a coalition agreement between Sofoulis' Liberals and Theotokis' National People's Party which was to take effect at the re-convening of the Chamber in October. Apparently realizing the threat which Metaxas now posed to the traditional political elites and their clientele, Sofoulis and Theotokis had abandoned their policy of confrontation and initiated the project of a Monarchist–Republican coalition which promised to command a nearly two-thirds' majority in parliament. The King, however, soon came to reject the compromise which he had heretofore welcomed. Having manoeuvred all along to consolidate his grip on the armed forces which he recognised as the prime instrument of political power in Greece, he categorically refused to reinstate even a portion of the purged Venizelist officers, a move which would have constituted a prerequisite to any all-round political settlement. In this way, he placed himself in full accord with the majority of Royalist officers who opposed any kind of power-sharing arrangement with the Venizelists. Metaxas finally seems to have been able to convince the king that a genuine Communist threat existed and that the traditional caste of politicians would prove unable to cope with the country's problems. In any case, the king's commitment to constitutional monarchy appears to have lacked conviction, for the very day he congratulated Sofoulis on his accord with Theotokis, he gave Metaxas his assent for the overthrow of the constitutional order and the establishment of an authoritarian regime (Zaharopoulos 1977: 203; Yannouloupoulos 1977: 69).

On 4 August 1936, ostensibly to prevent a 24-hour general strike planned by the communists, Metaxas, acting under the king's authority, established a fully-fledged dictatorship, dissolving parliament, declaring martial law and suspending the constitution. The coup met with astonishingly little resistance either from within the political establishment or among the population, showing just how little legitimacy the old political structures had retained. All parties and opposition organizations were subsequently suppressed and civil liberties curtailed. Metaxas justified his coup with the necessity of saving the 'social state' from communism and party factionalism and promised that his government would be 'entirely beyond parties' (Mazower 1991: 289). His 'New State', which he characterized as 'anti-Communist, anti-parliamentarian, totalitarian ... [and] anti-plutocratic' (Tsoucalas 1969: 55), had been inspired by the examples of Italian and German fascism as well as by Kemalist Turkey, but its similarities with these regimes were more formal than substantial. In reality, the dictatorship was authoritarian but by no means totalitarian. Although Metaxas assumed the title of *archigós* ('leader') and commanded a loyal police force, he never wielded absolute personal power since he was dependent upon the king, who remained in control of the armed forces. It was, in fact, the military, now thoroughly purged of Venizelist elements, upon which the power of the monarchy and the Metaxas dictatorship ultimately rested. Here it should be remembered that the Metaxas regime had neither been promoted by the army itself nor by any of the political parties, but was basically the king's creation. Originally a marginal figure, Metaxas himself had had no intimate connections with the militarist element in the army, no mass following, no party machine, no base within the bourgeoisie and no special relationship with the British. He was, at least at first, the king's man, even though his cooperation with the monarch was one of convenience on both sides. As for the king, he appears to have been convinced of the need for a strong authoritarian leader to free Greece from its economic and political crisis. He was, though, very possibly sincere in his assertion that he favoured at the most a mild dictatorship and a fairly rapid return to democratic normality (Koliopoulos 1977: 48; Andricopoulos 1980: 577).

Despite a certain admiration of Mussolini and his successes in the area of industrial relations, Fascism – especially its glorification of the state – had always remained foreign to Greek political thinking. Although Metaxas had appointed the known Nazi sympathizer Skylakakis as minister of the Interior during his period as prime minister, neither Skylakakis' 'Organization of the National Sovereign State' nor the Fascist 'Steelhelmets' played any significant role in interwar Greek politics (Mazower 1991: 267, 288). Taking this remarkable absence of Fascist influence in pre-1936 Greece into account, it seems plausible to assume that one of Metaxas' principal reasons for attempting to create a Fascist-style state after establishing his dictatorship was his lack of a personal power base. It was, however, precisely because his regime lacked the mass character of a genuine Fascist system that it was never really able to take root in Greek society. Moreover, all of Metaxas' attempts to create a personal power base were vigorously opposed by the king who was jealous of guarding the reigns of power in his own hands. As a result, apart from the state-controlled National Organisation of Youth (EON), Metaxas never succeeded in

building up his own party or mass organization. Given this inability to integrate the masses into a unified movement, it soon became the task of the military to 'contain' the working classes and keep 'the lower strata in their place' (Mouzelis 1978: 111).

The Metaxas dictatorship also never succeeded in developing a coherent political ideology which went beyond simple anti-communism and a mixture of nationalist and populist rhetoric which glorified the monarchy together with Greece's cultural and religious heritage. Its programmatic goals were hardly less vague. These included a commitment to the defence of the 'bourgeois order', a call for the co-operation of capital and labour, a new emphasis on the role of the state (especially in the area of economic planning and management) which was to supplant the *laissez-faire* policies of the pre-1936 era, and the announcement of a long-term plan, yet to be formulated, which was to help the country achieve economic autarky (Mazower 1991: 289, 291).

Though mimicking fascism as best it could, Greece under Metaxas never joined the fascist axis; in fact, it remained favourably disposed to Great Britain throughout the five years preceding the country's occupation by Nazi Germany. To be sure, Britain was opposed to the Metaxas dictatorship for reasons of principle, but it none the less accepted and even supported the regime for a variety of practical reasons. On the one hand, the king's uncompromisingly pro-British orientation served as an impediment to the further expansion of Italian influence in the Balkans. As long as the Greek army remained loyal to the king, London seemed more than willing to view the dictatorship as a beneficial and stabilizing factor, both with regard to internal Greek conditions and to the increasingly delicate international situation. British financial and economic interests also enjoyed a privileged status under Metaxas despite the growing domination of Greek trade by Germany and the dependence of Greek tobacco exports on the German market (Koliopoulos 1977: 49; Andricopoulos 1980: 577; Mazower 1991: 230–3). Although much factional manoeuvring was taking place behind the scenes within the armed forces, the increasingly pro-German stance of the anti-Metaxas militarist faction only served to strengthen the pragmatic alliance between King George and Metaxas. Thus, despite the economic importance of the clearing agreements with Germany, the king kept Greek foreign policy on a decidedly pro-British course during the whole of the Metaxas period, remaining officially neutral until Greece was attacked by Italy on 28 October 1940.

6 Interpretations and conclusions

Any evaluation of the 1935–6 political crisis and the collapse of Greek democracy must take into account the socioeconomic milieu within which they took place. To summarize briefly, interwar Greece was a highly dependent and, by European standards, underdeveloped ('semi-peripheral') economy with a chronic foreign debt, a costly, overextended and indebted state sector, a large and conflict-free but conspicuously undynamic agricultural sector, a small and

rudimentary industrial base, a sizeable wage labour surplus resulting from the Asia Minor refugee problem, and an export trade consisting of few unprocessed luxury products. Furthermore the Greek bourgeoisie had been divided first along geographical and then along political lines for over a century, with consequences for the formation of the political elite and for the nation as a whole. All these factors aggravated the effects of the world economic crisis and the ensuing problems of recovery and also played their part in determining the specific form of the political crisis in 1935–6. They were not, however, immediately instrumental in determining the *outcome* of the crisis which was primarily the result of political and political-cultural factors, both structural and contingent.

We can begin to understand the course of the political crisis when two interrelated facets of Greek political culture are considered: first, the occupation of the state apparatus was the traditional focus of all political activity, both on elite and popular levels, and second, clientelism provided the ‘rationale’ of nearly all intermediary associations linking Greek society with the state. This mode of articulation created and sustained a situation in which – despite formal parliamentary representation – the grievances that led to the social unrest of the mid-1930s could rarely find institutionalized political expression. Whereas the parliamentary arena was perceived by the population as being quite remote from society at large (and thus only accessible via the mediation of political patrons), parliamentary majorities generally had a weak and shifting social base and were dependent upon both partisan and non-partisan clientele for votes and extra-parliamentary support.

The latter point brings up the question of class structure, the role of parties and regime stability. During the interwar period Greek classes were still quite fluid and class consciousness was generally low. In contrast to most other European societies, Greece did not have an indigenous aristocracy and there was neither a landowning class nor an agricultural proletariat of any consequence. The great majority of Greeks earned their living either as smallholders, merchants or small craftsmen. The only new element in post-1922 Greek society was the relatively small industrial proletariat which, having developed outside the framework of traditional clientelistic relationships, was a potential trouble-maker within the context of the established sociopolitical order. On the elite level, the social composition of both the old ‘state bourgeoisie’ and the new ‘entrepreneurial bourgeoisie’ was remarkably similar, both consisting mainly of those circles of merchants and local notables from which Greek society had traditionally recruited its leadership. So the National Schism was less as a conflict of class interests or political ideology than of regional and particularistic interests articulated within the framework of a predominantly ‘traditional’ society.

In ‘modern’ societies where class structures are more or less solidified, there is usually a significant degree of ‘rational’ identification of group/class interests with specific political parties which can provide a stable social base for a governing party or coalition. In societies where class structure is heterogeneous and fluid, this basis tends to be lacking. Here, clientelism, patronage politics and populism are in their element, addressing ‘contingent’ rather than

'structuralized' interests and cultivating both a more irrational (that is, charismatic and symbolic) and utilitarian relationship between segments of the electorate and the party or leader in question. In Greece, this found expression in the perennial debate over the plethora of 'personal' parties and the lack of class parties and 'parties of principle'. During the interwar period, only the Communist Party can be said to have been genuinely non-personal with a more or less coherent class and programmatic identity. As for Venizelos' Liberal Party, it is true that it had developed an ideology of its own and that it had enacted numerous reforms of a non-particularistic nature during its term in office. However, with respect to its programmatic ambiguity, its economic and social paternalism, the personalistic character of its leadership and its basically clientelistic structure, the Liberal Party showed itself to be no more a party of principle than were the Populists or the old pre-1909 parties, despite the Venizelists' vehement criticism of the latter on precisely these grounds.

Thus, the incessant manoeuvring, bickering and intriguing among Greek politicians occurred less on grounds of political conviction, ideology or the legitimate interests of voters and constituents. Rather, it was a question of securing a power base within the state or, for their political clientele, of establishing and preserving connections with the power elite in question. Even the regime issue must be seen in this light. As Mavrogordatos (1983: 309) points out, the very institutions of the Republic had, in part at least, been conceived to guarantee permanent Venizelist control of the armed forces. Conversely, those substantial political interests which were pursued usually proved incapable of broad generalization within Greek society. This was partially a result of the country's heterogeneous class structure but was also an expression of the basic sociopolitical polarization which had originated in the National Schism of 1915–17. Accordingly, in an economic and political crisis situation, taking into account the highly mediated relationship between most segments of society and the parliamentary process, extremists had little difficulty in pushing the moderates from power. This process was further facilitated by the fact that there was no sufficiently strong locus of power outside the state and the military to prevent it, either in the economic sphere or in the sense of strong non-party intermediary groups or organizations.

A peculiarity of the Greek case is the fact that the electoral system, having been instrumentalized for political ends and changed repeatedly, does not provide a key to understanding the period of destabilization or the outcome of the political crisis. Not surprisingly perhaps, the fragmentation of the Greek party system tended to remain constant, regardless of the electoral system used at any specific moment.

Considered in the light of interwar Greek political culture, the crisis of 1935–6 can be interpreted as a crisis of the traditional system of party patronage and spoils distribution, compounded by various practices of political manipulation and outright electoral fraud. The growing dysfunctionality of this 'informal' system under the impact of the economic crisis was instrumental in provoking, first of all, the

crystallization of opposition between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists in mid-1932, and then, in a last attempt to preserve the system as such, the compromise concluded by moderate elements of both blocs in July 1936. This functional crisis had an economic and a political aspect. On the economic level, the old 'spoils' system had ceased to be fully viable the moment the quantity of spoils which could be gained by occupying the state apparatus no longer sufficed to satisfy the demands of the governing bloc's political clientele. This problem had arisen primarily because foreign loans were no longer available to finance political favours, but it is fair to assume that there had also been an increase in the total demand for favours as a result of the economic crisis. On the political level, it was becoming ever more evident that the chronic obsession of both blocs with the struggle for control of the state and military apparatus was preventing the political establishment from seeking adequate solutions to the urgent problems facing the country. This 'political power' side of the patronage game, ideologically underpinned by the increasingly hollow pathos of the National Schism, was slowly but surely undermining the political legitimacy of the entire traditional bourgeois elite.

It can be assumed that the parties to the accord of July 1936 had come to appreciate this fact, but it is uncertain to what extent they realized, or cared to realize, that the legitimacy of the parliamentary system itself had begun to suffer. Here it should be noted that the death of Venizelos, Tsaldaris and Kondylis in 1936 not only deprived the main political factions of their traditional leaders, but also relieved the Venizelists and anti-Venizelists of their chief protagonists of inter-bloc confrontation. This provided the moderates of both camps with a new latitude for political compromise. However, the passing of the mainstays of the traditional party system seemed for many to herald the passing of the system itself which, in their eyes, had been thoroughly discredited by the old guard of politicians. Taking all this into account, it seems likely that the envisaged coalition of the Liberal and National People's Parties would not have *solved* the political crisis and its underlying problems, but would simply have prolonged the existing instability, if for no other reason than because the clientelist system (which both parties still represented) was not capable of translating partisan compromise into radical political and social reform. Moreover, the general desire for a strong hand had in many quarters become much more widespread than trust in the problem-solving capacity of the parliamentary process. In the end, the dysfunctionality of the 'informal' system of clientelism and party patronage appears to have contributed substantially to the collapse of the 'formal' system of representative democracy. It is hard to imagine that a realistic alternative to the actual crisis outcome could have emerged within the context of the established political milieu.

At this point a word should be said regarding the weight of anti-democratic sentiment within the Greek political elite during this period. Though the appeal of fascism in interwar Greece was negligible, the extent to which authoritarian attitudes and sympathies had penetrated the Greek political establishment by the beginning of the 1930s should not be underestimated. It is true that openly authoritarian pronouncements were generally restricted to the extreme right wing

of the Royalist camp. Still, there was a high degree of dissatisfaction with what was perceived to be a basically unstable party system and this, for the most part, was summarily equated with parliamentary rule. A significant number of politicians and bureaucrats, Venizelists and anti-Venizelists alike, tended to view parliamentary democracy not as a value in itself, but as a means of preserving bourgeois hegemony. Consequently, the suppression of democracy, in full or in part, was considered to be legitimate as a last resort if the defence of the bourgeois order required it. Liberal Venizelists were no less prone to such attitudes than were Populist Royalists. Venizelos himself, who had developed increasingly authoritarian tendencies in the course of the 1920s, showed few qualms at responding to the economic crisis in general, and labour protest in particular, with a minimum of policy initiatives and a maximum of repression.

According to Mazower (1991: 267–8), an important school of thought within the political elite during this period seems to have envisaged the establishment of an authoritarian regime, possibly corporatist in character, which would have constituted a ‘third way’ between the unsuccessful paternalistic policies of the preceding years and outright fascism, which was deemed unacceptable. It was only because such ideas never reached the stage of precise and concrete formulation that they degenerated into a mere ‘defensive conservatism – common to both major parties – which emerged with particular clarity over the labour question’. Still, it is not surprising that many politicians from both camps were more than willing to accept authoritarian rule the moment they were convinced that this was the only way of preserving the bourgeois order. As Koliopoulos (1977: 46) comments, ‘Metaxas did act within the accepted mores of the Greek political world, and ... was a product and a representative of the Greek political system; only he played the game more roughly than was conventionally expected.’ The legitimacy deficit of Greek democracy must thus be considered as somewhat more than a consequence of incompetent politicians, dissatisfied political clientele, a lack of resources at the state level and a functional crisis of the patronage system. Of equal importance is the dubious loyalty of a sizeable segment of the political elite to the idea of parliamentary democracy when compelled by circumstances to choose between the defence of the political system and the perpetuation of class hegemony.

Finally, the political crisis of 1935–6 can be seen as a breakdown of the traditional symbiosis of clientelism and parliamentarism which had existed in Greece ever since the introduction of parliamentary institutions in 1844. This symbiosis is indicative of the underdeveloped (‘semi-peripheral’) character of the Greek political system and can serve to illustrate the ‘borderline’ status of the Greek case within the European context. Mouzelis (1978: 209–10 n.28) speaks of an ‘uneasy coexistence of vertical and horizontal political organisations’, both weakly institutionalized and ‘alternating in importance with the fluctuation in the balance of political forces at any specific moment.’ This, he concludes, explains ‘to a limited extent ... the notorious political instability of those underdeveloped capitalist countries with either permanent or intermittent parliamentary ... institutions.’ In the case of Greece, the clientelist oligarchy of the

nineteenth century had succeeded in instrumentalizing the parliamentary system for the purpose of preserving its traditional privileges and status. After the monopoly of the oligarchy had been broken in 1909, the country's parliamentary institutions carried on functioning as an instrument of elite hegemony through the mediation of the 'new' clientelistically organized bourgeois parties. Clientelism and personalism thus continued to permeate Greek politics during the interwar period, providing, as before, an effective means of precluding the autonomous political organization of the popular classes. By 'containing' these classes within the bounds of the existing bourgeois parties, it was possible to integrate the majority of the population into the political process in a dependent and subjugated capacity while at the same time suppressing the relatively autonomous Communist Party because of the threat it posed to the existing system of political inclusion (cf. Mouzelis 1978: 190 n.51).

The 'Communist threat' that was brought forward to justify the Metaxas coup thus had little to do with a concrete danger to the bourgeois order emanating from the small Communist Party or the few active trade unions. If these organizations seriously threatened the existing order, it was because of their existence as horizontally organized class associations which called into question both the vertically structured system of party patronage and Greece's non-ideological, two-bloc party system. The political arena of the Republic had, of course, been populated by a multiplicity of parties, but the National Schism had integrated the great majority of them into a dualistic, two-bloc structure which was decidedly less centrifugal or ideologically polarized than many of the multiparty systems in other European polities. It was therefore not the party system as such, but rather its clientelistic character, which had been instrumental in fostering the political instability of the early 1930s.

The symbiosis of clientelism and parliamentary democracy, unstable under normal conditions, began to break apart in the final years of the Republic under the strain of the economic crisis and the social friction which it entailed. With the wave of social protest which reached its climax in the spring of 1936, the political 'containment' of the masses, the prerequisite *sine qua non* of unchallenged bourgeois hegemony, was no longer a self-evident feature of Greek political life. Perhaps more important, the social change that had taken place during the previous decade, and which now manifested itself in workers' demonstrations and strikes, was gradually rendering both the National Schism as the determinant of political affiliation and the principle of non-class intermediary organisation functionally obsolete. The growing discrepancy between the sociopolitical cleavages at the base of Greek society, in which class issues were becoming increasingly dominant, and those articulated within the political establishment encouraged both political radicalization (horizontal inclusion) and political apathy (non-inclusion) while limiting the problem-solving capacity of Greece's parliamentary institutions. In the end, the system's crisis was resolved by the radical suppression of all horizontal forms of political organization. The parliamentary system was abolished together with all parties and trade unions, thus excluding the great majority of the population from the political process.

Unlike the military interventions of the Republican period, the Metaxas coup was not purely an expression of intra-bourgeois differences over the character of the regime. Rather, it incorporated a significant inter-class element into the *raison d'être* of the system it intended to create – namely the perception of a threat 'from below' (Mouzelis 1978: 26). The result was an authoritarian state whose extreme 'verticality' was reinforced by the correspondingly hierarchical institutions of the monarchy and the military. The Metaxas dictatorship persisted in power until the German occupation of Greece in April 1941. During these five years, Greek clientelism was reduced to its pre-1909, essentially non-partisan form, infiltrating the state and military apparati on a non-institutionalized basis until it re-emerged as the organizational principle of the country's political parties after the restoration of parliamentarism in the postwar era.

10

Hungary: Crisis and Pseudo-Democratic Compromise

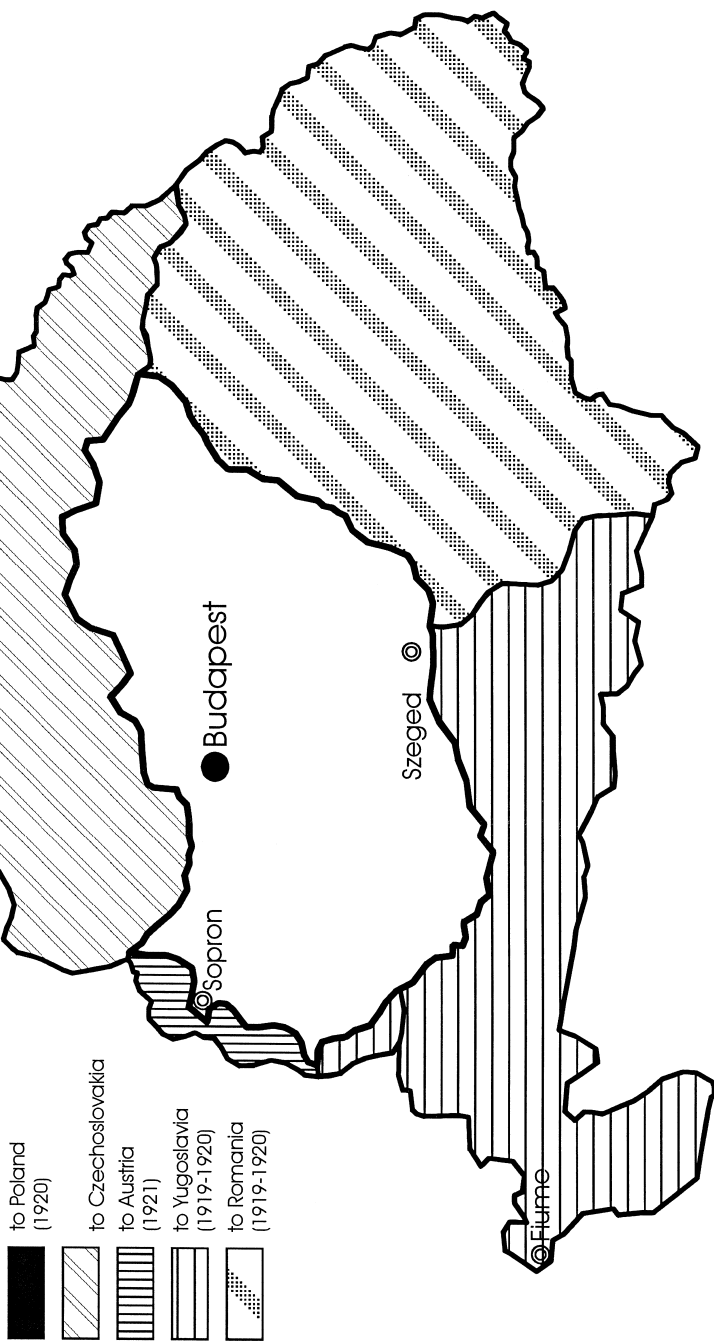
Gabriella Ilonszki

1 Introduction

We can regularly find clear-cut outcomes when we investigate the breakdown or survival of regimes in and after crises: democracy is either saved or a non-democratic solution is put forward. However, occasionally, borderline cases emerge and Hungary in the interwar years is one such. Hungary successfully kept the form and institutions of a façade democracy while sorting out problems on the backstage of politics; crisis responses in favour of stability were delayed and it turned towards a failure scenario only in the war years when it became impossible to keep the balance any longer. It is easier to conceive of the nature of this façade democracy when we examine the overall conditions. First the whole period was a crisis for Hungary. In fact, there were three crisis situations: (1) the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a consequence of the First World War; (2) the economic depression around the turn of the 1930s; and (3) the pre-Second World War developments when the ruling classes had to face the consequences of their previous policies and finally decided to join the Nazi-fascist bloc, hoping thereby to secure Hungarian interests in international politics. The first and the third were internationally determined while the second crisis, though internationally influenced, was met and solved internally.

After 1918 a new identity had to be found for the country and its citizens: in economic life, in politics, in their views about the world, and about the Hungarian state and its place within it. A new paradigm of development had to be found, even if temporarily, because the consequences of the First World War were never accepted as a 'final' solution by any important social or political group in Hungary. Temporary solutions were sought in the economy, in politics, in foreign policy and although in some cases they turned out to be good 'final' solutions, in other cases they caused further problems. Because of the territorial changes the whole of the industrial sector had to be restructured. New industries had to be established to replace the machine industry based on the mines of the 'historical Hungary' in regions that had been lost after the war. This was a successful period which saw the beginning of the electric and the textile industry in Hungary. But demands for the return to the pre-the First

Hungary



World War conditions made Hungary an ever closer ally of aggressive interests in the international scene and this also made the stabilization of the country impossible.

2 General background

The new realities that the country had to face after the First World War were different from those of the previous age. Hungary used to be one of the ruling states within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; around the turn of the century it was a state that was modernizing rapidly, with strong liberal tendencies. There were problems, mainly over ethnic issues. After the war not only was the Austrian empire dissolved but the Western allies, mainly the French, would not accept the survival of the so called historical Hungary. The peace treaty of Trianon reduced the Hungarian kingdom to 32.7 per cent of its former territory and shrank the population by 58 per cent. There has been no comparable loss in modern Europe and it was inexplicable and unjustifiable to the Hungarians at the time. This should be the point of departure in trying to understand interwar developments in Hungary (see Table 10.1 and also map at start of chapter).

The collapse of the monarchy and historic Hungary would also partially explain the radical democratic revolution of 1918 under Count Károlyi, and the radical 'red' revolution under Béla Kun in 1919. In October 1918 – in response to the military defeat and the collapse of the Austrian Empire – a revolution had

Table 10.1 Hungary: changes in territory and population: pre- and post- First World War developments

	Area sq. km.	Population	Magyars linguis.
Historic Hungary (without Croatia-Slavonia)	282,870	18,264,533	9,944,627
<i>lost to:</i>			
Austria	4,020	291,618	26,153
Czechoslovakia	61,633	3,517,568	1,066,685
Poland	589	23,662	230
Romania	103,093	5,257,467	1,661,805
Yugoslavia	20,551	1,509,295	452,265
Italy	21	49,806	6,493
<i>Total Losses</i>	189,907	10,649,416	3,213,631
Residual Hungary ^a	92,963	7,615,117	6,730,996

Note:

- a The official figures changed to 93,073 sq. km. and 7,990,202 inhabitants as a result of the first national census since (1) as far as territory is concerned there was a referendum held about the belongings of an area between Austria and Hungary, that was favourable for Hungary and (2) about 350,000 people fled from the ex-Hungarian territories of the 'new states' (Radasics 1946).

swept away the old regime in Budapest. Democratic forces formed a coalition government, introduced social and political reforms advocating democracy and also made attempts to save the integrity of the Hungarian state and to achieve a fair treatment at the peace negotiations. When it became apparent that earlier, partially secret, pacts and agreements made this impossible, and with the added factor of social unrest, the extremist left took over peacefully in March 1919 (Hajdú 1981; Borsányi 1993). Irrespective of their social and ideological programmes these revolutions sooner or later tried to seek a solution to the deep national crisis which followed the collapse of a state which had existed for a thousand years. Both revolutions were fuelled by a high degree of idealism: Count Károlyi believed in democratic norms and standards in international relations and Béla Kun in the common interests of the oppressed working classes in otherwise hostile states. Both were similarly concerned over Great Power interests and the neglect of the right of peoples to self-determination. The failure of the two revolutions helps to explain why democratic ideas were discredited between the two world wars in Hungary, why there was as no proper solution to the nationality problem, and why radical programmes for social change often originated on the right (Hajdu *et al.* 1985). Nevertheless, in some cases right-wing radicalism did understand the nature of the problems, and recognised the dangers of fascism. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky could be mentioned here: he was a member of a right-wing radical group in the early 1920s, later founding a radical party, subsequently he joined the Smallholders Peasant Party in the 1930s and died as a martyr of the anti-fascist movement in 1944 (Vigh 1982).

3 Economic developments

The heritage of the 'historical past' was apparent not only in ideology and politics but in the economy as well. During the Austro-Hungarian monarchy between 70 and 80 per cent of Hungarian exports and imports were within the borders of the Habsburg Empire. In the interwar period the Hungarian economy was exposed to the world market to a degree that had not happened before. The products of Hungarian agriculture had difficulty in finding markets without the advantageous tariff system of the monarchy and other industrial instabilities emerged too. For example for industries within the new borders energy supplies and material resources now had to be secured from abroad. The extent of the recovery in the postwar years is shown by the fact that national income per capita in 1929 (about US\$120), the peak year of stabilization, was 110 per cent of that in 1913. In the beginning the new conditions seemed to be so disadvantageous that many groups, both in and outside government, did not believe that the Hungarian economy could be restructured successfully. In 1924, after a large injection of loans from the League of Nations the prospects of stabilization became more promising. It could be argued that the 'new' country was more developed and more industrialized than the 'old' one. The remaining central region was more modern than the areas lost, with urbanization growing throughout the period (see Berend *et al.* 1972: 147). The

share of agrarian and non-agrarian population became more balanced with the relative importance of the industrial sector. In 1928–9 agriculture contributed for 39.7 per cent of national income and industry for 37.4 per cent (Ránki 1976: 773).

Hungarian society had all the characteristics of a 'modernizing' society with large differences in the living conditions of different social groups. Life expectancy increased to 50 by 1930, and 57 by 1941, compared to 40 just before the First World War. The population as a whole also grew 'older' with around 25 per cent in the 0–14 year age group and around 11 per cent in the age group above 60. There was nearly 100 per cent literacy among the industrial population, and the figure was around 85 per cent among the agricultural population. In the 1930–1 school year 92 per cent of an age group took part in elementary education, 10 per cent in secondary education and 7000 in university education – a 50 per cent increase from the prewar era.

4 The social bases of politics

The comparative advantage of the 'new' country was also discernible in the social structure – it was no longer burdened with the problem of ethnic minorities. The main regional cleavages, and the dominant ethnic cleavages, both disappeared. The only remaining significant minority ethnic group was that of the German speakers who constituted 5.5 per cent of the population.

The religious map of the country also became clear-cut. A Roman Catholic majority (65 per cent) and a Protestant minority (27 per cent) lived together, not always harmoniously, but in peaceful coexistence. The Roman Catholic hierarchy was influential in political life, Catholic interests were present in social organizations, in women's, youth's and professional organizations, but there were no conflicts worth mentioning. Religious cleavages were not reinforced by economic or ethnic cleavages of any significance in this respect.

There was a Jewish population of about 5 per cent which had a long tradition of participation in the economic life of Hungary. Some of the leading capitalists were from a Jewish background, as were many of the Hungarian intelligentsia. The Jewish population was concentrated in urban areas, 56 per cent of them living in Budapest and in the other 10 largest towns. About one-third of them were independent craftsmen or tradesmen with a small workshop, a little less than 30 per cent were professional and white-collar employees. About a quarter were an employee or a worker. There was no major social or political tension until the 1930s when this became an issue in response to external developments. The Jewish population which had been an integral part of the society was faced with growing anti-semitism which was also fed by worsening social and economic conditions.

The 'duality' of the social structure in Hungary is widely accepted among Hungarian social scientists. This assumes that there was a traditional element in the social and economic setting which grew out of social groups that were concentrated and deeply rooted in agricultural production. In addition there was also a more

dynamic element concentrated in trade and finance, later in big business, and often of foreign origin. These traditional and modernizing elements were not always easy to distinguish. We cannot simply say that the capitalist class represents the modern, while the agrarian interests represent the traditional views. There were groups within the peasantry that established a modern capitalist type of agricultural production on their medium-sized family farms and there were bourgeois groups that rejected the modernization of business. The dual social structure was apparent in many respects. Traditional elements existed both within the ruling groups and among the lower strata: the family farm peasantry and the gentry (either still in agriculture or involved in town and country bureaucracy) would both belong to the traditional segment. The differences were often a matter of style and behaviour and throughout the whole period we see the conflict between the traditional Hungary and the modernizing Hungary. It was only in the late 1930s that modernization in the form of mass production and mass consumption reached a countryside that was deeply traditional. Agricultural ownership patterns show the outline of the agrarian social setting and the great inequalities that existed (see Table 10.2).

It is not easy to map the full variety of the traditional and the modern segments. In the countryside the basis of the political system in interwar Hungary was the rich peasantry which was able to enjoy the advantages of the stabilization years, and also survived the deepest crisis years. Those between 100 and 1000 cadastral yokes, and the upper layer of the 5–100 cadastral yoke stratum, belonged to this group. It was significant not only in economic terms, but also from a political and cultural point of view. They determined the political and the social atmosphere in the countryside, the highest in hierarchy had contacts with the ruling classes as lower rank military or bureaucracy representatives. Most of the medium-sized farms, however, struggled for survival in the worsening economic conditions. The extent of poverty in the lowest category varied greatly and depended on the quality of land and production, but a large proportion could not live by farming alone and had to undertake extra wage labour. Together with the agrarian proletariat they were employed by the larger landowners or the rich peasantry. A large part of this group was created by the half-hearted land reform of 1920 which gave 1–2 cadastral yokes to a substantial segment of the peasantry. As a group they were denied opportunities

Table 10.2 Hungary: agricultural ownership

Area of farms in cadastral yokes ^a	Number of farms	Territory of farms in % of all area
1000	1070	29.9
100–1000	109945	18.2
5–100	437560	41.7
under 5	1184783	10.2

Source: Eckhart (1941: 34).

Note:

a 1 cadastral yoke = 0.57 hectares.

for social mobility and so they responded to social demagoguery. They were receptive to land reform propaganda and other forms of extremism. This was a seemingly neglected part of the Hungarian population and their unsolved problems placed a heavy burden on the whole regime. They were the group who eventually left the countryside when, because of the crisis and the absolute shortage of work, they could not earn a living there. With the loss of their roots in the countryside and a failure to establish new ones in towns, they were formed a potential base for mass extremist movements.

Thus, in agriculture there was a rich and conservative peasantry that wished to keep its privileges – consequently the political regime could rely on them. There was also a variety of small property owners who were struggling for survival on the edge of agrarian proletarian life, and on the lowest social level there lived the real agrarian proletariat – unorganized and eager for solutions to its problems. The intellectual, and later political, movement of the middle 1930s (the so-called ‘populist’ writers, the movement of the March Front) drew an embarrassing picture of their life. In some regions the neglected poor peasantry and the agrarian proletariat ‘escaped’ to non-political and non-social ‘solutions’ like the occult and religious movements. A repressive apparatus ensured the stability and the silence of the countryside through a state bureaucracy ruling on the village level together with a separate police force and the acceptance of traditional values.

The urban and partly industrialised population also had several sub-groups within its ranks. The Hungarian industrial labour force was a skilled labour force before the First World War. As a result of the changes in industrial production the unskilled and female workforce grew following the development of the textile and the machinery industry. Forty per cent of the industrial workforce

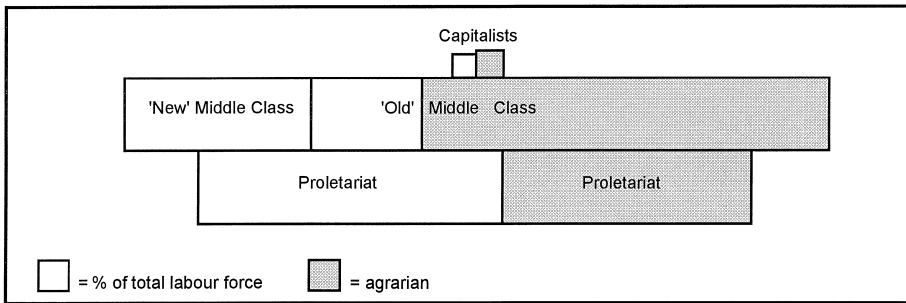
Table 10.3 Hungary: class structure, 1930

Population (millions)	8.6
Employment rate	46
Rate of agrarian employment	54.3
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.8
Family farms	31.5
Agrarian proletariat	19.3
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	0.6
Old middle class	8.6
New middle class	14.4
Proletariat	23.5
Sub-proletariat	
Total	98.7

Sources: Kaser and Radice (eds) (1985: 534); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 302); Ránki (ed.) (1976: 773); Berend and Ránki (1974b: 8.2).

Note: The figure for landlords is an estimate based on the data for the size of the holdings.

Figure 10.1 Hungary: class structure, 1930



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 10.3.

was employed in small workshops and a significant proportion of workers had no connection with industry (servants, daily wage labourers, etc.) which contributed to the petty-bourgeois character of the urban population.

Only a small segment of the labour force was organized in the social democratic movement, but there was a well-developed system of other organizations such as those for professional, clerical or elite groups. Most of them were linked to cultural or beneficiary activities. Nevertheless, there were some which assumed interest articulation roles, such as the widespread Hangya farming association movement. However, even in these cases elite groups occupied the leading roles. All of which contributed to the stability of the system and helped to establish loyalty among the wider population. (Hajdu 1981). Trade unions, the largest working-class organizations, contained only a minority of the workforce. Trade union membership never exceeded 110–120,000, but the unions were more important than the numbers might seem to imply as basically only skilled workers were organized and those employed with national firms (such as public transport) were not allowed union membership.

The ruling classes are the most difficult to characterise. While the old aristocracy mainly maintained its prosperous landowning positions, the bourgeoisie had a large share in finance and business. Their interests were sometimes different as the so-called 'mercantile-agrarian' debate proved, particularly in the second half of the 1920s. But Prime Minister Bethlen (1921–31) was able to manoeuvre successfully between them and made them accept a liberal economic and financial policy, based on the political skills and the dominance of the high bureaucracy. As contacts grew between these two groups, it becomes necessary to distinguish the aristocratic, traditional ruling elite from the social groups which wanted their share in the political and economic process. They were part of the middle class, who felt their positions threatened by the new economic and political setting. Their background was partly medium or small to medium-sized landownership, and partly positions in the military and the bureaucracy. Some of the old landowning middle class could not keep up with the economic

competition and the need to modernize, while the borders and conditions of the new country made promotion or widening privileges unimaginable for those employed in the middle or lower-middle rank military and bureaucratic apparatus. They wanted to assimilate or, if this was not possible, to become similar to the elite; the most dynamic segment of this group wanted to occupy the political and bureaucratic positions which would have made their career safe and their prospects more promising. They were the 'gentry', a notion which expressed not only social status but also behaviour, style and life models. Very many in this group were not able to move closer to the higher ranks, they became 'declass  ' approaching petty bourgeois or even proletarian elements and potential recruits for right-wing radicalism. The precise share of this 'old middle class' within society is difficult to estimate because the borderlines of this group are very vague. The new or modern middle class had less influence in society and on general developments than could have been assumed from their share in economic activity or amongst the professions. Since they could not make themselves independent of the 'pressures of the era', their aim mainly was to assimilate to the 'old middle class'. They were mostly victims of this 'baroque epoch', where surface and facade, and the stubborn adherence to traditional forms of behaviour, mattered more than the promotion of contemporary interests (Szekf   1934).

5 The political setting

A closer look on the ruling classes reveals the real basis of politics in interwar Hungary. The analysis of the internal segments of the ruling elite is all the more important because elite behaviour had been decisive throughout the whole period and mass politics was the exception and not the rule. While the Hungarian elite was disunited, it was time and again brought together by one overall preference: stability was required as the only guarantee for the re-establishment of the lost 'historical' state. We find a system where the collusion, bargaining and consensus of elite groups over basic rules contributed to the stability of the system and delayed crisis. Elite agreement did not help but in fact inhibited democratic outcomes (Field *et al.* 1990).

Distinct groups organized according to different issues and interests. The *economic* dimension involved the segregation between the groups that had interests mainly in agricultural production and trade, and thus were in favour of protectionism, and others that had industrial interests and were in favour of free trade. The **political** dimension, though closely connected to the previous one, had its own logic. It divided the groups that advocated authoritarian decision-making and policy processes based on hierarchy and centralized organizations from those groups which advocated not just authority but also efficiency and expertise in the policy processes. In *ideological* terms we can find a strong royalist group (either in favour of the Habsburgs or monarchical institutions in general) which was backed by Catholic interests and sub-milieus advocating traditional values. Others either flirted with liberal conservatism (emphasizing the role of

individuals and a meritocracy together with western traditions) or radical conservatism (emphasizing the necessity of change and mass contacts). The *power* dimension separated those in power from groups attempting to get into power. Eventually the major division between elite groups in Hungary was that between traditional conservatives and radical conservatives.

The general political tendencies of interwar period Hungary can be represented as a circle. The system grew from an anti-revolutionary start. The defeated and destroyed country was led out of the turmoil of the war and two revolutions by a group of strongly authoritarian politicians headed by Admiral Horthy. He openly advocated the anti-revolutionary character of their movement, a new regime which combined nationalism, militant Christianity and the rejection of liberal and/or left-wing values. At the start there were many representatives of the old middle class and members of the military and the bureaucracy in the ranks of Horthy's followers. In the first phase the military and para-military right-wing groups took revenge, organizing pogroms against the activists of the revolutionary period. After a while, though, they became an 'inconvenient' burden on Horthy, who understood that his regime would only be accepted in Europe, and internal conciliation would only be possible, when these groups became less prominent. This was the moment when the old ruling class re-merged. Count Bethlen is the politician whose name and character signified the conciliation and reconstruction period from early 1921 to the crisis years – the second phase of the interwar period. With the help of different compromises, Bethlen was able to stabilize the system, which consequently lost most of its radically right-wing particularities. The third phase came when, as a consequence of the deepening crises, the old groups re-emerged and achieved ruling positions under Prime Minister Gömbös (1932–6). From 1936 onwards there were many attempts to return to the stability and to the political norms and tendencies of the Bethlen era, but with only minor success. By that time many decisions had been made both internally and on the international level: contracts were signed such as that with Italy and Austria in 1934. But too many tensions had been left unresolved to return to the earlier stability which meant not only a semi-liberalized economy but also a certain degree of freedom in political expression and in the professions. It is worth noting that freedom was extensive for higher-ranking groups and professionals, while very limited for the lower strata in society. From the late 1930s members of the old ruling class were not able to regain power having only a few representatives in government. The more radical and right-wing middle class gained strength and influence. So the interwar political system came to a halt having come full circle in the sense that right-wing radicals, mainly from the lower middle class, and now closely tied to German Nazism, achieved positions of power.

This simplified version of the 'political circle', and the distinction between the conservative-traditional representatives of the ruling class on the one hand and the right wing radicals of the middle or lower middle class seeking for power and advocating authoritarian or totalitarian views on the other, offers an interpretation both of the whole interwar period and about the nature of the crisis.

The choices and relative balance between totalitarianism and authoritarianism is reflected in the interaction of different elite groups. To be more precise we need to clarify the groups among traditional conservatives who seriously flirted with authoritarian ideas and practices but who never collaborated with radical extremists. Similarly there were some among the radical conservatives who never went beyond 'saloon fascism', i.e. radicalism in words, ideas of corporatism and some demagoguery. Of course, others arrived at the fringe of totalitarian fascist movements or became the initiators of such movements themselves. The traditional ruling elite with Western connections did not need this type of background since there was no real left-wing danger in society. Social demagoguery together with mass participation, particularly of fascist-type movements, would have caused more inconvenience than positive results.

As a consequence of the crisis, and changes in the international situation, pressure towards totalitarianism strengthened. However, the totalitarianization of the system – and the final failure of this façade democracy – occurred only in 1944–5 when, under conditions of 'Total War', the Arrow Cross Party achieved power with Nazi backing.

What type of political cleavages came from this background? The nature of the party system was quite stable throughout the whole period. The political arena was dominated by one party, the Egységes Párt (Unity Party, EP). The name of the governing party underwent some changes but this did not influence its overall policies. The EP was formed as a result of well-designed political steps by Bethlen, the future prime minister, after conciliating some of his rivals. The EP worked as a coalition of different interests among the ruling class. Although occasionally changes occurred within the party, resulting from the changing cooperation between elite groups, the governing party always had an overwhelming majority within parliament. It comprised the most important elite groups and interests, there were only breakaways but no real splits. There was no real challenge to the governing party. Smaller parties appeared only on the fringe of the political scene.

The EP was in essence an elite organization based on personal interests and personal loyalties. The two major trends within the elite, that is the traditionally conservative and the more right-wing radical trends, coexisted within the same party most of the time. Nevertheless, there were some breaks and mergers in the peaceful pre-crisis years, which were the result of elite and coalition differences:

1. One major break happened in 1923 when some right-wing personalities led by Gömbös, the future prime minister (1932–6) and the rival of Bethlen, left the EP. Gömbös was a typical radical: military middle-class background, very ambitious but sometimes uncertain about political means and goals, a radical nationalist who would have liked to adapt to international events. His new party, the Fajvédő Párt, first advocated land reform and promised help to the Hungarian ethnic peasantry against big capital of Jewish background.

2. A significant merger occurred in 1928 after the conservative consolidation had been successful – Gömbös joined the EP and the elite coalition became complete again.
3. In the crisis years the break had a different origin: at that time it was the traditional conservatives, led by Bethlen, that felt the unity of the EP to be inconvenient. In 1935 they decided to break away. This was a response to the aggressive policies of the Gömbös government.
4. The next break-away (in 1938) was part of the third crisis of interwar Hungarian politics. At that time 62 MPs left the governing party. They had differing reasons for doing so, but were united by opposition to the German orientation of Prime Minister Imrédy, who was left with a minority status party in parliament.

The EP was an elite-coalition party and not a mass organization. Only in the crisis years, under the right-wing rule of Prime Minister Gömbös, were there attempts to change the EP into a mass party. This was part of the radical programme to mobilize the country politically behind the government. After initial successes the project did not have many results because it was not backed by participatory values and it could not reach the groups that would have had an interest in establishing mass political standards and institutions. It was also against the interests of the ruling elite who sought for other solutions, namely elite compromises. Generally speaking, elite politics was opposed to mass politics.

It must be emphasized that a more modern, more structured Hungarian party system did not have enough time to develop. Before the war the source of political cleavages was first the relationship to the Monarchy and to independence or the extent of independence. Only after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy did it become possible to establish more modern forms of political institutions. The formal democratic forms of the regime were counterbalanced by the evergrowing centralization and the power of the bureaucracy. For example, the mushrooming interest groups were absorbed by the bureaucracy and were interwoven with informal links between the elite groups that were over-represented in their leadership; elections would be conducted by secret ballot in Budapest, but in reality a government commissioner would be running the city.

The major political group, the EP, was surrounded by smaller groups from the left and the right. On the left the Social Democratic Party was the most permanent party throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Social Democrats represented continuity between the pre- and postwar years, having been founded in 1890. However, from a perspective which concentrates on the ruling groups, and the main political developments, their role is not significant. In 1919 they partially collaborated with the communists. In the 1920s the Social Democrats collaborated with liberal groups in several actions and programs. Forces which accepted the conservative stabilization as the best possible alternative for the destroyed country were dominant within the party. Only during the crisis did they try new strategies, with some success but without a major breakthrough. At that time they attempted to draw the agricultural labour force into their movement and started a

determined trade unionist strategy. On the local level and for organized labour they played an important function, but they did not become a party which could influence the national policy agenda (Pintér 1980).

Still on the left there were some small liberal parties that have to be mentioned. They were either intellectual movements and/or had modern middle class (entrepreneurial) background. They were more important as propagandists – either through parliament or through the press – than as a real political force. They did not even have what was evident in the case of the Social Democrats – a solid basis of support (Nagy 1983). Liberals were always insignificant and similarly to the socialists and the agrarians they became weaker at the first post-crisis elections and even more so during the second post-crisis elections. This was accompanied by the apparent presence of fascist-type parties, at least in 1939.

On the right some radical initiatives emerged time and again even though this type of party did not have consistent support even in the crisis years. Only after 1937 did the Hungarian National Socialist Party evolve and gain some mass support. The hostility of traditional conservative segments of the ruling class was shown when the party was banned in early 1938 and its leaders were imprisoned. Facade democracy was not strong enough to entirely suppress the extreme right. Under a new name (Hungarian Arrow Cross Party) it gathered new strength and developed into a real ‘alternative’ by the end of 1944 (Laczkó 1966).

Overall the party system could be described as a hegemonic one-party system (Sartori 1976: 260), as is clearly shown by the parliamentary strength of the parties. The dominance of the governing party was never questioned, it even became more entrenched as an immediate consequence of the crisis and incorporated a variety of other conservative parties. The main election results for the period are summarized in Table 10.4.

But what was the function of parliament in this period: a) what interests did it represent; and b) what role did it play within the political system?

Table 10.4 Hungary: electoral results, 1922–39

	1922		1926		1931		1935		1939	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Governing Party (b)	56	137	69	168	63	155	70	171	69	178
(Other) Conservatives	15	36	14	35	14	33	6	15	3	8
Liberals	3	7	4	10	4	9	4	10	2	5
Socialists	10	24	6	14	6	14	5	11	2	5
Agrarians	3	8			6	14	9	23	5	14
Right-Radicals			2	4			2	5	17	43
Non-Party	14	33	6	14	8	20	4	10	3	7
Seats total	245		245		245		245		260	

Source: Sternberger, Dolf/Vogel, Bernhard (1969), vol. 2, pp. 1365.

Notes: a The National Assembly became the Lower House in 1927.

b Egységes Part (1922, 1926, 1931), Nemzeti Egység Pártja (1935), Magyar Élet Pártja (1939).

As to the first question: the franchise was limited (see Table 10.5) and in addition there were two types of districts or constituencies in Hungary. The majority of them were 'open' districts in the sense that there was no secret ballot and the voters had to declare their choice in public. This was the case in the majority of the districts and was the only prevailing form in the countryside. In 1931 80 per cent of the constituencies were of this type. Very often seats were not contested at all as there was only one candidate – from the governing party. In 1931, there were 68 unanimous results, among them 55 for the EP, in the 199 open districts. In a minority of constituencies there was a secret ballot and a list system, as in Budapest and other large towns. Social Democrats could only win in the secret ballot districts which reveals probably not only their political partisanship but also the atmosphere within the whole electoral environment. It is an historical irony that when open voting was finally abolished in 1939 the Social Democrats got their lowest number of seats in parliament for the whole period, while the new fascist groups achieved their highest share. 1939 was the time when economic prosperity, and territorial gains, together with land reform demagoguery contributed to the success of right-wing radicals.

Electoral rights were debated throughout the period and different political groups tried to capitalise on the issue. The traditional conservative groups did not want to widen the franchise. But in the crisis years, under Prime Minister Gömbös, the Unity Party was influenced by right-wing radicals and in accordance with their attempts to establish mass influence they advocated the extension of electoral rights. For a time even the Social Democrats considered the possibilities of cooperation with the radical forces in government because they hoped for better electoral results from a wider electorate. Nevertheless, real changes did not occur. Both the traditional conservatives and the radicals were fearful of the possible outcome. So the 1935 elections took place on the basis of the old electoral law and in an atmosphere of tension in many districts, particularly the open ones.

It is interesting that it was the conservative radicals who attempted to introduce the idea of a 'mass party' and popular support just as a more inclusive

Table 10.5 Hungary: voting rights in the interwar period

Year	No. of population eligible to vote	Share of national population (%)
1922	2,381,598	29.5
1926	2,229,806	26.6
1931	2,553,310	29.4
1935	3,003,940	33.8
1939 ^a	4,626,853	44.4

Source: Figures from Statisztikai Evkönyv 1923, 1927, 1932, 1936, 1939.

Note:

a Numbers are counted for the new territory, after the territorial regains. As a consequence of the first Vienna Dictate Felvidék (Southern Slovakia) was returned to Hungary. We have to note that 86.5 per cent of the population was ethnic Hungarian, 9.8 per cent Slovakian and 3.7 per cent of different ethnic background in the given territory.

electoral law was enacted. Nevertheless, with their elite background radicalism this 'saloon fascism' was so tied to landowning and capitalist interests that they did not dare to risk a real challenge to the system. The regime could be stabilized without flirting with fascist-type radicalism. The strength of elite interests is proved by the fact that when the 'real' fascist Arrow Cross Party achieved significant representation (in 1939 with 26 seats) and then began to advocate land reform, they were forced to backtrack on this issue. We can conclude that the Hungarian Parliament had a very limited representative function with some important groups either under-represented or not represented at all.

As with other highly centralized political systems with authoritarian tendencies, parliament was not the major focus of political decisions in Hungary. Behind the large governing party there was the often unseen, if not secret, structure of elite groups and organizations. Their informal discussions about political and economic issues mattered more than political debates in parliament. The true history of these organizations is still to be written. They were interwoven with each other, and with the ruling political elite and society at large through different social organizations. Their representatives held important positions in the leading committees of cultural, religious or youth organizations of the day, particularly those which were meant to have a major interest articulation role.

6 The formation of coalitions

The party structure of the parliament did not matter much in government formation. It was the governor (Admiral Horthy) and the small circle around him that decided who became prime minister and nominated ministers. The governor was the central figure in the political system. This resulted from the strange circumstances in which the new regime came into being and stemmed from the monarchist tradition. When the Habsburgs abdicated, Hungary remained a kingdom. Within the ruling class there were strong royalist sentiments and some groups even advocated the return of the Habsburgs. While this would have been impossible considering the international scene, it would also have been difficult to consolidate the regime without the involvement of those royalist groups who were a significant part of the old Hungarian aristocracy. But the main reason for keeping the form of a constitutional monarchy was that the Hungarian kingdom and the crown itself had a symbolic meaning that seemed impossible to give up. They signified the entity and the unity of 'historical Hungary' which had been reduced and re-defined by the peace treaty of 1920. Since 'irredenta' or revision was a crucial element of politics, and of political and popular thought, the symbol of the crown had a real function.

The other element of the governor's role was that he attempted to embody the cooperation of the different elite groups. Although in the early years of the

period he was the leader of the militant radical groups – he was the military commander of the anti-revolutionary forces in 1919–20 – he very soon succeeded in acquiring the backing of all elite groups and the international community. Particularly after he distanced himself from the most militant leaders with whom he had started his career, those who organized the terror against the ‘reds’ and the ‘Jews’ in the first, anti-revolutionary phase. As the consolidation of the regime proceeded Admiral Horthy became more and more a father figure and representative of the ‘nation’. At the least he became the representative of the different elite groups. But the function of the governor was not only symbolic, he had very concrete rights and duties within the system, and these were extended over time. In the end he had acquired all the functions of a constitutional monarch.

A major step towards this was taken in 1933 when Governor Horthy established his right to adjourn and dissolve the chamber of representatives (the Upper Chamber was re-established in 1926), and later in 1937 when he achieved an almost complete veto power over the legislative process, together with the right to suggest a successor to his position. As to the relationship between parliament and the governor (and his inner circle) it is revealing that parliament ‘rebelled’ only once with a vote of no-confidence against Prime Minister Imrédy in 1938. But even in that case he was nominated again by the Governor for Prime Minister and the House was made to accept him.

This constitutional setting mostly resulted in stability because it ensured at least the peaceful coexistence of the elite groups, if not always their cooperation; and if not the democratic involvement of the people then perhaps their silent acquiescence. Stability and conservative reconstruction and reconciliation was the prevailing trend in the pre-crisis years.

Table 10.6 Hungary: government composition, 1919–41

Date in	Government	Parties in Government
1.08. – 6.08.1919	Peidl	Soc.
7.08. – 15.08.1919	Friedrich 1	Offi.
17.08. – 24.11.1919	Friedrich 2	Cons. Lib.
24.11.1919 – 15.03.1920	Huszár, Simonyi-Semadam	Cons. Lib. Agr.
19.07.1920 – 14.04. 1921	Teleki 1	Cons. Lib. Agr.
14.04.1921 – 24.08.1931	Bethlen	Cons. ^a Offi. ^b
24.08.1931 – 1.10.1932	Károlyi	Cons. ^a
1.10.1932 – 12.10.1936	Gömbös	Cons. ^a
12.10.1936 – 14.05.1938	Darányi	Cons. ^a
14.05.1938 – 16.02.1939	Imrédy	Cons. ^a
16.02.1939 – 3.04.1941	Teleki 2	Cons. ^a

Abbreviations:

Soc. = Socialists

Offi. = non-party members/official representatives

Cons. = Conservatives

Lib. = Liberals

Agr. = Agrarians

Notes:

a The governing party, which was, because of its majority, never challenged, but conducted elite compromises internally.

b Gömbös joins on 10 October 1929, as a representative of the radicals, but settles down with the governing conservative party line while in governmental posts (until 1936).

7 The crisis and its resolution

The world crisis brought economic tension and political-social conflict to Hungary. It first became apparent in agriculture, but soon spread to other sectors of the economy.

As a consequence of the collapse of the world market and decreasing levels of production agricultural and industrial unemployment grew enormously. At the bottom of the depression one-third of the industrial workforce was unemployed. To protect the country from the total financial collapse banks closed down in 1931 and were allowed to pay only 5 per cent of the accounts with an imposed upper limit. Social tensions grew and became more difficult to handle. New policies were needed to solve them.

This was the time when a new strategy of crisis management emerged. As had occurred earlier the two distinct elements of the ruling elite had different views about politics and policy: conservative versus radical authoritarianism; traditionalism versus populism; wider European outlook versus distinct nationalism (often on an ethnic basis) were the three most important cleavages.

After the collapse of the Bethlen era it was the turn of the alternative group led by Gömbös to try new strategies (Kónya 1968). But before that there was a short lived attempt to save the prevailing conservative traditionalism. Count Károlyi, a traditional conservative representative of the elite, became prime minister after Bethlen. He had strong royalist sentiments, but flirted with the liberal groups. His attempt to form a government of national unity, virtually a coalition government, ended with a failure. This proved that there was no possibility of bringing other groups into the governing elite and so a solution was sought within the ranks of the existing elite.

The crisis years, and the political-governmental changes at that time, could be described as elite changes which gave way to new radical populist crisis management strategies. Challenges from outside the elite circles remained insignificant and did not have much influence on general developments. The Social Democratic Party tried, virtually for the first time, to organize some segments of the agrarian population. They also organized some successful anti-crisis demonstrations and launched anti-crisis programmes with the trade unions in these years, but these activities could not become political alternatives. The Social Democrats were an unacceptable partner for the conservative forces. The efforts of the small and illegal communists to mobilize and radicalize the working class failed completely. The communist plan to destroy the regime did not rest on *realpolitik*: in Hungary the 'revolutionary' potential was missing, most of the politically conscious just wanted to improve their living standards, and the system as it was.

The foundation of the Független Kisgazdapárt (FKGP) could be taken as a successful and promising initiative to provide representation to the Hungarian landowning peasantry. The Smallholders became a parliamentary group in 1932 but were no rival to the ruling classes. Nor were the tiny Liberal Party a political alternative. Small fascist groups were established in the crisis years but they

Table 10.7 Hungary: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
NNP (m. P)		3300						3842	4596	4402	4596	4999	5164	5050	4807	4678	5101	5136	5393	5755	5626	5913
NNP (m. P) (a)		4258						4966	5786	5567	5853	6435	6304	5649	4900	4512	4434	4577	4935	5371	5576	5913
in 1938 prices								4702	5853	5162	5158	5671	6099	5779	5192	5215	5125	5156	5292	5432	5576	6049
NNP/cap. (P)		530						598	690	659	687	750	729	648	559	512	499	511	547	591	609	641
NNP (m. US-\$)		745						869	1012	974	1024	1125	1103	988	857	789	776	801	863	939	975	1034
NNP/cap. (US-\$)		93						105	121	115	120	131	127	113	98	90	87	89	96	103	106	112
Population (thousands)	7828	7940	8029	8102	8173	8232	8299	8383	8454	8520	8583	8649	8716	8763	8812	8880	8950	9020	9090	9160	9230	9230
AGR PROD (1929 = 100)												100	83.9	71.7	60.7	52.6						
Unemployment (thousands)		110	34	76	130	181	239	241	211	183	138	90	56									
B. o. Trade (m. P)								-64	-374	-385	-25	89	31	6	78							
Lost working days(millions)								52	295	131	149	80	190	33	125	92	111	233	161	105	170	
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.																						
Cost of Living						100		94	88	96	101	101	92	87	84	77	77	79	83	88	89	
Unemployment								100	94	102	107	107	98	93	89	82	82	84	88	94	95	
NDP				100				100	117	112	118	130	127	114	99	91	89	92	99	108	112	119
Strikes									100	567	252	287	154	365	63	240	177	213	448	310	202	327

Sources: Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 167ff., 356, 743ff., 786, 822); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 302–3); Berend and Ranki, György (1972: 130); Ranki (ed.) (1976: 606, 608).
Note: P (Pengo) is US\$0.1749; NNP is at constant 1938/9 factor costs. a NNP is at current factor cost; extrapolated estimates for the number of population. b Unemployment in industry.

remained on the periphery of political life. As was shown earlier, before 1937 there were no significant fascist groups. There were two reasons for this – first Hungarian society was not open to mobilization and extremism. Cultural determinism and historical experience were decisive in this respect. Second, under Prime Minister Gömbös the fascists hoped – not without reason – that they would be allowed to get close to power. They thought that after the withdrawal of the traditional conservative wing their time would come in cooperation with the radical conservatives within the ruling elite. As we know, Gömbös tried to use them but eventually he bowed to other political forces – the disapproval of big capital and the old aristocracy, and the emerging crisis within the governing party. All in all, policy ‘solutions’ and political developments sprang only from elite political decisions; political or social forces from outside had little influence.

Of course the crisis had its effects and by the time of the radical takeover the atmosphere was not peaceful. Emergency powers were introduced in 1931 to provide limits to the mobilization of the masses. But to the governing EP and the governing groups conciliation had gone as far as it could even if it was temporary. Gömbös abandoned antisemitism because he needed the backing of Jewish capital. He prepared the basis for a new conciliation between large industrial companies, the aristocracy and the state apparatus on the one hand and the ambitious and dynamic middle classes on the other, although he obviously wanted to give increased influence to the latter group. Consequently, in the 1935 elections he was able to bring 100 entirely new MPs into the House: the majority representing his ideas and with a similar background of middle-class military radicalism. The new element in his crisis management was an attempt to play the populist tune by launching a movement of mass participation and promising political and economic reforms.

During his tenure of office the crisis was slowly ‘solved’. In industry it was self-financing that helped to promote internal investment and production; in agriculture international agreements opened new opportunities: in 1934 foreign trade agreements were signed with Germany, Austria and Italy which opened new markets for the Hungarian agricultural products. Nevertheless, the leading political groups were not entirely satisfied with Gömbös. For Bethlen and the conservatives he was too populist and dangerously committed to some fascist ideas. This group looked at Gömbös’s connections with Nazi Germany as a disgrace. Similarly, in the long run, he was not an acceptable alternative for the opposition on the left. His corporatist ideas about the restructuring and ‘etatization’ of interest groups were scandalous to them. Neither were groups on the radical right satisfied. From his pre-prime ministerial career they had envisaged a more radical programme.

Gömbös could not unite the EP around him because, although he became prime minister, Bethlen kept the position of party leader. The conflicts between them, after the economy was more or less stabilized, became so tense that in spring 1935 Bethlen left the governing party. Conservative supporters of Bethlen as well as different opposition groups supported a vote

of no confidence in Gömbös. Furthermore, the prime minister's illness made withdrawal easier for him.

With this resignation, one era of Hungarian politics came to an end and another started. Obviously Gömbös wanted to turn the regime in a more authoritarian direction and some of his initiatives suggested the totalitarianization of the system. This project failed. He himself withdrew, facing difficulties in some issues. He could not make his line acceptable to the rival elites, or to liberals and Social Democrats on the left and fascists on the right. He did gain some popularity among the public, but this was insignificant in a country where mass mobilization and mass participation were almost unknown. Overall he could not succeed in generating mass support. As a result, the collision between traditional conservatives and those further right who favoured totalitarianism became more apparent, but most of the time the previous groups were in a dominant position. It was possible to halt the tendencies of totalitarianization between 1932–6, but populist and fascist ideas and sentiments had escaped from Pandora's box.

8 Conclusion

We may conclude that the new realities of the 'new' country brought a tragic burden in many respects: the image and the feeling of a reduced nationhood and a feeling of isolation among hostile neighbours. (The little entente was openly formed as an anti-Hungarian alliance by Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania.) The new regime started as an anti-revolutionary initiative and was more authoritarian than the previous one.

The crisis was solved by changing the governmental line – as one pull in the tug-of-war game between elites. The major problem, from a developmental perspective, was that although things were reversed by the traditionalists, by the time that this happened events had moved on and there was no way back.

During the interwar years an exclusionary type of political system prevailed in Hungary, as the electoral laws and the centralized nature of the political decision-making process show. Similarly, the system was not of a mobilizing type. Social movements were very weak, and this was reinforced by – and embedded in – the political culture of the country. The conservative stability of the system, apart from the elite level, was built on two major characteristics. On the one hand the regime was based upon both urban and rural support; the economically well-to-do were involved in a network of social associations run by the elites. On the other hand the regime was able to find the ways and means to pacify large social groups by keeping them in marginal positions in every sense: in weak social, economic and definitely political conditions.

The major features of this façade democracy did not change significantly during this period. The regime was successfully stabilized, neither the pre-crisis decade nor the crisis years affected the political setting to any considerable degree. Internally the conservative authoritarian pattern was not challenged. However the two other, internationally determined crisis moments – the postwar

national crisis and the political-military crisis of the Second World War, both of them linked to the problem of national identity and irredenta, proved to be fatal. Hungarian politics revolved around the renegotiation of the unjust Trianon peace treaty and as a result Hungarian domestic politics became linked more and more to the international environment (Juhász 1979). As a consequence, even traditional conservatism with its stable non-democratic patterns and methods began to lose ground and from early in 1941, after the occupation of Yugoslavia, and it was only a question of time before the authoritarian regime would slide into totalitarianism.

11

Ireland: Democratic Stability without Compromise

Allan Zink

1 Introduction

Irish democracy is a deviant case in the context of interwar Europe. A small, peripheral 'island behind an island' (Jean Blanchard), Ireland emerged into statehood in 1921 after a long period of British rule. The country's path to independence was by no means smooth, being strewn with dissension, violence and internecine strife, yet at no time was Irish democracy itself seriously in danger. This was due to an historically unique set of circumstances which influenced both the content and the context of Irish politics and which partially isolated the country from the mainstream of modern European development. Ireland was thus largely shielded from the socioeconomic, intellectual and political changes of the 1920s and 1930s.

2 The historical background of interwar Irish politics

2.1 British rule and the roots of Irish political culture

The central problem of Irish politics both before and after independence was the country's relationship with Great Britain. The English conquest of Ireland had been largely completed by the end of the sixteenth century and ushered in a period of economic hardship and socio-political oppression. Although English policy towards Ireland had from the beginning been essentially colonial in character, it acquired an equally strong anti-Catholic flavour after the break between the Church of England and Rome. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries large quantities of property were transferred to the hands of non-Catholic immigrants with the result that, between 1641 and 1703, the share of the land owned by indigenous Irish Catholics fell from 60 per cent to a mere 14 per cent (Chubb 1982: 6). The large-scale settlement of English and Scottish Protestants in Ireland, especially in the northern province of Ulster, was followed by the extension of England's anti-Catholic Penal Laws to encompass the whole of the Irish Catholic population. This led to the practical abolition of the political rights of the country's native majority and restricted their civil liberties for the greater part of the eighteenth century. In their attempt to protect the privileged position of the Protestant gentry and

Irish Free State



suppress Irish Catholicism in general, they fostered the emergence of religious antagonisms within Irish society which persist up to the present day. It has been estimated that towards the turn of the nineteenth century a privileged minority consisting of less than a quarter – and possibly only one-fifth – of the population was in possession of nine-tenths of the land (Chauviré 1965: 87), while the Catholic majority remained politically unrepresented, economically underprivileged and socially marginalized.

Ireland, formally a separate kingdom under British rule, became constitutionally a part of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland' as a result of the union of the English and Irish parliaments in 1801. Although the Catholics of Ireland were emancipated in 1829, a propertied Protestant elite, the so-called 'ascendancy', dominated the country during the larger part of the nineteenth century. England's traditional protectionism (which expressed itself, among other things, in the limitation of Irish exports to Britain and an equally prohibitive industrialization policy) continued to reinforce the chronic underdevelopment of the Irish economy, proving detrimental to Protestants and Catholics alike. The potato famine of the mid-nineteenth century touched off a wave of mass emigration among Catholics, primarily to the United States, which continued even after independence and lasted well into the post-Second World War period. Although a series of land reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries abolished most large landholdings and led to the emergence of a class of small owner-occupier farmers, Irish emigration persisted at a yearly rate of from 0.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent of the population during the interwar period (Chubb 1982: 4). This drained the country's labour reserves and limited urbanisation and economic development on any major scale. As a consequence, Ireland in the interwar period remained a generally poor, predominantly rural society in which the small family farm constituted the backbone of the agricultural sector.

The establishment and maintenance of English hegemony in Ireland had been facilitated by the latter's relative isolation and insularity on the extreme Western periphery of Europe. Due to its strategically advantageous location between Ireland and the European continent, Great Britain was able to act as a barrier against intellectual, cultural and political currents from abroad and thereby to exercise a decisive influence on Irish culture for more than four centuries. As a result, the norms and values of Irish society became progressively anglicized, especially in Dublin and the larger east coast towns. Despite numerous unsuccessful rebellions from the late sixteenth century onwards, the formal incorporation of Ireland into the framework of the Westminster system in 1801 had the effect of committing the mainstream of Irish nationalism to the values of parliamentary democracy. Against the background of these developments, three distinct elements can be distinguished which coalesced to form what was subsequently to become the political culture of the independent Irish state.

2.1.1 The rural-peasant tradition

The highly conservative, essentially pre-modern values of Ireland's rural society, underpinned by the singularly un-cosmopolitan character of the Irish Catholic Church, exercised considerable influence on the development of Irish political culture both before independence and during the interwar period. Foremost among these orientations were a strong local bias, loyalty to family and neighbours (and in general to persons and institutions rather than to ideas), the bond of reciprocal obligation and service, the importance of personal, face-to-face relationships and, especially, of personal influence and 'connections'. To this might be added the traditional predominance of authoritarian attitudes in

the family and in institutionalized social relations, a leaning towards deference to persons of authority (especially the clergy) and a corresponding climate of anti-intellectualism. Such a constellation of attitudes, characteristic of many pre-industrial peasant societies, meant that the country's political institutions tended to function somewhat differently than the British model on which they were based (cf. Chubb 1982: 15–16, 21–2).

2.1.2 The insurgent tradition

The second constituent element of political culture in Ireland was the rebel tradition, born of the experience of a people waging an ongoing underground struggle against a more powerful foe. Over time, the insurgent mentality became ingrained in the Irish character and came to constitute the basic ethic of the secret societies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, thereafter, of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Whereas the persecution of Catholicism had driven the Irish masses to attach themselves even more closely to the Roman Catholic Church, the discriminating and apparently fraudulent character of English law prompted the emergence of an informal code of conduct, the purpose of which was to circumvent and obstruct official English legality which was seen as the root cause of the people's suffering. Typical characteristics of this 'second law' were the intimidation of oppressive landlords, the circumvention of judicial proceedings by means of coalitions of witnesses and, if need be, perjury, a cult of silence with regard to the authorities and the persecution or even execution of informers (cf. Chauviré 1965: 88–9).

2.1.3 The Westminster tradition

Despite the extent of Ireland's acculturation during the period of English rule, the ultimate acceptance of British parliamentary principles by the majority of the Irish was by no means a foregone conclusion. The basic ambiguity which characterized the relationship between Irish nationalism and 'the English' is, however, only partially explained by the simultaneous existence of traditionalist-peasant and insurgent-obstructionist attitudes within the population. Essentially, this equivocal relationship had its origins in the fact that the mainstream of the Irish nationalist movement had both fought against and acted within the context of the British political establishment during the greater part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the one hand, the formal incorporation of Ireland into the Westminster system of government had not in itself satisfied even the most elementary nationalist demands. Despite the legal emancipation of Ireland's Catholics and the subsequent abolition of absentee landlordism, the power of the British ruling elite had remained largely intact up until the end of the First World War. Class distinctions and religious prejudices were still powerful forces within the whole of the United Kingdom and the last property-based restrictions on the franchise were not abolished until 1918. Having remained basically provincial in character, Ireland continued to experience the inequalities of British society with particular and at times quasi-colonial intensity. Ireland was, as Garvin (1987: 140–1) puts it, 'internally

non-democratic, despite the existence of electoral institutions'. On the other hand, the great majority of Irish leaders had gained their political experience in Westminster and developed a basically positive attitude towards the working of the democratic system *per se*. Although a truly universal franchise had yet to be realized, Ireland had profited visibly from the extensions of franchise which had taken place in the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century. Its inhabitants were thus in a position to assess the potential advantages of parliamentary democracy provided that it could be freed of the burden of foreign rule. As Chubb (1982: 6) observes, the decisive stage in the adoption of British political culture in Ireland occurred at about the same time as mass politics began to emerge in Great Britain. Considered from this perspective, the widespread acceptance of democratic values and the principle of majority rule by the Irish appears to have been just as much the result of opportune timing and historical contingency as of ideological persuasion or political conviction.

2.2 Irish nationalism and independence

The origins of the Irish nationalist movement go back to the end of the eighteenth century and the struggle against the anti-Catholic penal laws. This explains to a large extent why, from the very beginning, loyalty to the Irish nation and faithfulness to the Catholic Church were considered by most nationalists as synonymous. The first genuine nationalist organization, the Catholic Association, was founded by Daniel O'Connell in 1823 and relied strongly on the local clergy for support. An Irish member of Parliament with an essentially British political outlook, O'Connell sought to better the situation of the Irish people through constitutional, legal and peaceful forms of agitation. His greatest success was the granting of full political rights to Ireland's Catholic population in 1829. Critical of O'Connell's moderation and loyalism was the Young Ireland Party which, being more Gaelic than Catholic in its ideology, strove to achieve full independence from Britain and regain possession of the soil. This group won considerable influence during the 1840s, challenging O'Connell on several issues, but it was crushed after an unsuccessful attempt at rebellion in 1848. Ten years later, under the impression of the ravages caused by the potato famine, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB, also known as the Fenians) was formed with the proclaimed goal of casting off the British yoke and establishing an independent republic by revolutionary means.

It was Charles Parnell who, though himself a Protestant, first succeeded in uniting the various nationalist organizations (including the Fenians and the newly formed Land League) in a common struggle. A master of obstructionist tactics and an heir to both the Westminster and rebel traditions of Irish politics, Parnell assumed the leadership of the Irish National Party in 1877 and led the parliamentary battle for Irish Home Rule until his death in 1891. Home Rule – domestic autonomy within the framework of the United Kingdom – was less than full independence, but Parnell considered this to be the only basis for a political compromise with the British at the time. His belief in the fundamental inseparability of the national and social questions led him to lend active support to the fierce and

often violent campaign waged by the Land League for the reacquisition of the land by the peasants. The activities of the Land League, begun in 1879, were instrumental in bringing about the passage of two land laws, in 1881 and 1891, which opened the way for the abolition of landlordism in Ireland. Home Rule, though, was still too radical a measure for the British political establishment to accept. It was left to Parnell's successor, John Redmond, to finally secure the enactment of a Home Rule bill in 1914. As fate would have it, this act was never implemented due to the outbreak of the First World War and the subsequent course of events which rendered it politically obsolete.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a number of more radical nationalist groups emerged whose demands went much further than the relatively limited goals of the Home Rule movement. The most important of these was Sinn Féin (lit. 'We Ourselves'), a predominantly middle-class movement founded in 1905, which initially propagated the idea of a dual monarchy but soon committed itself whole-heartedly to the cause of republicanism. Equally republican, but more social democratic than nationalist, was the Labour Party which, together with the Irish Trade Union Congress, was formed in 1912. As the influence of Sinn Féin grew, especially after the outbreak of the First World War, Irish nationalism turned progressively to extra-parliamentary means of struggle. This was a reaction to the increasing mobilization of the Protestant community in Ulster which was categorically opposed to any political settlement that might imply Catholic majority rule in Ireland. After the Ulster Volunteer Force, the militia of the Protestant Unionists, had begun to arm itself in anticipation of the struggle against the introduction of Home Rule, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the newly organized Irish Volunteers followed suit in the hope of preventing the possible secession of the Ulster counties as provided for by the Home Rule Act of 1914. Against this background of rising tensions, violence finally erupted on Easter Day of 1916 when the IRB, actively supported by a number of prominent Sinn Féin leaders, launched an armed revolt and issued a formal proclamation of the Republic. Although the ultimate defeat of the rebellion was a foregone conclusion, the brutality of the British reaction had the desired effect of convincing even moderate segments of Irish opinion that a more radical break with Britain was now imperative. Accordingly, from 1916, the issue of Home Rule was for all practical purposes a dead letter.

After the Easter 1916 rising the political initiative lay clearly in the hands of Sinn Féin. A month after the parliamentary elections of December 1918, the opportunity for decisive action was seized when the Sinn Féin parliamentarians who had been elected to the House of Commons refused to assume their seats, constituting themselves instead as the Irish (parliamentary) Assembly or *Dáil Éireann*. A revolutionary Irish government under Eamonn de Valera was formed, a Declaration of Independence adopted and a five-article 'Constitution of the *Dáil Éireann*' drafted which underlined the democratic and republican nature of the state which had been proclaimed. From the enactments of the revolutionary *Dáil* it is clear that, while it rejected British rule, it fully accepted the British

political system and its liberal democratic values. Statehood thus brought Ireland a transfer of power, but neither a change in the existing political system nor notable socioeconomic reforms (cf. Chubb 1982: 10).

Violence erupted in the course of 1919 as local volunteer groups, later to become known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), began to engage in the sporadic assassination of British policemen. Countermeasures carried out against the Dáil and Sinn Féin only served to increase the level of volunteer activity which, in turn, prompted severe reprisals on the part of the British. Although the powers of the revolutionary Dáil were more symbolic than real, it soon became apparent that the secessionist movement could not be put down by force. Seeking a constitutional solution which would require a minimum of concessions, the British government advanced a proposal in December 1920 which foresaw the partition of Ireland into two separate entities – a predominantly Protestant state in the North consisting of six Ulster counties and a predominantly Catholic state in the rest of the country, each state enjoying a highly restricted form of local self-government. Not surprisingly, the proposal was accepted in the North and rejected in the South, but from that moment on the idea of partition was on the agenda. After agreeing to a truce in July 1921, the London government came forward with a second initiative which repeated the previous British position on Northern Ireland but provided for the creation of an autonomous 'Irish Free State' in the South which was to have Dominion Status within the framework of the British Commonwealth. This time, the discussion over the acceptance or rejection of the British proposals – 'the Treaty', as they came to be known – led to the splitting of Sinn Féin into a majority, pro-Treaty faction under Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, and a minority, anti-Treaty faction under de Valera. Although the latter was categorically opposed to anything less than full independence for the whole of Ireland, the Treaty was signed by representatives of the Sinn Féin majority faction on 6 December 1921 and the Irish Free State (*Saorstát Éireann*) proclaimed. The six counties of Ulster which had voted for the Home Rule arrangement of 1920 remained part of Britain.

The split within the Sinn Féin movement led to an exchange of hostile acts which escalated to civil war in June 1922. The war, in which the majority of the IRA sided with the anti-Treaty forces, was primarily a military test of strength, but was overshadowed by numerous assassinations on the part of anti-Treaty irregulars and the execution of anti-Treaty prisoners by the government. It soon became evident, however, that none of the outstanding political disputes could be solved by the continuation of hostilities. In appreciation of this, the anti-Treaty forces agreed to lay down their arms in May 1923, thereby tacitly – though for a long time not explicitly – recognising the legitimacy of the country's new political institutions. The main disagreement between the two warring parties was not the system of government established by the Irish Free State; rather, it was essentially a fight between purists and pragmatists which had been aggravated by personal animosities (cf. Garvin 1987: 143, 149). The pro-Treaty faction considered the compromise with Britain, though incompatible with Republican ideals and in itself

distasteful, to be none the less justifiable as it put an end to more than four centuries of English domination in 26 of Ireland's 32 counties. Moreover, no other settlement appeared to have been feasible under the given circumstances. They thus regarded the Dáil of June 1922 as the legitimate successor to the revolutionary Dála of 1919 and 1921, especially since the elected government appeared to enjoy widespread recognition among the population. The anti-Treaty party refused to accept the legitimacy of the 1922 Dáil because they felt that the recognition of the Treaty and the institutions created by it constituted a betrayal of their oath of allegiance to the 1919 Republic. Even the purely formal oath of fidelity to the British monarch as head of the Commonwealth was a major reason for them to reject the Treaty settlement outright (cf. Garvin 1987: 142; also Lee 1989: 67–8). None the less, at the height of the civil war, on 6 December 1922, the new Constitution of the Irish Free State – a product of the Treaty negotiations – was formally adopted and William Cosgrave elected as president of the Executive Council. Cosgrave and his pro-Treaty party, which took the name *Cumann na nGaedhal* in 1923, remained in power without interruption until 1932. Although de Valera's anti-Treaty party abstained from parliamentary elections until 1927, its abandonment of force in favour of constitutional methods four years earlier had already implied its *de facto* acceptance of the elected government and of its own role as chief opposition party. With the official reconstitution of the party under the name *Fianna Fáil* in 1926 and its participation in the general elections of June 1927, the very last chapter of the independence process was brought to a close.

3 The social bases of interwar Irish politics

Inter-war Irish society was remarkably free of the socioeconomic and socio-cultural cleavage structures found in other Western European polities. The 'four critical lines of cleavage' elaborated by Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 14 ff.) thus offer little help in explaining the specific patterns of political mobilization and confrontation that developed in Ireland. To begin with, a *centre-periphery (dominant vs. subject culture) cleavage* did not exist in the Irish case. In 1926 about one-fifth of the population spoke the Irish language (see Table 11.1), but the Irish-speaking areas (*Gaeltacht*), though perhaps poorer than others, did not in any sense constitute a 'subject culture'. Far from being disadvantaged, Irish speakers were revered as the bearers of true Irish culture while the revival of the Irish language became one of the main goals of the educational system. Moreover, the majority of Irish speakers were bilingual and had full access to the English-speaking sectors of society. Similarly, a politically relevant cleavage between the more and less strongly anglicized areas of the country cannot be discerned. It is true that anglicization – understood here as the superimposition of modern urban values upon Ireland's peasant society – occurred in varying intensities in different regions of the country. Rumpf speaks of a 'general east–west gradient corresponding to the degree of anglicization' measurable by 'the number of Catholics in the population, the size of farms, the number of

inhabitants per square km of cultivated land and the types of farming' (Rumpf 1959: 67). Anglicization had also been more intense in the towns than in the rural areas. None the less, the character, outlook and values of Irish society as a whole remained predominantly rural and essentially pre-industrial throughout the entire interwar period. A special case of anglicization was, of course, the adoption of British political culture as the dominant element of what was to become the political culture of independent Ireland. This, however, was characteristic of the whole of Irish society and did not have an essentially segmental or regional character.

A *state-church cleavage* of the sort experienced by many continental European countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was also absent in Ireland. The relationship between the Catholic Church and the Irish state remained largely free of conflict due to the specific historical alliance which had linked Roman Catholicism with Irish nationalism at a very basic level. Although, by European standards, the Church in independent Ireland exercised an unusually strong influence upon state policy (especially in areas such as education, marriage, family and social policy), a large-scale political confrontation between Catholic and secular interests did not develop. Furthermore, the centuries-old cleavage between Catholics and Protestants had lost its political relevance as a result of the small size of the Protestant minority which remained within the borders of the Irish Free State after partition (ca. 7 per cent as against ca. 93 per cent Catholics). Although elements of a Protestant subculture did exist, notably because education and a variety of social activities were organized on a confessional basis, such segregational structures did not as a rule extend to the sphere of politics. Only in Donegal and other parts of Ulster belonging to the Irish Free State did one find segmented societies similar to those in Holland, Belgium or Northern Ireland (cf. Chubb 1982: 13, 17–18). Accordingly, if for no other reason than for lack of a sizeable non-Catholic minority, religious affiliation did not represent an important factor in the political life of independent Ireland.

A *land-industry cleavage* did not emerge in interwar Ireland because of the underdeveloped character of the country's industry and the low degree of urbanization.

Table 11.1 Percentage of Irish speakers, 1851–1946

Area	1851	1871	1891	1911	1926	1946
Ireland	29.1	19.8	19.2	17.6	19.3	21.2
Dublin (city and county)	1.2	0.4	0.8	3.7	8.3	15.5
Leinster (without Dublin)	4.3	1.6	1.3	3.3	10.2	17.2
Munster	43.9	27.7	26.2	22.1	21.6	22.0
Connacht	50.8	39.0	37.9	35.5	33.3	33.2
Ulster (part)	17.0	15.1	17.8	20.4	23.9	26.0

Source: Chubb (1982: 346).

Note: The category of Irish speakers includes all those who speak Irish only or who can speak Irish and English. It excludes those who can read, but cannot speak Irish.

Most Irish industry was situated in and around Belfast, Ireland's only industrial city, and in those parts of Ulster which remained with Britain after 1921. The rest of the country – that is the 26 counties which constituted the Irish Free State – retained its predominantly agricultural character throughout the entire interwar period. The mainstay of Irish agriculture was the small, undercapitalized but increasingly market-oriented family farm. According to the census of 1926, 53.4 per cent of the working population were engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing; 33.6 per cent belonged to the service sector while only 13.0 per cent were employed in mining and manufacturing. In absolute figures, the industrial labour force in 1926 was no larger than 105,000. The non-urban character of interwar Ireland becomes evident when one considers that in 1926 only 959,000 persons (or 32.3 per cent of the population) lived in towns of 1,500 inhabitants or more, 13.6 per cent in Dublin (ca. 404,000 inhabitants) and no more than 2 per cent in any of the remaining towns (Chubb 1982: 341, 343–5; Lee 1989: 120).

An *owner–worker cleavage* of the type experienced by most modern industrialized countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was also largely absent from the Irish scene. Due to the predominantly agrarian, non-industrial character of Irish society and the previous abolition of landlordism, class antagonisms did not play a major role in shaping the issues and confrontational patterns of interwar Irish politics. On the surface at least, questions of 'national' significance took priority over economic and social matters in determining party profiles and electoral preferences. Thus, although Ireland had long since entered the era of mass politics, the stage had not yet been set for the advent of class politics, as had been the case in the economically more developed countries of Europe. The reasons for this become evident if one looks at the structure of Irish society in the 1920s and 1930s. Following the disappearance of the Protestant landed gentry after land reform, the privileged position of the Protestant middle class was undermined by the demographic consequences of partition. The minority character of the Protestant element in the Irish Free State made possible the rise of a Catholic bourgeois elite which gradually established itself in such traditional Protestant

Table 11.2 Population of Ireland, 1821–1946

Year	Irish Free State (26 counties)	Population increase/ decrease (%)	Northern Ireland (6 counties)	Population increase/ decrease (%)	Total for all Ireland (32 counties)	Population increase/ decrease (%)
1821	5,421,376		1,380,451		6,801,827	
1841	6,528,799	+20.43	1,648,945	+19.45	8,177,744	+20.23
1861	4,402,111	-32.57	1,396,453	-15.31	5,798,564	-29.09
1881	3,870,020	-12.09	1,304,816	-6.56	5,174,836	-10.76
1901	3,221,823	-16.75	1,236,952	-5.20	4,458,775	-13.84
1926	2,971,992	-7.75	1,256,561	+1.59	4,228,553	-5.16
1946	2,955,107	-0.57				

Source: Chubb (1982: 341).

Note: Figures on population increase/decrease are the author's calculations.

strongholds as business, commerce and the professions (Chubb 1982: 12–13). The new Catholic middle class, however, did not have the means at its disposal to assume the role of a modern entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Instead, it constituted itself as the new state class, recruiting its membership in the early years primarily from among the lower middle classes in the small towns and rural areas, and from among the small farmers. The two main pillars of post-independence Irish society were thus the smallholders and the new Catholic middle class. The capitalists, the urban proletariat, the agricultural proletariat and the old middle class (small craftsmen, traders, etc.) were weak both in numbers and in political influence. The relatively large groups of sub-proletarians and proletarioids resulted from Ireland's basic poverty but did not in themselves constitute factors of any far reaching political significance.

The absence of a strong owner–worker cleavage can be illustrated by the types of class alliances which coalesced around the three major parties of the interwar period. It is interesting to note here how the basic socioeconomic interests of the groups concerned were 'translated' into national categories at the political level. In terms of national policy, Cumann na nGaedheal (which later took the name Fine Gael) was, above all else, the party of the Treaty and the proponent of Commonwealth status. It drew its strongest support from those elements of the population which depended upon or profited from good relations with Britain and from the maintenance of the status quo. These were, first of all, the larger and more prosperous farmers, many of them Protestant, who were dependent upon British markets for the sale of their produce; secondly middle-class businessmen and professionals, again many of them Protestant, who were active in such fields as

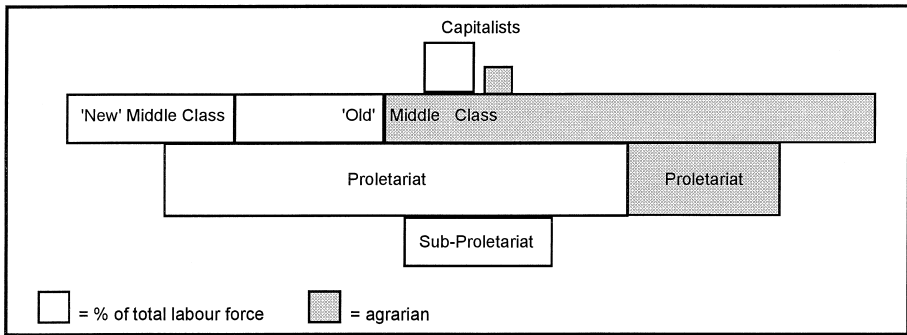
Table 11.3 Ireland: class structure, 1926

Population (millions)	3
Employment rate	43.7
Rate of agrarian employment	54.8
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.8
Family farms	25.3
Agrarian proletariat	11.7
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	2.6
Old middle class	7.6
New middle class	8.6
Proletariat	35.8
Sub-proletariat	7.6
Total	100

Sources: Statistisches Reichsamtsamt (1936: 138); Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems (1954: 31, 34, 43, 301).

Note: The figure for landlords has been estimated according to the size of the holdings. The data for capitalists is too high, but there is no way to define this category in more detail. The figure for the new middle class has been calculated from the data for employees given in *Statistisches Reichsamtsamt* (1936).

Figure 11.1 Ireland: class structure, 1926



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 11.3.

banking, insurance, commerce and industry and whose firms were often British owned and almost always oriented towards British interests; and finally, a sizeable portion of the old middle class, for example shopkeepers who, to a large extent, lived from the sale of imported British goods. This alliance clearly reflected Ireland's economic dependence which is documented by the fact that as late as 1937, 92.7 per cent of Irish exports went to, and 50.5 per cent of its imports came from, the United Kingdom (Chubb 1982: 346).

In contrast to the pro-Treaty forces, *Fianna Fáil* presented itself as the champion of republicanism and of full independence from Britain, uniting under its banner all those who had traditionally suffered disadvantages as a result of British domination and who had nothing to gain from the continuation of the link with London. These were on the one hand the smallholders, i.e. Catholic rural Ireland, and on the other the new Catholic middle and state classes. Finally, the Labour Party – the only Irish party with an overt class identity – was supported by an alliance of the rural and urban proletariat whose small number accounted for the party's perennial weakness at the polls. Labour actually gained more support from agricultural labour than from the urban Catholic working class, many of whom were *Fianna Fáil* nationalists with strong ties to their rural places of origin, and was thus strongest in the southern and eastern regions of Ireland where large-scale farming and the use of hired labour was the most common (cf. Chubb 1982: 7–8, 104–8).

The inapplicability of the Lipset–Rokkan cleavage model to the Irish case implies that the nature of the political conflict which gave rise to Ireland's post-independence party system cannot be adequately explained with reference to pre-existing socioeconomic or sociocultural cleavage structures. This does not mean that the division of the nationalist movement over the issue of the Anglo-Irish Treaty was not, at least in part, rooted in concrete conflicts of interest within civil society. Both the residual effects of the old Catholic–Protestant cleavage and the patterns of conflict resulting from the emergence of a new

hegemonic class and political elite ran parallel to and reinforced the line of cleavage opened up by the split in Sinn Féin over the 'national question'. However, the party system which emerged from this process soon evolved a dynamism and logic of its own which both transcended and outlived the specific interests and issues out of which it had originally developed.

4 Intermediate structures

4.1 Political parties

With the attainment of independence the nationalist movement inevitably lost much of its previous *raison d'être*. The split of Sinn Féin over the question of the Treaty and the ensuing civil war heralded the emergence of new power structures and constellations of interest which brought new issues to the forefront of Irish politics and prompted the formation of new partisan alignments. The party system which developed during the first ten years of Irish statehood thus bore little resemblance to the situation which had existed before 1921. By the end of the 1920s, all of the parties of the pre-First World War era had disappeared from the scene, with the exception of the Labour Party which – officially at least – did not consider itself part of the nationalist movement. Although smaller parties came and went, Ireland in the 1930s had effectively developed a three-party system which, in the following decades, showed only minor fluctuations in relative party strength (see Table 11.4) and in the underlying pattern of partisan support. The two main parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, were strongly leader-oriented associations which bore little resemblance to the mass parties which had emerged in the urbanized, industrial polities of Europe. Both parties defined themselves almost exclusively by their acceptance or rejection of the new national status quo and were thus not readily identifiable in terms of a clearly 'left-of-centre' or 'right-of-centre' ideology. It can be argued that the dichotomization of Irish politics over the Treaty issue had been largely the creation of rival political leaders within Sinn Féin and that this, initially at least, had not been the primary political concern of the population at large (cf. Chubb 1982: 97). The results of the first general elections in 1922 seem to confirm this assumption inasmuch as 40 per cent of the first-preference votes were given to candidates who belonged neither to the pro-Treaty nor to the anti-Treaty factions of Sinn Féin (Garvin 1977: 169). Still, within the space of only a few years, the national issue had given rise to a political cleavage which divided the great majority of the population into two irreconcilable partisan camps. As for the smaller parties, in particular the Labour Party, they 'found their policies to be increasingly peripheral to the consensus of the vast majority of the electorate' (Mair 1977: 62).

4.1.1 *Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael*

Cumann na nGaedheal ('League of the Gaels') was founded in 1923 as the party of the pro-Treaty forces, essentially the pro-Treaty faction of Sinn Féin and the majority faction of the paramilitary Irish Republican Brotherhood. It was the first

governing party of the Irish Free State and remained in power without interruption until 1932. Its membership and its main support were recruited from among large farmers, the urban upper-middle class and the more prosperous elements of the old middle class (such as merchants and artisans). Although lacking a specific regional base, the party was predominant within the Protestant community and enjoyed throughout the 1920s the favour of the Catholic Church which had lent its support to the pro-Treaty forces during the civil war. The largely bourgeois character of Cumann na nGaedheal's membership and its elitist organizational structure gave it the appearance of a conservative party, but apart from its less militant stance on the national question, there was little in its ideological orientation to distinguish it from its main rival, Fianna Fáil.

Following its defeat in the general elections of 1932, Cumann na nGaedheal merged with the Centre Party (essentially the old Farmers' Party) and the small National League, reconstituting itself as Fine Gael ('Tribe of the Gaels') in 1933. While the ideological proximity of mainstream Fine Gael to Fianna Fáil made it difficult for the former to pose as an attractive alternative to the government, a minority of intellectuals on the party's right wing propagated the organization of Irish society along vocational lines as elaborated by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). Certain elements within this group also appear to have believed in the compatibility of fascism, at least as they understood it, with Roman Catholicism (cf. Chubb 1982: 106). For all these reasons electoral support for Fine Gael declined progressively throughout the 1930s, continuing its downward slide well into the following decade.

4.1.2 *Fianna Fáil*

Fianna Fáil ('Soldiers of Destiny') was established in 1926 by de Valera and those opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty who, having broken with the IRA, had relinquished violence and paramilitary means of struggle in favour of legal, parliamentary methods. Republican and radical nationalist in orientation, the party was essentially the successor to the anti-Treaty faction of Sinn Féin, but it also relied heavily upon local units of the former Irish Volunteers for its initial membership and organizational strength. The main body of support for Fianna Fáil came from the Catholic smallholder population, especially in the poorer regions of western Ireland, as well as from elements of the middle class with small farmer backgrounds (including the new state class) and parts of the urban working class which had recently emigrated from the countryside. Relations with the Catholic Church were strained and remained so throughout the entire inter-war period, despite efforts by the party's leadership to underscore their religious predilections in public. After a period of abstention in which Fianna Fáil boycotted the Dáil Éireann, the party formally entered parliamentary politics by sending its deputies to the Dáil two months after the general elections of June 1927. De Valera subsequently justified this step with the argument that, although Fianna Fáil rejected the Irish Free State *de jure*, it accepted *de facto* the need for majority rule (Fanning 1986: 161).

A policy of deliberate moderation and the inability of the Cosgrave government to cope with the deteriorating socioeconomic situation brought Fianna Fáil to power in 1932. De Valera assumed the office of head of government which he held until 1948, first under the title 'President of the Executive Council' and then, after the enactment of a new constitution in 1937, as 'Taoiseach' (Prime Minister). During the course of these 16 years, Fianna Fáil grew increasingly conservative, Catholic and pro-business in its policies, attracting a part of Fine Gael's traditional electorate but losing some of its own supporters in the process. Although its majority in the Dáil was often very small, it gradually assumed the role of a dominant party, accustomed to wielding political power as a matter of course and reluctant to contemplate even the theoretical necessity of entering into coalition arrangements. By the early 1940s, Fianna Fáil had effectively become a national catch-all party – a political orientation which it retains to the present day.

4.1.3 *The Labour Party*

The Labour Party was founded by trade union leaders in 1912 as a constitutional, non-Marxist socialist party with little affinity to nationalist ideology or policy. It recruited its membership primarily from among the numerically small rural proletariat and, to a lesser degree, among the urban working class. The country's largest trade unions were also affiliated to the party in a corporate capacity. As long as the anti-Treaty deputies continued to boycott the Dáil, Labour was able to function as Ireland's principal opposition party within a multiparty context. It lost this role, though, after Fianna Fáil entered the Dáil in 1927. The transferral of the confrontation over the national question into the parliamentary arena and the growing dichotomization of Irish politics reduced Labour's status to that of the third and smallest element within Ireland's emerging three-party system. After 1932, Labour provided the Fianna Fáil government with much-needed parliamentary support on several occasions, but it was only in 1948 that it actually participated in a coalition government itself.

There were several reasons for the Labour Party's lack of success among the voting population as a whole and the urban working class in particular. According to Mair (1977: 64), Labour's weakness was due primarily to its electoral policies which 'were essentially welfarist with a minimal attraction to the major economic sectors of the community, and which were oriented towards the urban and rural proletariat, a group which, in relative terms, was electorally peripheral'. The fact that the party proved equally incapable of attracting the bulk of urban workers stemmed from its inability to swim against the prevailing ideological tide and convince its intended constituents that social and economic issues were more important than the quarrel over the Treaty. Moreover, Ireland's working-class constituency had been reduced from the outset as a result of partition and the loss of the industrial area in and around Belfast. Hence, as the country's only class party, Labour was at a permanent disadvantage in a society which was not ideologically attuned to class politics and whose socioeconomic structure was not conducive to the political articulation of class-based interests.

4.1.4 *Smaller parties*

Although both Irish political culture and the country's electoral system favoured localism and personalism in politics – many individual 'personalities' entered the Dáil as independent parliamentarians or as leaders of small splinter parties – the sheer weight of the Treaty issue tended to preclude the emergence of parties representing interests of a non-nationalist character. As Chubb (1982: 68) points out, most of the smaller parties which came into being during the 1920s and 1930s were somehow by-products of the conflict over the Treaty and none of them demonstrated any permanence. This was the case, for example, with the National League and the National Centre Party which were absorbed by Fine Gael in 1933. Aside from the Labour Party, the only representative of concrete socioeconomic interests which succeeded in securing a solid foothold in the Dáil was the Farmers' Party of the 1920s. An outgrowth of the Dublin-based Farmers' Association, the party represented the interests of the larger, more prosperous farmers and provided parliamentary support to Cumann na nGaedheal. Because of substantial regional differences in the size, value and produce of Irish farms, however, it was never capable of developing into a representative of the whole of Irish agriculture and had become largely ineffective by the end of the 1920s.

4.1.5 *Radical republicanism*

After de Valera and the majority of the anti-Treaty party had opted for constitutional politics in the mid-1920s, a small minority of dissenters continued to espouse violence as a means of achieving full republican sovereignty and national unification. Insignificant in numbers and organizationally unstable, the various extremist groups that were founded or resurrected during the early 1920s proved quite heterogeneous in character, tending more or less to overt violence and varying in outlook from nationalist to socialist. Foremost among the more militant organizations was the Irish Republican Army (IRA) which had traditionally been grouped into a political (legal) and a military (clandestine-revolutionary) wing. Some political support for radical republicanism came from the small farmer milieu in the poorer areas of the country where the insurgent tradition was still strong, but on the whole there was little popular sympathy for groups like the IRA.

4.2 **Interest groups**

4.2.1 *Interest associations*

Interest associations have always been a familiar feature of public life in Ireland. Although such associations often demonstrated clear political preferences, they generally avoided close links with individual political parties. The only noteworthy exceptions during the interwar period were the Farmers' Party, which acted as the political agent of its parent organization, and the Labour Party, which had organic ties to the Irish Trade Union Congress and most individual

trade unions. Otherwise, Ireland's interest groups tended to remain outside the immediate sphere of politics.

Aside from these more immediately economic interest associations, there were few organizations in interwar Ireland through which group interests were effectively represented as matters of public concern. The absence of deeply rooted cleavage structures in (southern) Irish society precluded the emergence of broad social movements of the type which developed in other European countries. The only other institution which functioned essentially as an interest group – albeit a highly influential one both inside and outside the political arena – was the Irish Catholic Church.

4.2.2 *The Catholic Church*

However one chooses to categorize the role of the Catholic Church in Ireland, the fact is that its influence on Irish politics was considerable. During the course of the nineteenth century, the Church's authority was greatly strengthened by the identification of the nationalist movement with the rural Catholic milieu. None the less, the Catholic Church did not become an 'established' church in the English sense after independence, nor was it granted any legal privileges. Rather, its power derived entirely from its traditional authority, its national symbolism and the strong religious identity of the population. The influence of the Church on Irish politics was thus never institutionalized or formalized and it was not common for members of the clergy to stand for public office or to engage actively in party politics.

There were, however, a number of political issues which the Church considered to be within the range of its proper concern and on which the bishops, speaking collectively as 'the hierarchy', would deliver pronouncements whenever they considered a matter to be of sufficient importance. Such issues usually concerned marriage and divorce, contraception and abortion, censorship, social welfare, the health services and education. In most cases, the position taken by the hierarchy was extremely conservative and reflected the basic opposition of the Irish Church to social change. Still, direct attempts by Ireland's bishops to influence the political decision-making process appear to have been comparatively rare; concrete instances in which Church intervention played the decisive role in determining government policy are in any case difficult to verify (Whyte 1980: 365; Chubb 1982: 127). This is perhaps less a sign of restraint on the part of the Church than of the efficiency of social pressure, since in a thoroughly Catholic society, a government whose policies stand in contradiction to the teachings of the Church has little chance of popular acceptance from the outset.

5 The Irish political system

5.1 The central political system

The Irish Free State was a democratic and secular republic in everything but in name, based de facto on the principle of popular sovereignty, but obliged by the

Treaty of 1923 to accept a series of constitutional provisions reflecting the special nature of the country's relationship with Great Britain. These provisions, though controversial enough to provoke a civil war, were in fact largely symbolic and were mostly related to the formal prerequisites of Ireland's membership in the Commonwealth: formal recognition of the Crown (which in principle went no further than constitutional rhetoric), a governor general resident in Dublin and an oath of loyalty to the British monarch, not as sovereign of Ireland, but as head of the Commonwealth. Of substantial relevance to the new Irish state were at the most a series of institutions and mechanisms intended to protect the Protestant minority, and the setting-up of British military installations in Ireland for defence purposes. Otherwise, the system of government laid down by the Irish Free State Constitution was essentially a copy of the Westminster model and the British cabinet system. The head of government was the president of the Executive Council, equivalent to the British prime minister, who, together with his ministers, made up the government (Executive Council). The Executive Council was responsible collectively to the lower house of parliament, the Dáil Éireann, which had the rarely exercised power to remove the government and call new elections. Elections to the Dáil were to be held at least every five years on the basis of universal adult suffrage, but these could be – and usually were – called by the government at an earlier date when it appeared opportune to do so. The 1923 constitution also established an upper house, the Senate (*Seanad Éireann*), in which the Protestant minority was to be firmly represented. The *Seanad* had the power to delay legislation passed by the Dáil, but disagreement over its composition and opposition to the chamber on the part of Fianna Fáil led to its abolition in 1936. This move was part of the de Valera government's policy, initiated in 1932, of progressively distancing Ireland from the Commonwealth by abolishing its symbols and institutions one after the other. This process culminated in the full repeal of the Irish Free State Constitution and the adoption of a new 'Constitution of Ireland' (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*) in 1937 which preserved the essentials of the previous system but did away with the symbolism associated with Commonwealth status.

The only substantial difference between the political system of the Irish Free State and that of the United Kingdom was the means by which parliamentary deputies were elected. In contrast to Britain's majoritarian system, members of the Dáil (*Teachta Dála* or TD's) were chosen by a 'system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote.' This method, which had been advocated by both Sinn Féin and the British government as a means of protecting local religious minorities, involved a complicated system of vote-counting calculated to ensure that as few votes as possible got 'wasted' on very strong or very weak candidates. The basis of the system was the multi-member (three- to five-person) constituency in which the prescribed number of candidates was elected according to the relative majority of votes received. Each voter had the right to cast as many votes as there were deputies to be elected in his district and to mark, if he so chose, the order of preference of the candidates which he had indicated on his ballot. In such cases, votes could be transferred

from one candidate to another when they were either no longer required to secure the election of the preferred candidate or after an especially weak candidate was eliminated.

Experience showed that the Irish electoral system tended to favour both independent candidates and larger parties, placing smaller parties at a disadvantage. On the one hand, the 'ordinal' choice given to the voter could enhance the performance of individual personalities known to the local electorate and of individual deputies who had broken away or been expelled from their party of origin (cf. Chubb 1982: 101, 152, 156). On the other hand, the system reinforced the overall strength of the larger parties and thus contributed to the creation of stable parliamentary majorities. Although governments often had to rely on a certain number of independent deputies for an absolute majority in the Dáil, the basic stability of Ireland's three-party system was never threatened by an uncontrolled proliferation of smaller parties such as occurred in various other interwar European polities (cf. Gallagher 1975: 503).

5.1.1 Administration and civil service

At independence, the Irish Free State took over the existing British system of public administration with very few personal or structural changes. The civil service continued to function as before, providing the state with a loyal, stable and professionally competent basis amidst the turbulence of the immediate post-independence years. The public administration reform of 1924 did away with many of the unwieldy central authorities which had been a peculiarity of Irish bureaucracy under British rule, but otherwise the previous system was scrupulously preserved and administrative continuity maintained. Ireland's new political elite, having no other credentials than its participation in the struggle for national independence, was in many ways dependent upon the experience of the British-trained civil servants whose values, as Garvin (1987: 167) points out, were quite different from those of Sinn Féin.

5.1.2 Military and police

Both the military ('Defence Forces') and the police (Garda Síochána or, popularly, Gardaí) were relatively small and under-funded bodies which, like the civil service, had continued in the British tradition of political impartiality and loyalty to the government of the day. Accordingly, neither the military nor the Gardaí were ever relevant to the course of Irish politics. Initially, both forces were staffed with members of the IRA faction which had joined the pro-Treaty forces in 1922. At that time the government was faced with the task of defending itself against the anti-Treaty insurgents with the help of security forces which had not yet been brought under its full and undisputed control. However, after initial disciplinary problems in the Gardaí in 1922, and a futile army officers' plot in 1924, both organizations submitted unconditionally to the authority of the civilian government. With the accession of the Fianna Fáil to power, the question arose as to whether the security forces would agree to serve a government led by their former foes in the civil war. As it happened, de Valera

did not interfere unduly in the internal structure of the army or the police and both services reciprocated by accepting the new government without reservation.

6 Dynamic elements and interactions

6.1 Electoral results and government formation

The general elections of the interwar years produced a succession of stable governments (see Table 11.4) despite the fact that the parliamentary majority of the governing party was usually very small. The Cumann na nGaedheal government remained in power for a total of nine-and-a-half years (1922–32) while Fianna Fáil was in office for nearly sixteen years in succession (1932–48). There were no coalition governments during this period and coalition strategies were never seriously contemplated by any of the parties in the Dáil. The fact that single parties were always able to form a government can be seen as the consequence of a combination of factors, the most important of which were: the swift development and stability of Ireland's party system with its three core parties, the large-party bias of the electoral system, the ideological dichotomization of Irish politics and the relative stability of the pattern of popular support. Although minority governments were in power for roughly one-third of the time between September 1922 and July 1943, no Irish government either before or after the Second World War was ever defeated by a parliamentary vote of no confidence. Electoral participation rose steadily from 61.2 per cent to 81.3 per cent between 1923 and 1933, levelling off at around 75 per cent in 1937 and 1938 (see Table 11.5).

Table 11.4 Ireland: government composition, 1922–38

Date of appointment	Governing party	One-party maj. government	One-party min. government
September 1922	Pro-Treaty = Cumann na nGaedheal	1 yr. ^a	
September 1923	Cumann na nGaedheal	3 yrs., 9 mos. ^a	
June 1927	Cumann na nGaedheal		4 mos.
October 1927	Cumann na nGaedheal		4 yrs., 5 mos ^b
March 1932	Fianna Fáil		11 mos.
February 1933	Fianna Fáil	4 yrs., 5 mos.	
July 1937	Fianna Fáil		11 mos.
June 1938 ^c	Fianna Fáil	3 yrs., 8 mos.	
		Total: 12 yrs., 10 mos.	6 yrs., 7 mos.

Source: Chubb (1982: 148).

Notes:

- a Government majority due to the fact that the members of the anti-Treaty party/Fianna Fáil, the largest opposition party, did not take their seats.
- b The government had the support of the Farmers' Party which, however, ceased to operate as a party. Its members became, for all intents and purposes, members of Cumann na nGaedheal.
- c Until July 1943.

The general elections of 1922 and 1923 resulted in a clear defeat for the anti-Treaty party and unexpected gains for the Labour Party which, despite its non-nationalist platform, had supported the signing of the Treaty (see Table 11.4). Had the anti-Treaty deputies not boycotted the Dáil, Cumann na nGaedheal would have been compelled to form a coalition government with the Farmers' Party and/or with a number of smaller parties and independent deputies. As it was, Cumann na nGaedheal commanded an absolute majority of occupied parliamentary seats both in 1922–3 (53 out of 92) and between 1923 and 1927 (63 of 109) and was thus able to govern alone.

With the entry of Fianna Fáil into the Dáil in August 1927 the numerical requirement for an absolute majority increased to 77 seats. Cumann na nGaedheal, though still the strongest party, had sustained considerable losses in the June 1927 elections, falling to 47 seats, while Fianna Fáil, having maintained the 44 seats it had previously held, was now a very close second. The Labour Party, profiting from the jaded image of the government, had achieved its best result of the entire interwar period with 22 seats. Cosgrave formed a minority government, but the fact that the Treaty issue was now being debated within the Dáil itself put him on the defensive and induced him to resort to snap elections in September 1927 in the hope of increasing his parliamentary mandate. This gamble only partially paid off: Cumann na nGaedheal won 62 seats, Fianna Fáil obtained its heretofore best result of 57 seats while Labour, a victim of the growing public concern with the national question, was reduced to a mere 13. Once again, Cosgrave formed a minority government which was able to sustain itself in office until the next general elections in 1932. He was compelled, though, to rely on the support of the declining Farmers' Party (with six seats) together with that of several smaller parties and independents in order to survive.

Following de Valera's electoral victory in 1932, Fianna Fáil had sufficient popular support to either gain an absolute majority of seats (1933–7 and 1938–43) or to win a sufficiently large relative majority to govern with the help of independents (1932–3 and 1937–8). In the two instances in which de Valera was compelled to form minority governments, he resorted to snap elections after a little less than a year in order to secure an absolute majority again. Under such conditions, the only realistic alternative to a Fianna Fáil government would have been a Fine Gael-Labour coalition. Throughout the 1930s and most of the 1940s, however, the ideological differences between the two parties remained too great to make such a coalition appear feasible.

6.2 Economic developments

Independence did not bring prosperity to Ireland. With its structurally underdeveloped economy and generally low standard of living, the country still suffered from chronic underpopulation as emigration, especially from the poorest rural areas, resumed after the First World War. Ireland's tiny industrial sector had been reduced even further by the loss of the Belfast area while most non-traditional sectors of the economy remained dependent on Britain for their viability, only slowly proving able to orient themselves towards domestic structures and needs.

Table 11.5 Ireland: electoral results, 1922–38

	16.06.1922		27.08.1923		9.06.1927		16.09.1927		16.02.1932		24.01.1933		1.07.1937		17.06.1938	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Sinn Féin			3.6	5												
Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin	21.8	36	27.4	44												
Fianna Fáil			26.1	44	35.2	57	44.5	72	49.7	77	45.2	69	51.9	77		
Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin	38.5	58														
Cumann na nGaedheal			27.4	47	38.7	62	35.3	57	30.5	48	34.8	48	33.3	45		
Fine Gael																
Farmers' Party	7.8	7	12.1	15	6.4	6	2.1	3								
Irish Labour Party	21.3	17	10.6	14	12.5	22	7.7	7	5.7	8	10.3	13	10.0	9		
Communists					1.1	1	0.1	—								
National League			7.3	8	1.6	2										
National Centre Party									9.2	11						
Other Parties	10.6	10	10.9	17	14.1	16	10.4	14	5.0	9	9.7	48	4.7	45		
Total Seats		128		153		153		153		153		153		138		138

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 224).

This economic inheritance was compounded by the unimaginative and ineffective economic policies of the Cosgrave government. Cumann na nGaedheal's dogmatic belief in free trade prohibited even mild protection of industry and was indicative of its predisposition towards promoting market-oriented agriculture at the expense of industrial development. Although unemployment had begun to rise steadily from 1920 onwards, little was done to ameliorate the situation of the poor and the jobless. The situation became critical as the effects of the world economic crisis began to be felt in 1930–1. In these two years alone, the value of exports fell almost 25 per cent while invisible incomes decreased with the decline in remittances from emigrants and dividends from overseas investments (Lee 1989: 190). The sudden drop in emigration following the collapse of overseas job markets caused a drastic rise in unemployment and underemployment which, in turn, led to a further reduction in domestic consumption. By the latter part of 1931, a major economic and social crisis had developed which encouraged renewed activity on the part of the IRA and other militant organizations. Faced with these challenges, the Cosgrave government once again clung to conventional economic wisdom playing down the social emergency with appeals to law and order. In an attempt to balance the budget, it engaged in a radical reduction of public expenditure which further aggravated the plight of the unemployed and in the end contributed to Cumann na nGaedheal's defeat in the general elections of 1932.

6.3 International interactions

Ireland's external relations during the interwar period were strongly influenced by two interrelated factors: the country's small size and its peripheral location. Both imposed limitations on Irish foreign policy, as did the overwhelming influence of the United Kingdom. The combination of both factors effectively isolated Ireland from the rest of Europe, promoting a widespread disinterest in (and ignorance of) European and world affairs not only among the general public, but also among the majority of Irish politicians. (In this respect de Valera was a notable exception.) Irish politics thus tended to focus on domestic matters and, especially, on the two great legacies of the 1921 Treaty: the constitutional question and the problem of the border with Northern Ireland. The overriding importance accorded to these two issues gave rise to what might be termed a collective obsession with the United Kingdom, widely seen as the root cause of many of the country's unsolved problems. Not surprisingly, then, Ireland's foreign policy was virtually monopolized by the conduct of relations with the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, with the Vatican. In all other respects it was characterized by a strong isolationist tendency and a general unwillingness to become involved in matters which were not of immediate domestic concern.

7 Actions and reactions during the period of crisis

Inter-war Ireland never experienced a full-blown crisis of democracy. It was, however, faced with a series of more limited crisis situations which demanded adequate and effective responses from the political system within

Table 11.6 Ireland: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
NDP (m. £)									154	157	159	161	156	150	146	142	147	152	156	158	161	169
in 1938 prices									146	159	159	160	160	165	165	164	168	167	171	160	161	169
NDP/cap. (£)									52	53	54	55	53	51	50	48	49	51	53	54	55	58
NDP (m. US-\$)									755	769	779	789	764	735	715	696	720	745	764	774	789	828
NDP/cap. (US-\$)									254	260	265	269	261	251	242	235	242	251	257	263	269	282
Population (thousands)	3103	3102	3103	3096	3022	3014	3005	2985	2971	2957	2944	2937	2927	2933	2949	2962	2971	2971	2967	2948	2937	2934
COST (1914 = 100)	186	181	184	189	184	172	174	175	170	158	154	151	152	158	154	151	152	158	159	172	174	174
Unemployment (thousands)									36	36	34	25	21	22	21	22	25	63	72	104	123	100
B. o. F. Trade (m. £)									-17.3	-18.6	-19.3	-16	-13.5	-13.4	-11	-13.4	-15.6	-16.1	-16.1	-16.1	-16.1	-16.1
Lost working hours (m.)									1209	302	294	85	64	54	101	77	310	42	200	180	288	186
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.									100			110		111					156	159	163	
Cost of Living					100	97	99	102	99	92	94	94	91	85	83	81	82	85	85	92	94	94
Unemployment					100	100	100	94	69	58	61	58	61	69	175	200	289	342	278	228	242	256
NDP					100	100	100	102	103	105	101	97	95	92	95	92	95	99	101	103	105	110
Strikes					100	25	24	7	5	4	8	8	6	26	3	17	15	24	15	145	17	

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 60–1, 341f); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 167ff., 356, 743ff., 823); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 139).

Note: £ (pound) is US\$4.8663; NDP is at current factor costs.

the framework of democratic politics. Each of these crises can be located within a specific 'arena', that is, an area of society in which resources of a particular type are exchanged and converted by the major actors. They can also be understood as products of the concrete interaction between the civil war legacy and the immediate effects of the world economic crisis. So, the question facing Irish democracy on the eve of the 1932 general elections was less one of survival or collapse than of whether the system would prove capable of tackling the enormous *integrative* tasks with which Irish society was confronted.

7.1 The parliamentary arena: the accession of Fianna Fáil to power

The Fianna Fáil victory in the 1932 elections gave rise to the fear that the previous government or the army might seek to prevent their former civil war enemies from assuming political office. During the preceding electoral campaign Cumann na nGaedheal had veered sharply to the right, putting forward a purely law-and-order platform while ignoring the pressing socioeconomic issues of the day. In particular, it had instigated a wave of anti-communist hysteria, the so-called 'red scare' in a futile attempt to implicate Fianna Fáil in a purported conspiracy of the left. The fact that the subsequent transfer of power took place so smoothly was thus by no means a foregone conclusion.

Aside from Cosgrave's categorical willingness to accept the verdict of the electorate, a large measure of the credit for the successful transition must go to the skilful combination of circumspection and shrewdness with which de Valera developed his democratic credentials before the Irish public. Ever since 1927, Fianna Fáil had made a conscious effort to win the confidence – if not the support – of the most influential segments of Irish society by practicing a policy of deliberate restraint. Particular attention was given to gaining the favour of the Catholic Church. Although certain groups within Cumann na nGaedheal still hoped to be able to stigmatize de Valera as an incorrigible rebel and IRA sympathizer, it was clear to most by 1932 that Fianna Fáil was committed to parliamentary democracy and that its political respectability could no longer be seriously contested. The pragmatic orientation of the party's electoral programme was a case in point: although Fianna Fáil made much of its intent to abolish the oath of allegiance to the king upon assuming power, the main body of the programme was dedicated to concrete measures of economic and social policy (employment, housing, social services, etc.) which contrasted markedly with Cumann na nGaedheal's unimaginative status quo platform. After winning the elections, de Valera secured the loyalty of the military, the police and the civil services by demonstrating his intention not to penalize Treaty supporters within their ranks. He also won the parliamentary support of the Labour Party through a policy of relative compromise on sensitive issues and translated this support into an informal electoral alliance which endured in principle for the rest of the interwar period.

7.2 The extra-parliamentary arena: the IRA and the Blueshirts

A more serious challenge to the integrative capacity of Irish democracy was posed by the activity of the IRA and other militant organizations during the economic crisis. Violence had been immanent during the whole of Cosgrave's period in office, but IRA activity had increased significantly since 1927, bringing with it a new surge of intimidation and killings. The tension reached a preliminary climax when the 'red scare' was unleashed in the autumn of 1931. The fact that a leading IRA man, arrested in July, was found to be in possession of a document from a left-wing organization was seen as proof, at least in government and Church circles, that the IRA had communist links. This was, in fact, not the case. Despite the appearance of several small and insignificant revolutionary groups in the early 1930s, the IRA itself had neither turned to the left nor had it in any way changed its ideological position as a result of the economic crisis. Ireland's revolutionary nationalists were still, as Garvin (1987: 172) puts it, 'radical in style and means, but not in ends'. The Cumann na nGaedheal government reacted to the apparent emergency by drafting a Public Safety Act which was passed by the Dáil in October 1931. The new law, which had the backing of the Church, provided for the establishment of military tribunals for crimes of subversive violence and allowed for the immediate banning of 11 left-wing organizations together with the IRA. The Act was opposed by both Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party, the former arguing that it failed to address the root of the problem which was the economic crisis. Labour, in turn, feared that the Act could be used against the trade unions in their legitimate struggle against rising prices and unemployment.

In a further move against the IRA, Cumann na nGaedheal, now in opposition after its electoral defeat of February 1932, founded the Army Comrades' Association (ACA) for the purpose of protecting its supporters against IRA harassment. This led to clashes between the IRA and the ACA which increased in intensity as the year progressed. Perhaps under the influence of the National Socialist victory in Germany, the ACA adopted the blue shirt and the fascist salute in March 1933. Four months later it assumed the name 'National Guard' (although it became popularly known as the Blueshirts) under its new leader, General Eoin O'Duffy: a fierce anti-communist of doubtful democratic persuasion who, following Fianna Fáil's accession to power, had been dismissed by de Valera as commissioner of the Garda Síochána. The Blueshirts acquired their strongest political influence in September 1933 when Cumann na nGaedheal, the Centre Party and the National Guard merged to form Fine Gael. Seizing the opportunity of the moment, O'Duffy assumed the leadership of the new party, relegating Cosgrave, whose position had been weakened as a result of two recent electoral defeats, to the role of parliamentary leader.

But were the Blueshirts, especially after O'Duffy had taken over as leader, genuinely fascist? All evidence seems to indicate that, despite appearances, they were no more fascist than the IRA was communist. This, according to Garvin, was hardly surprising since there was no real basis for fascism in Ireland and a real

drift into fascism was inhibited by the general structure of Irish society, which had undergone little of the wholesale disruption that fed the fascisms of central Europe. Culturally, Ireland was Anglo-American, and was too much part of that cultural area to be attracted by the exotic political apparatuses of fascism... [Moreover,] the organic character of Irish Catholicism acted as a substitute for the organic vision offered by many fascists (Garvin 1987: 173; cf. also Lee 1989: 182–4).

As a first step towards stemming the violence between the Blueshirts and the IRA (which, in the meantime, had become a serious threat to public order), the Fianna Fáil government began to move systematically against the Blueshirts – and with great circumspection against the IRA – during the course of 1933. This was done first with the help of the police and then, in the case of the Blueshirts, by invoking the Public Safety Act which de Valera had not repealed. The one-sidedness of this strategy is to some extent understandable. Not only did de Valera still have to take account of the IRA sympathizers within the Fianna Fáil and its electorate, but he also realized that the IRA would prove infinitely more difficult to combat than the fairly straightforward and transparent Blueshirt organisation. After violence between the Blueshirts and the IRA had once again begun to escalate towards the end of 1933, the government formally banned the National Guard in February 1934, effectively suppressing the organization by the end of the year. The fact that there was little resistance on the part of Fine Gael to the government actions testified to the growing opposition within the party to O’Duffy’s obvious disregard for constitutionality and the parliamentary process. In September 1934, O’Duffy was compelled to resign as party leader, bringing the Blueshirt episode to a close and paving the way for Cosgrave’s re-election to this post the following year.

The end of the fighting between the Blueshirts and the IRA led to a decline in political violence during the course of 1935 and 1936 and a corresponding reduction in the number of convictions under the Public Safety Act (Lee 1989: 219). None the less, de Valera’s policy of restraint towards the IRA came to an end after the outbreak of a new wave of terror at the beginning of 1935. Admitting his disappointment at the refusal of the IRA to cooperate with his government, de Valera confirmed his intention to retain the Public Safety Act as long as ‘organised crimes of violence’ continued to occur (Fanning 1986: 166). After further murders by the IRA in the first half of 1936, the Fianna Fáil government overcame its inhibitions and declared the IRA illegal under the Special Powers Act, ordering the immediate imprisonment of many of the organization’s leaders. Despite initial disunity within the government, the following years saw the enactment of several new laws and constitutional provisions which permitted it to deal more effectively with terrorist violence. This did not, of course, put an end to the IRA’s underground activities which were extended to Britain at the beginning of 1939, but it did, perhaps for the first time, draw a clear line between the legitimate sphere of democratic politics and the principal illegitimacy of political violence in Ireland.

7.3 The economic arena: the advent of developmental and social policy

The growing economic hardship and social tension which contributed to Fianna Fáil's electoral victory in 1932 must be seen against the background of the previous government's economic policy which was both ineffective and unpopular. This brought up the question of whether the new government would be able to use the means at its disposal in a competent and acceptable manner to combat the destabilizing effects of the economic and social crisis.

De Valera got off to a bad start. In June 1932 his government decided to withhold annuities hitherto paid to Great Britain in order to alleviate the pressure which these were putting on small farmers' incomes under the prevailing deflationary conditions. De Valera's audacity won him a good deal of popular support, and the suspension of payments did, initially at least, benefit the small farmers (who, of course, were Fianna Fáil's main constituency). However, his move triggered off an economic war with Britain which not only led to six years of tension between the two countries, but also caused the already contracting domestic market to shrink even further. This confronted the government with the task of devising a socioeconomic policy which would prove capable of tackling both the effects of the world economic crisis and the additional burdens brought about by the economic war.

Between 1932 and 1936 four comprehensive programmes were launched which pursued the double goal of reflation of the economy and compensating for the worst social repercussions of the crisis. This was the first time that an Irish government had undertaken systematic efforts to promote all-round economic development and expand social welfare services. The new government's agricultural policy was centred on a programme to promote tillage at the expense of livestock production in the expectation that this would increase self-sufficiency and curtail emigration. An industrialization programme was aimed at creating new fields of employment with the help of protectionist measures and a series of newly founded state enterprises. It was hoped that the development of Ireland's industry, a heretofore neglected task, would also further the general aim of self-sufficiency and reduce the country's economic dependence upon Britain. In conjunction with the industrialization programme, a housing and building programme was inaugurated to provide working-class families with suitable living conditions and an additional source of employment. Finally, a wide-ranging package of social measures was introduced, including an increase in unemployment benefits, the provision of unemployment benefits to uninsured segments of the population, increased old-age pensions, a single health insurance and new regulations on working conditions, especially for juvenile labour (cf. Lee 1989: 182–201).

Some of these programmes (such as housing) were relatively successful, some less so and some (like the tillage programme) achieved nothing. Fianna Fáil's long-cherished goal of self-sufficiency showed itself to be unattainable in practice. Among the more enduring legacies of the de Valera government's early economic policies was the increasingly active role which the state had begun to play in both developmental planning and as an economic factor in its own right (Raymond 1986: 115–16). Their most positive short-term effect undoubtedly lay

in the simple fact that, after years of inactivity and indifference, the government was perceived to be doing something in the fields of economic and social policy which was intended to benefit, and actually did benefit, the 'plain people'. In Lee's (1989: 195) estimation the achievements of the de Valera government were quite impressive under the given circumstances. Not only was it able to avoid the economic catastrophe which appeared immanent in 1931 (and this despite the additional hardships brought about by the economic war), but its policies also helped to limit the extent of social polarization and contain the influence of political extremism.

7.4 The national arena: the resolution of the Treaty issue

From the beginning the essence of Fianna Fáil's *raison d'être* had been its opposition to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Once in office, though, it was faced with the question of how to pursue this aim within a democratic and constitutional framework. The path that de Valera chose consisted of a gradual, step-by-step loosening of Ireland's constitutional ties with the British Commonwealth. He began in May 1932 by having the Dáil remove the oath of allegiance from the Constitution and by replacing the incumbent governor general with one of his own supporters. The cessation of annuity payments to Britain the following month was also part of this strategy, although de Valera initially may not have been aware of the consequences of his actions. Despite the ensuing crisis in Anglo-Irish relations, the order established by the Treaty was further dismantled in 1936 when the Senate was abolished and all references to the British monarch and governor general were deleted from the Constitution. Finally, in March 1937, the draft of a new constitution was introduced into the Dáil and confirmed in a referendum on 1 July. With the enactment of this new 'Constitution of Ireland' (Bunreacht na hÉireann) on 29 December the Irish Free State formally ceased to exist. None the less, its political system was preserved with only minor changes so that a maximum of political and institutional continuity was ensured.

The main point in which Bunreacht na hÉireann differed from its predecessor was the absence of any mention of allegiance to a foreign power. Ireland was defined as a sovereign, democratic and independent state bearing the name 'Éire' in Gaelic and 'Ireland' in English. Although Bunreacht na hÉireann was as republican as a constitution can be, Ireland was nowhere explicitly called a republic. Such mention was omitted in order to retain a last vestige of Commonwealth status, this being seen as a precondition for enticing the Ulster Unionists – someday – to agree to a reunification of the country. Still, provision was made for the office of a president as head of state alongside that of the prime minister (Taoiseach) as head of government. In addition to the Dáil, the Senate (Seanad Éireann) was reintroduced as the second chamber of parliament (Oireachtas), though with extremely limited and subsidiary functions.

A further step towards the de facto dissolution of the 1921 Treaty was the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreements of April 1938 which officially brought the tensions between the two countries to a close. Britain agreed, among

other things, to remove its military facilities from Ireland and return its so-called 'Treaty ports' in exchange for a guarantee that Irish territory would not be allowed to be used as a base of attack against the United Kingdom. This Defence Agreement eliminated the last traces of British presence in the independent part of Ireland. It was also an important precondition for Dublin's neutrality in the Second World War which was unanimously declared by the Dáil on 2 September 1939.

8 Conclusion

The question as to why the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy survived with comparatively little difficulty in Ireland – despite civil war, economic depression and the violence of militant organizations – must be seen in conjunction with the uniqueness and 'peripherality' of the Irish case. Likewise, one must consider not only those factors which tended to reinforce the fabric of Irish democracy, but also those which inhibited the growth of anti-democratic tendencies powerful enough to pose a serious threat to the system.

One reason for the absence of strong anti-democratic movements in Ireland was without doubt the quasi-traditional structure of Irish society. The 26 counties which became independent in 1921 were hardly urbanized, had little industry and were underpopulated even by rural standards. The major political cleavages found at least in part in most Western and Central European states had either not developed or had been resolved as a result of partition. Wage labour – both in the towns and in agriculture – was marginal compared to the high percentage of smallholders and self-employed among the working population. Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the emergence of mass politics in Ireland was not accompanied by the simultaneous development of class politics, and this situation was mirrored in the predominantly petty bourgeois character of both major nationalist parties. The fundamentally non-class character of interwar Irish politics also helps to explain why the 'national question' was able to dominate Irish political life in an era in which other European societies were concerned with eminently more pressing socioeconomic issues. Ireland's mainly rural society did not experience the kind of post-First World War modernization crisis which had prompted the emergence of fascism on the Continent. There was thus no class or other socially defined element within interwar Irish society which perceived the existence of parliamentary democracy in itself to be a threat to its basic interests.

A second reason for both the strength of the democratic element and the weakness of anti-democratic attitudes was the country's geographical and cultural isolation. Having had no immediate experience of anything but the Westminster system, most Irish citizens perceived the idea of an alternative regime type as beyond the limits of realistic consideration. Thus, while the rural-peasant tradition of practical politics coalesced with the Westminster parliamentary tradition to create a uniquely Irish brand of democratic culture, the insurgent tradition was progressively isolated from mainstream politics, if for no other reason than its lack of a

tangible perspective within the democratic context of the independent state. A further consequence of Ireland's extreme peripherality was the fact that the political elite was able to cultivate an atmosphere of parochialism and conservatism which allowed the country to lag behind the rest of Europe in most areas, but which also spared its democratic institutions the shocks that were being experienced on the Continent. The price of this 'splendid isolation' was the neglect of many urgent social and economic problems which were overshadowed by the largely artificial and increasingly irrelevant concern of the political establishment with national issues. In such an un-cosmopolitan environment, the Irish Catholic Church had little difficulty in maintaining its traditional ideological monopoly which fostered a largely apolitical outlook on everyday life, rendering most people insensitive to fascist and other continental European political ideologies.

Once again, it should be stressed that Ireland never experienced a genuine crisis of its political system. All major conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s, beginning with the civil war, were concerned either with the formal constitutional framework within which Irish democracy was to be situated or with the country's relationship to Great Britain. The system of parliamentary democracy itself was never an object of contention. Moreover, all major political actors of the interwar period were essentially committed to the principle of majority rule inasmuch as this had been the objective of the nationalist struggle for independence. Such potentially destabilizing factors as the IRA and the Blueshirts remained marginal phenomena with regard to their political appeal and were seen by the majority of the population as a security problem rather than as a matter of politics. It is thus reasonable to conclude that there was an overwhelming democratic consensus in interwar Ireland on all levels and in all segments of society. Under these circumstances, a radically different outcome to the crises of the 1930s appears to have been neither possible nor conceivable.

12

Italy: Early Crisis and Fascist Takeover

Marco Tarchi

1 Introduction

In the context of European parliamentary regimes between the world wars, there is one crucial question to ask in analysing the crisis of Italian democracy: why did the liberal Italian State collapse so early? Italy was not the only country where social conflicts, political disorder and economic depression exerted joint negative effects immediately after the First World War, but it was the first to surrender to the fascist challenge, ten years before the breakdown of Weimar Germany. The success of authoritarian forces in Italy was not the consequence of military intervention, but rather the outcome of a period of confused and intense democratic mass politics.

To answer this question one has to identify the structural elements (social cleavages, intermediate structures, political conflicts, cultural trends) of the crisis in Italian democracy, as well as the 'subjective' factors – the perceptions, intentions, strategic and/or tactical moves of the institutional and political actors – which influenced the political dynamics of the period.

The critical situation was the outcome of a multiplicity of closely related factors and so the crisis may be seen from several different perspectives. Some scholars divide it, as Bracher (1955) did in the case of Germany, into three periods: *loss of power*, *power vacuum* and *attainment of power*. Others concentrate their attention on the transformations of political society and distinguish the *loss of autonomy* from the subsequent *paralysis of political action* and from the *seizure of power* itself (Farneti 1975). But in the study of the Italian case it may be more appropriate to stress the connection between institutions, political society and civil society all through the critical period and, therefore, divide the overall process into three consecutive phases: *the crisis of political integration*, *the disintegration of social and political identities*, and *political re-integration*, brought about by coercive means after the breakdown of democracy.

In many respects, the consequences of the First World War were the main factors in the crisis which shook Italian democracy after 1918 and which led eventually to the Fascist victory of 1922. However, it would be difficult to explain why the breakdown of the liberal regime occurred so swiftly without

Italy



taking into account the development of mass politics and the late, troubled integration of some social groups into the national community.

2 Historical background: Italian democracy and the advent of mass politics

The *Risorgimento* and the subsequent unification of Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century had led neither to a social revolution nor to a popular mobilization which might have encouraged the identification of the masses with

the new national State or the formation of a common civic culture. The localism which had been inherited from the centuries-old tradition of administrative division and strong economic inequalities was reinforced by a system of limited democracy. Moreover, this system introduced into public life strong elements of apathy, clientelism and corruption which became prevalent over wide areas of the country and especially in the south. The regime was not supported by a genuinely inclusive coalition since both central and local government remained in the hands of a ruling class of notables whose power was rooted in the pre-industrial and quasi-feudal social organization of rural nineteenth-century Italy, and which was incapable of sustaining the impact of modernizing transformations (Ullrich 1980). In addition, the negative attitude of the Vatican hierarchy towards secular authority delayed the birth of a Catholic political party capable of articulating the interests of important segments of the population. Most representatives of the labour organizations – both Catholic and socialist – did not recognize the legitimacy of the unified bourgeois-democratic State. So, from the very beginning, the equilibrium of the parliamentary regime was unstable.

The gradual transition from a competitive oligarchy to mass democracy was also threatened by the structural conflicts within Italian society. All cleavages connected with the building of a national State and from industrial development were active and salient (Rokkan 1970a). The emancipation of the political class from civil forces, and its professional capacity to mediate conflicts, were underdeveloped; it lacked the basic resources to re-define the social tensions as problems that could be solved through compromise (Farneti 1975). As a result a large part of the experienced liberal élite tried, at the outbreak of war in 1914, to find some way to avoid any involvement in the hostilities; they were afraid of the social consequences of mass mobilization; for the same reasons many opponents of the 'old order' – republicans, revolutionary syndicalists, nationalists, and radical democrats – favoured immediate involvement.

Both the advocates and enemies of the liberal State were aware of the importance of the choice between neutrality and intervention. In fact the war acted as a trigger to the crisis, since it pushed some previously uninvolved social actors into political action and new demands were made on the institutions of government; political participation rose rapidly and threatened the slow consolidation of the democratic regime, it expanded ideological, social and political conflicts and altered or widened existing problems.

3 The social conditions of postwar Italian politics

3.1 The immediate effects of the war

The first phase of the crisis started immediately after the armistice. The enthusiastic expectations of the interventionist movement which had led to claims for a 'greater Italy' had soon been replaced by widespread disappointment. Although Trento and Trieste had been reconquered, the Allied refusal to carry out the secret London agreements (which acknowledged Italian rights to a large part of the Adriatic coast

including Fiume and Dalmatia) shocked public opinion and nurtured a sense of injustice. The popular writer and war hero Gabriele d'Annunzio gave expression to this when he spoke of a 'crippled victory', a phrase that immediately became the *Leitmotiv* of the postwar period.

At the end of the war the echo of the controversy between interventionists and neutralists was still alive and contributed both to the fragmentation of the Italian party system and to the polarization and radicalization of political competition. The legacy of the First World War was even more evident through the consequences of the wartime *general mobilization*. The psychological experience of military life had brought men from different worlds closer to each other; the community spirit had created common myths and aims for the veterans (Leed 1979). But the 'total war' had also acted as a socializing experience, creating a new political awareness for individuals who had never before been involved in public life.

Those from the countryside, who formed more than 40 per cent of the employed population in 1914 and who had been extensively drafted into the army, were most immediately affected by this process (Serpieri 1930). Courted by a ruling class that promised land reform to limit the unionization of the countryside, they were given a political role by electoral reform. By strengthening the social and political position of the peasants, the government tried to foster conservative attitudes and create a counter-weight to the ideological homogeneity of the working class and to stabilize the political balance of the postwar period. The success of the newly established Catholic Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI) in the 1919 elections, to a large extent a direct consequence of this reform, showed that this strategy worked.

If the rural population was the main beneficiary of political change, it was not the only one. The development of heavy industry had attracted workers

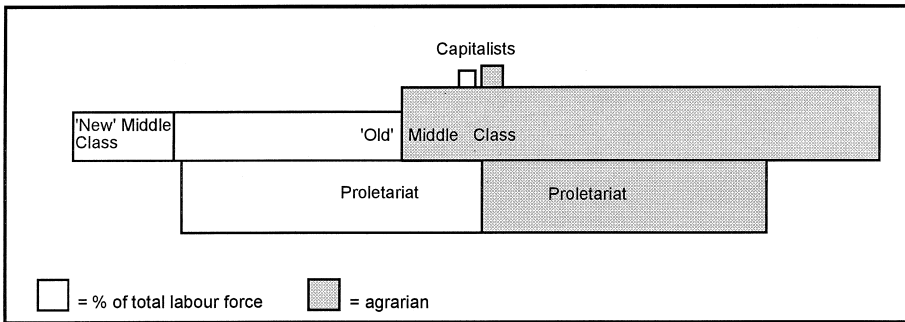
Table 12.1 Italy: class structure, 1921

Population (millions)	37.3
Employment rate	49.4
Rate of agrarian employment	55.7
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	0.5
Family farms	37
Agrarian proletariat	22
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	0.3
Old middle class	11.7
New middle class	5.2
Proletariat	23.2
Sub-proletariat	
Total	99.9

Sources: Statistisches Reichsam (1936: 141; Flora (1987: 555); Sylos Labini (1974: 155ff., table 1.1., table 1.3).

Note: The figures given for landlords and capitalists are rough estimates.

Figure 12.1 Italy: class structure, 1921



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 12.1.

to the larger urban areas – mainly women and adolescents – who contributed to a growing sense of class solidarity. These factors were to become crucial elements in the struggles of the following years. At the same time, the interventionist campaign and the call to arms urged intellectuals and students to take direct political action. Many of those who had served as reserve officers experienced responsibility and command for the first time, so the consequences of the First World War spread to the middle classes as a whole modifying their attitudes, status and economic conditions; they also had a growing numerical importance.

All through the war, official propaganda had given the nation a feeling of *union sacrée*. The end of hostilities revealed how fragile that image of unity was and the extent of fragmentation in Italian society. The efforts of ideological integration promoted by the ruling class clashed with the accumulated antagonisms that some of the population felt more acutely because of emergency measures, inflation and other economic consequences of war. The conflicts which had characterized Italian social life of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were aggravated and gave rise to some new ones too.

The war factor had already produced negative consequences for the stability of Italian politics in 1914, when neutrality was declared. Only after a long period of public debate, press campaigns, demonstrations and riots, had the liberal government decided to take sides with Britain, France and Russia against the Central Empires. Parties, newspapers and individuals formed two opposed groups. The socialist party (PSI), a majority of militants of Catholic organizations and several members of the governmental coalition, represented by Giolitti, had gathered under the banner of neutralism. Those in favour of intervention were a more heterogeneous group within which the reactionary and openly imperialistic expectations of nationalists were mixed with the revolutionary ideology of many dissidents on the Left – socialists who had split from the PSI, revolutionary syndicalists, republicans – and with the moderate attitude of the liberal-conservative wing of the government majority and of the ‘national Catholics’.

In spite of this confusion interventionism was a new, important cleavage which cut across the political spectrum and allowed the revolutionary and democratic wings to present the entry of Italy into the war as a success of the 'real country' over the 'legal country', that is to say as a victory of the anti-parliamentary forces (Vivarelli 1991).

3.2 The modification of social cleavages

The conflict between town and country, a traditional source of political and social tensions, was increased by the impact of the war. The call to arms depopulated the land, especially in the South, and compelled many women to move into the industrial labour market or to replace husbands and sons in agricultural work. Severe economic conditions brought general discontent both amongst the rural bourgeoisie and the farmers. In only three years wealth had moved from the agricultural to the industrial sector. On the other side, large segments of urban middle classes believed they were victims of farmers' 'egotism' and their dissatisfaction caused sporadic riots.

Furthermore, the unsatisfactory results of the Versailles peace conference reinforced the centre-periphery cleavage and created the conditions for a direct threat to the stability of institutions. After the armistice, Italy incorporated a number of ethnic minorities whose sense of Italian identity proved to be problematic and who contributed, through displaced nationalistic sentiments, to the growth of movements which stressed Italian patriotism. It was on these foundations that d'Annunzio built consent for his intervention in Fiume which represented an open challenge to the democratic regime (Ledeen 1975). The rejection of the corruption of central government in the 1919-21 period acted as a powerful focus for disloyalty to the liberal order and legal authorities in the irredentist periphery.

The recurrent onset of anti-clericalism in nationalist demonstrations, the attitudes of the Army General Staff and government declarations all through the war, as well as the secularizing effects of wartime experiences on popular behaviour, cumulatively produced an intensification of the organizational commitment of the Catholic movement. In March 1918, the *Confederazione Italiana dei Lavoratori* (CIL), a unified Christian labour union, was founded; in January 1919, the *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI) came into being. The direct entrance of confessional organizations into the political arena ended the gradual rapprochement of the Catholic electorate and the liberal parties that had been sanctioned by a special agreement in 1912, the so-called *patto Gentiloni*.

Last but not least, the First World War had produced a major transformation in the class struggle. The turnover and power of the large industrial corporations had risen as a consequence of the substantial increase in industrial production dictated by military needs. But the strength of trade unions had increased in parallel too owing to the numerical increase in the workforce. The example of the Russian Revolution radicalized and politicized the conflicts within factories, while the farm labourers were mobilized by the inability of liberal governments to carry out the oft-promised agrarian reforms. The fear of revolution provoked by the convergence

of rural and urban conflicts, instigated, but not always controlled by the maximalist left, was certainly a major factor in the crisis of Italian democracy; not only because it brought about the reaction of oligarchical and propertied groups but also because it caused the middle class, frightened and crushed between the upper bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to become part of the struggle and later to support the fascist movement (De Felice 1980; Gentile 1989).

Instead of transcending and transforming the contrasts which had been characteristic of social and political life since unification, the war complicated them, arranging some of the new actors along the old conflict lines and placing some others *between* them. The superimposition of new divisions on the old increased the pressure of social movements on political society and institutions. In addition, some ideological conflicts also interacted with social dissatisfaction. The class struggle was partly reinforced by the religious–secular cleavage, with the mobilization and activation of the Catholic population in rural areas, but it was also extensively affected by the split in the labour unions: conflict potential was increased by the rivalry between ‘white’ and ‘red’ organizations, which clashed more and more frequently after Autumn 1919. With its remarkable capacity for aggregation, the war cleavage enlarged the political space and created a place for new competitors (Linz 1980). This process started a phase of *expansion and multiplication of political arenas*, which developed between November 1918 and Autumn 1920.

4 Intermediate structures and identifications

4.1 The mobilization of social movements and interest groups

The multiplication of interest conflicts, the activism of new groups, the fluidity of political alignments, and the weakening of old liberal élites, which were unable to impose effective decisions on the contending groups (Hagtvet and Rokkan 1980) are all major factors in the crisis of Italian democracy. The dynamics of the process fit the crisis model proposed by Linz and others: in a first phase (1919–Autumn 1920) radicalization of conflicts, polarization, fragmentation and fractionalization of parties became more profound, participation and violence increased (Linz 1978; Morlino 1981). As a consequence, decisional inefficacy and the ineffectiveness of the coalition of actors who sustained the democratic regime came to a peak. In 1921–2, the instability of governments and a further deepening of political conflict, together with the failure of all attempts to preserve and consolidate the regime, caused a growth of violence and the politicization of neutral actors, eventually leading to the delegitimization of institutions. Compared to other cases of democratic crisis in interwar Europe, the main difference that emerges is related to the policies that the fascist movement followed when faced with the outbreak of conflicts and the subsequent loss of legitimacy by legal governments. It did not limit itself to violence by armed militias to neutralize some of the interests acting within the system; it promoted

and protected some others (mainly those of the middle classes) and tried to reassemble those mechanisms of political mediation which the social conflict of the immediate postwar period had seriously eroded. That is to say, it took advantage of the intense social mobilization of 1919–20 to legitimate itself as a shield against the disintegration of national community and lay the foundations for the new regime that it aimed at building (Lyttelton 1973).

The period of social unrest was characterized by radicalized conflicts on substantive issues, and by the increasing difficulty faced by the liberal old ruling class in forming governmental coalitions. But some other phenomena also influenced the crisis of political integration. In the field of material expectations the logic of class blocks was giving way to a progressive differentiation of group interests and the call to national identity beyond 'sectarian' divisions created still more partisan loyalties. A growing part of population withdrew into class consciousness, religious creed, ideology or ethnic culture. Parliament and political élites lost their room to manoeuvre and attempts at mediation or compromise were replaced by the direct action of interest groups.

One of the most relevant features of the sudden transformation of Italian politics during this phase was the introduction of new actors: the younger generation, students, intellectuals, new middle-class sectors such as white-collar workers, farmers, small entrepreneurs, and retailers. For many of these, demobilization represented a sort of cultural shock, which started a range of negative reactions: frustration because the abilities, created in military life, were not recognized by the labour market; aversion to the selfish game of materialistic interests; lack of esteem for politicians who appeared to be responsive only towards larger social groups. The feeling of an inexorable decline in the parliamentary system drove many demobilized officers to organizations that openly intended to demolish the liberal regime, groups which progressively expanded into a wider, more educated, milieu. The fear of a loss of status made these groups available for mobilization against the system (see Salvatorelli 1925; De Felice 1975).

Lacking the resources and status characteristics they required to be successful within the old-fashioned liberal parties, too imbued with secularization to be attracted by a confessional organization, and alien to the class dialectics of socialism, these groups first tried to take part in the reform of public life through the movement of organized ex-servicemen. This attempt to acquire political influence was a widespread European trend. But despite initial successes – the creation of an independent political movement that claimed a membership of 500,000 in 1920, a network of associated organizations, mass demonstrations, and the occupation of uncultivated lands – it did not achieve success in the 1919 election. But its impact was decisive in the postwar period as it modified the terms of political competition and created a new pole of collective identification, it expanded the audience for nationalist ideas and launched a new political style that deeply influenced the fascist movement (Gentile 1975; Ward 1975; Sabbatucci 1974; O'Sullivan 1983).

4.2 Old and new actors of class conflict

This modification of the divide between political and civil society was the product of the unusual social fluidity of the postwar period. Because of economic problems, unions experienced not only an increase in membership – 548,039 in 1918, 2,321,062 in 1919, 3,309,010 in 1920 (Pappalardo 1989) – but also sharper internal divisions. These channelled workers into a movement characterized by the coexistence of hegemonic powers and induced each organization to consolidate its representative monopoly in specific sectors instead of trying to recruit new members from somewhere else.

The mobilization of the lower classes all through the *biennio rosso* (1919–20) was characterized by polarization and radicalization. Making use of its stronger influence acquired within the CGdL, the maximalist faction of the PSI repeatedly put its own aims before the specific interests of the unions. Strikes were often called for political reasons and rose to a level that induced the press to coin the neologism *scioperomania* ('strike mania'). Often they were not concentrated on a few concrete or achievable goals, but wasted their efforts by diffusing them in a number of fields so that many people were indirectly and negatively involved in the troubles.

Even though it went beyond the normal wage claims and raised great expectations on the Left, the radical action of the lower classes did not produce a revolution and won only minor improvements in working conditions. But this 'offensive' mobilization produced some unforeseen results such as the coordination of the middle class in 'defensive' leagues and the entry of demobilized veterans into social conflicts. This combination of factors contributed to the growth of a general feeling of *permanent emergency* which reduced confidence in the democratic system and helped an acceptance of the violent fascist reaction. Fascism was, however, until 1920 only a small, fringe movement, with a restricted influence, whose leader had suffered a defeat in the 1919 elections (De Felice 1965). It took the *counter-mobilization* of the petty and middle bourgeoisie (Germani 1975) to offer it a crucial opportunity for success.

The rise of the middle classes was in fact the other main aspect of the mobilization of civil society during the first phase of the Italian crisis. If industrial conflict was primarily ended by the Europe-wide wave of recession and unemployment towards the end of 1920, the outcome of the agrarian class warfare was decided by the crucial transformations of landed property, which caused a retrenchment of the rural proletariat and the birth of a large petty bourgeoisie of farmers. After the armistice, the wartime slogan of 'land for peasants' changed to a programme which saw the redistribution of large estates as a policy to gain the rural vote. With different interpretations, the principle of compulsory settlement of uncultivated lands was defended by the majority of deputies, veterans associations, influential newspapers, and Chambers of Commerce; this pressure persuaded the government to accept it and create a special agency to select and allocate lands to cooperatives of ex-servicemen. Meanwhile, many tenants and sub-tenants, aided by inflation and fear of expropriations, could buy the land they cultivated from the owners. Thus, between 1918 and 1921 the

percentage of landowners in agricultural population grew from 21.2 to 35.6, the proportion of tenants and farmers remained relatively stable (30.9 per cent to 26.3 per cent), and the percentage of labourers and day workers fell from 47.9 per cent to 38.1 per cent.

The new class of small landowners, larger and more pugnacious than the the old agrarian bourgeoisie, and suspicious of the socialist programme of land collectivization, kept away from the harsh struggle which involved red leagues and large landowners, mainly in the Po Valley and Tuscany. When Leftist organizations decided to spread the conflict outside large estates it decided to react in self-defence, at first by placing its trust in Catholic leagues, then later, as the danger persisted, by joining the fascist ranks and by contributing to the organization of the *squadre d'azione* (Snowden 1986; Zangheri 1960; Vivarelli 1991; Cardoza 1982).

5 The central political system

The rise of socialist and Catholic mass parties further worsened the situation, since these movements, by their refusal to bargain over matters connected with their basic values, excluded themselves from the political market and increased the influence of the electorate's impenetrable and incoercible sectors. As a consequence, the multiplication of non-negotiable issues weakened the coalition potential of all parties and diminished the role of institutions: the aggregation of group interests through parliamentary decisions became impossible.

This stalemate was a direct consequence of the uncertain state of the Italian democracy prior to the critical postwar period. Even if it was formally inaugurated in 1861, its consolidation was still rather weak in terms of the legitimacy, efficacy, and effectiveness acquired by the dominant coalition (Morlino 1980). Because of the low legitimacy of the executive, the absence of real overarching structures acted as an accelerator of the crisis. The monarchy, which was a symbol of national identity and the constitutional arbiter of political competition, supported the status quo and was hostile both to the Catholic movement and to the PSI. The higher ranks of the military and the bureaucracy were officially politically neutral, but their loyalty to the State coincided with a strict attachment to the king, who was also the commander-in-chief of the army; they generally shared the conservative views of the Court. At the local level, the administrative system based on prefects, appointed by the government in every chief town of a province, was a powerful instrument which limited the freedom of action of the municipalities and controlled popular protest.

Through this strongly centralized administration, the old ruling class of notables tried to remedy its own weakness in terms of elective legitimacy. The instability of the cabinets made the regulation of conflicts by appropriate long-term policies almost impossible, and so it more and more used the potentially coercive resources at its disposal to ensure the desired results; and sometimes this

strategy induced State officials to form provisional alliance with actors – landowners, ‘civic unions’, nationalist paramilitary militias – which showed clear anti-democratic intentions.

On the other hand, the democratic potential (Lepsius 1978) of the Italian regime was extremely limited in the parliamentary arena too. Most Italian parties had never acted as mass movements, and the more developed socialists and populists were deeply dependent on social organizational networks. So, of the 508 deputies elected in November 1919, only the 156 Liberal Democrats were openly in favour of the existing political structure. Their governmental allies in the postwar period were either ‘tactical’ or ‘reluctant’ democrats. Some, like the right-wing liberals and the agrarians, hoped for a direct political role for the monarchy; others – radicals, social reformists and chiefly the PPI – did not agree on substantive matters with the old liberal élite but used the influence of their Cabinet representatives to increase their electoral audience and resources. PSI and PRI, and even ex-servicemen, were openly ‘semi-loyal’ towards the institutions of the state.

6 The development of the crisis situation

6.1 Political families and interest groups

The alliance between the rural middle class and fascism was a turning-point in the crisis (Baglieri 1980; Roberts 1980), the decisive factor that transferred the social conflict into politics. Until the summer of 1920, only the Socialist Party

Table 12.2 Italy: government composition, 1919–22

Duration	Government	Parties in government	Percentage of seats	Duration (days)
23.01.1919–21.05.1920	Nitti	Libl. DemL. Rad. Sen. Rif. IndCath.	51.5	333
21.05.1920–15.06.1920	Nitti	Libl. DemL. Rad. Sen. PPI.	37.6	25
15.06.1920–4.07.1921	Giolitti	DemL. Libl. Rad. PPI. Sen. Rif.	52.0	384
4.07.1921–26.02.1922	Bonomi	Rif. DSoc. DemL. PPI. Lib. Ind.	55.1	237
26.02.1922–1.08.1922	Facta	DemL. DSoc. Rif. Agr. PPI. Lib. Ind.	68.8	156
1.08.1922–31.10.1922	Facta	DemL. DSoc. Rif. PPI. Ind.	46.2	91
		Cabinets’ average tenure		204

Source: Bartolotta (1971: 144–63); Vivarelli (1991: 911–24).

Abbreviations:

- Libl. = Independent Liberals (Members of the Gruppo Misto)
- PPI. = Partito Popolare Italiano (Catholic)
- DemL. = Democrazia Liberale
- Lib. = Liberaldemocratici
- Rad. = Radicali
- DSoc. = Democrazia Sociale
- Sen. = Independent Senators
- Agr. = Agrarian Party
- Rif. = Reformist Socialists
- Ind. = Independents (non-MPs)
- IndCath. = Independent Catholic MPs.

had invested massive resources in the class struggle. The liberal ruling class had adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude: the two Nitti cabinets (23 June 1919–14 June 1920) and, above all, the governmental coalition presided by Giolitti (15 June 1920–3 July 1921) had deliberately avoided meddling in this issue. Catholic organizations were obliged to take a defensive attitude and concentrated their efforts on the improvement of their large network of associations. Even the attention of the anti-democratic Right, although it had criticized the 'anti-national' attitude of socialists incessantly and had often lent its support to bourgeois reaction, was mainly oriented towards the problems of irredentism. But an important indication of how the expectations of the lower classes, and the fear of revolution, were modifying Italian political culture and behaviour was provided by the results of the November 1920 municipal elections, which represents the dividing line between the two phases of the democratic crisis (Maier 1975). The success of PSI and PPI, which together achieved control of 45.8 per cent of town councils and of regions like Emilia, Tuscany, Lombardy, Venetia and Piedmont, created strong polarization throughout the country. Only in the southern areas and in the big cities, where it had promoted or accepted alliances with the 'order parties', was the old liberal élite able to defeat its socialist and popular competitors. Significantly, the best results for the Right coincided with increases in voter turnout (Giusti 1922), which seemed to indicate that members of the middle classes had objected to government inactivity and had mostly abstained from the polls.

The electoral results showed that the liberals had lost the confidence of a large part of conservative and moderate opinion, and that a serious challenge to their representative capacity was growing. Oligarchical and propertied groups were still willing to collaborate with the ruling class, and intended to exploit fascist coercive resources temporarily just to contain socialist action and counter-attack; but small landowners often enlisted in *squadre d'azione* and agreed with the fascist programme, which not only promised to re-establish social peace at any cost but also aimed at the replacement of representatives and institutions of 'old' Italy with the spokesmen of the 'new' nation moulded by the war.

The double insertion of Mussolini's fascist movement into the Italian political dynamics – on the one hand as an indispensable partner of liberal-constitutional forces to repel the assault of PSI and PPI, and on the other as the representative of new actors, mobilized by the effects of the First World War and by the fear of a collectivist revolution – was the almost obvious consequence of the new political space created by mass politics. Italian fascism was certainly a late-comer both among European mass parties and within the Italian party system (Linz 1980), but at the same time 'an "earlycomer" as a non-democratic response to mobilization of lower classes ... the first fascist party' (Morlino 1990, 4); it was a completely new phenomenon. The character of the late-comer improved its image in the eyes of many potential followers, as one could not regard it as responsible for the degeneration of political life; and as a new-comer, it exerted through the youth of its leaders (Linz 1976) and its incessant reference to the «rights of the victory», a strong attraction on the war generation. Because of its

Table 12.3 Italy: electoral results, 1919–24

	16.11.1919		15.05.1921		5.04.1924	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Radical Party	1.9	12				
Socialist Party	32.3	156	24.7	123	5.9	24
Republican Party	2.1	9	1.9	6	1.6	7
Independent Socialists	0.6	1	0.6	1		
Reformist Socialist Party	1.4	6			4.9	22
Economic Party	1.5	7	0.8	5		
Ex-Servicemen	4.1	20	1.2	7		
Popular Party	20.5	100	20.4	108	9.1	39
Communist Party			4.6	15	3.8	19
Fascist Party			0.4	37	66.5	375
Slovene Minority			0.6	5		
German Association			0.7	4		
Sardinian Action Party			0.5	3		
Others			0.4		5.4	34
Seats total		508		535		535

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 258).

popular component, nationalist attitudes and participatory characteristics it was seen by the right wing of the ruling class as a useful counter-weight to the growth of revolutionary expectations within the lower classes, but the aims of the leadership of the *Fasci di combattimento* largely exceeded that role.

The social warfare of the 1919–20 period caused a disintegration of previous collective identities and enabled fascism to act all through the second phase of the crisis as a *protest catch-all party* (Linz 1980), collecting from anywhere the discontent aroused by increasing disorder. Through their action, the ‘black shirts’ did not aim to restore the status quo, but to stand as candidates for leadership by coercively demobilizing the conflicts that the democratic regime was by then unable to mediate. Stressing the danger of anarchy related to an uncontrolled proliferation of pluralism, and opposing the myth of class with the myth of nation, they made every effort to look like a sheet anchor to the groups which did not feel involved in the struggle and were afraid to be swept away by it. As Rokkan and Lipset have pointed out, the solution they proposed for social conflict ‘aimed at *verzuijing* but wanted only one pillar in the nation’ (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 23).

The fascist message was potentially addressed to the whole national community, but in fact it was received mainly by the lower middle classes who were exposed to a loss of identity and to the danger of being crushed between social and confessional blocks (Petersen 1976; Berezin 1990). We have mentioned the situation of small landowners; as for the urban middle classes, they were unable to act in conformity with the logic of collective movements and their social and

political weight was small, as industrialization, urbanization and inflation had deprived them of any homogeneity and created deep divisions among different professional groups. The petty and middle urban bourgeoisie realized the disadvantage of internal divisions in comparison with the political cohesion of the working class and of big industry, but that perception was not sufficient to reassemble its fragmented interests on political grounds all through the expansive phase of the crisis; but it fomented a tough hostility toward democratic governments among its members, whose attitude was restricted to the issuing of sporadic protectionist measures (Sylos Labini 1974).

The first step of the urban middle classes towards a position of 'semi-loyalty' (Linz 1978) to the democratic regime was the adoption of a corporatist mentality and a withdrawal from the logic of the political market. Instead of trying to win over some of the fractions of the constitutional centre to their cause they organized a myriad of 'civic unions' and 'defence leagues', chiefly to participate in local elections, but also in order to prevent and/or mitigate the effects of social conflict and to propagate a national patriotic ideology with anti-parliamentary overtones. Seeing that their efforts were ineffective, increasing numbers of these groups began to sympathize with fascism, which acted for the middle classes as a functional substitute for an almost non-existent process of syndicalization, protecting their status, aggregating and unifying their aspirations and offering them virtual representation within the political arena and the promise of a preferential role within the corporative structure of a future 'new State' (Gentile 1989).

The inadequacy of the ruling class in the new situation created by the unforeseen explosion of mass politics became even more evident during the second phase of the crisis (1921–2), which was characterized by the disintegration of the

Table 12.4 Italy: membership of 'Fasci di Combattimento', 1919–22

Month/Year	Members	Basic units
December 1919	870	31
December 1920	20,615	88
March 1921	80,476	317
April 1921	98,399	471
May 1921	187,098	1,001
June 1921	204,506	1,192
July 1921	209,385	1,228
August 1921	212,919	1,253
September 1921	213,631	1,268
October 1921	217,072	1,311
November 1921	217,256	1,318
December 1921	218,453	1,333
April 1922	219,792	1,381
May 1922	322,310	2,124
December 1922	299,876	3,424

Source: De Felice (1965: 8–11, 510–11).

old social and political identities. After the end of industrial conflict, a political solution was still possible, but the fragmentation and fractionalization of the party system frustrated all attempts at preventing the breakdown of democracy.

One of the reasons for the extreme difficulty in finding a compromise resided in the previously mentioned low democratic potential of the Italian postwar political system. Those parties which had dominated the scene before 1914 were not ready to receive the inputs of new actors, since they were either deeply penetrated by interest groups and lobbyists or characterized by an inflexible and exclusivist subcultural background. From the beginning of the century the liberal political class had tried to absorb the effects of the mobilization of new popular strata, but only by using opportunistic tactics, and alternating some measures of welfare policy and repression with clientelism and advances to the moderate PSI parliamentary group. No attempt had been made to build a structured party which could channel the energies of an already well-developed bourgeoisie, and which was willing to stress its importance in political terms.

That the lack of adaptation to mass politics in the party system as a whole, particularly of the parties which formed its centre, was the major political reason for democratic breakdown can be seen better if one looks at the gap between the evolution of Italian society and that of its parliamentary representation. In comparison with the Parliament which had voted for the war declaration, the new *Camera* elected in November 1919 was greatly transformed: the number of socialist seats had tripled (from 52 to 156); 100 deputies of the PPI had taken the place of the 29 clerical conservatives elected in 1913; 20 deputies had been elected in ex-servicemen lists; the liberal democrats had lost their majority within the assembly. The turnover of deputies was unprecedented: over 60 per cent of them had never been elected before (Cotta 1982). Nevertheless, only two parties, the PSI and the PPI, both representative of the old cleavages, had really increased their presence; the success of the ex-servicemen movement was less than its presence at the mass level; and the seven deputies of the Partito Economico (four of whom acted as spokesmen for agrarian interests) could not be considered a realistic expression of middle-class ferment. As for the 225 deputies of the Centre, they had been elected by the old-fashioned association of notables or by small parties without any solid social base.

As a consequence the parties represented in the new Parliament were not able to find a solution to the problem of the balance between the particular interests of their electorates and the exigencies of the common good. The creation of coalitions on single issues became independent of the governmental dynamics of the democratic system; exploiting waves of protest these coalitions stopped filtering the demands of social actors and began to bring them indiscriminately to the attention of executive, thus making agenda-setting still more difficult. The overload in decision-making caused by the inadequate adaption of institutions to the changed social and cultural cleavages of postwar society, was another step towards the breakdown of democracy. The discontent of groups whose interests were neglected by the non-responsiveness of the political class drastically reduced their loyalty to democracy and transformed them into potential fellow-travellers of the fascists.

Instead of mediating conflicting demands, the party system amplified them so that Parliament became the forum for expressing social antagonism and lost its adjudicative capabilities. Lobbying and cross-vetoes increased the pressure of social actors on the institutional framework and paralyzed government decision-making, so raising general dissatisfaction.

Only a strong, enlarged governmental coalition could have put an end to this but the conditions for such a development were absent. To ensure relative stability in their cabinets, Nitti and Giolitti were obliged to ask for, and obtain, the support of the PPI. But the Catholic Party was more interested in the defence of its electorate's interests through the control of strategic ministries, like Agriculture and Education, than in the reinforcement of the system: its loyalty was conditional on the adoption of specific measures and did not extend beyond the limits of its confessional subculture. The PSI was deeply divided on which attitude to follow and the wish of the parliamentary group to collaborate was always opposed by the intransigence of the party leadership. A 'red-white' coalition between socialists and Catholics was impossible because of the competition between the two factions, which often developed into open conflict. So, the liberal centre was still master of the situation but, in order to avoid disavowal from allied groups and/or from internal factions, its favourite politics was an evasive one: despite the spread of violence, it confined the executive to an attitude 'above parties' and entrusted the formulation of policies to the informal bargaining of single deputies and pressure groups.

6.2 Economic developments of the crisis and political coalitions

The old liberal conception of the linkage between social conflict and political action was realised again in late 1920. Giolitti did his best to satisfy the conflicting demands by the passage of laws on the renewal of labourers collective agreements and on the nominal refunding of stocks to the bearer. But contrary to what he thought, the inflationary effects of these measures (most of all a rise of 50 per cent in prices of consumer goods in a few months) involved the breaking of the traditional partnership between some sectors of middle classes and the old ruling class. On the other hand, neither Giolitti's cabinet nor the succeeding liberal governments were able to prevent the economic depression, which saw a decrease in GNP, a worsening of the balance of payments, with a growth both in the cost of living and of unemployment.

Defeated in the area of social policy the liberal élite tried to regain legitimacy by re-establishing public order; but the decline of civil coexistence had gone too far. Realizing that the attention of the nationalist sectors of public opinion had been attracted by other issues, the government could use force to reconquer Fiume after a naval bombardment in December 1920. The situation of a struggle which pitted left against right in a sort of undeclared civil war was completely different. After the end of the factory occupations and the decline in rural demonstrations and strikes, the reaction of the middle and upper-middle classes had modified the terms of the conflict. Fascists and socialists fought directly for

Table 12.5 Italy: economic and social indicators, 1913-39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
GDP (m. L)	21498	76449	103775	107801	115015	122176	126557	156677	165835	145818	145810	145742	130813	118343	114989	107536	108070	121785	132143	155779	167378	185362
NDP (m. L)	19932	70324	95709	99226	105883	112284	115627	143032	151284	133263	133602	133290	119052	107674	104860	97584	98090	110637	119993	142022	152268	168601
in 1938 prices	88697	114635	118641	103413	111400	118134	118020	129644	127759	123042	133615	100367	120135	121306	120893	119306	126526	140675	141640	152659	152268	164892
NDP/cap. (L/a)	564	1969	2666	2742	2772	2911	2970	3643	3821	3338	3317	3282	2907	2605	2516	2323	2316	2591	2789	3277	3485	3819
NDP (m. US-\$)	1048	3699	5034	5219	5569	5906	6082	7523	7958	7010	7027	7011	6262	5664	5516	5133	5160	5820	6312	7470	8009	8868
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	30	104	140	144	146	153	156	192	201	176	174	173	153	137	132	122	122	136	147	172	183	201
Population (thousands)	35351	35717	35900	36189	38196	38571	38927	39265	39590	39926	40281	40607	40956	41339	41677	42005	42352	42693	43020	43341	43695	44148
IND PROD (1913 = 100)	100	104	104	95	107	116	128	146	146	140	154	158	150	135	135	144	140	151	151	175	175	191
COST (1913 = 100)	100	273	359	427	423	423	436	491	527	482	445	591	441	395	386	364	345	350	377	414	445	455
Unemployment (thousands)	-1134	-15048	-8647	-6463	-6096	-6096	-5008	-7926	-7214	-4741	-7361	-6419	-5228	-1433	-1456	-1441						
B. o. Trade (m. L)	95	-7418	-10870	-5039	-2428	-1541	386	-1187	-1034	-696	-3252	-2402	-1520	1768	772	-568	-627	-1590	261	-1992	-547	-9
Union Membership (thous.)	648	2321	3309	3127	1297	1663	2380	2531														
Lost working days (millions)	22325	30569	8180	6917	296																	
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.	100	113	122	135	154	147	162	166	158	142	142	152	147	159	159	147	159	159	184	184	201	201
Cost of Living	100	99	99	102	115	123	113	104	138	103	93	90	85	81	82	88	81	82	88	97	104	107
Unemployment	100	107	113	117	144	152	134	135	134	120	109	106	98	99	112	121	143	153	170			
NDP	100	107	113	117	144	152	134	135	134	120	109	106	98	99	112	121	143	153	170			
Strikes	100	85	4																			

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 62-3, 353f); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 167ff., 357, 744ff., 818ff); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 143); Cassa Nazionale per le Assicurazioni Sociali (1925: 703).
 Note: L (lira) is US\$0.0526; GDP and NDP are at current market prices.

territorial control; radicalization had reached its peak and violence, terrorism and the formation of paramilitary groups were no longer clandestine. Open conflict became more and more frequent and the number of people actively involved in the struggle increased continuously (De Felice 1966).

Making a late attempt to redress its ineffectiveness, the liberal government at first employed force against both extremist movements. With the agreement of the king, Giolitti gave the prefects stronger instructions, and police forces started to act punitively against riots. However this initiative was soon frustrated by the growing politicization of the neutral interests which should have protected the democratic State from its enemies. Even if the higher ranks of the army were too divided to be seriously tempted by projects for a *coup d'état* and their allegiance to the monarchy was beyond dispute, fascism had created open and clear connections with many subaltern officers and NCOs. It could also rely on the undeclared sympathy of a large number of middle-level members of both the civil and military administration; restlessness and hesitation were spreading among the armed forces and prevented effective repression of the troubles.

Since coercive action did not yield results and the authority of the State was even more openly challenged, the liberal élite made one last attempt to save democracy through the institutional expedient of snap elections. Giolitti intended (i) to exploit the internal difficulties of the PSI, which had just seen the split of the communist wing and was deeply divided between reformist and maximalist tendencies; and, (ii) to co-opt Mussolini's movement into the conservative ranks under the umbrella of a 'national block', which also included nationalist, right liberal and agrarian candidates, and so restrict fascist electoral success through the preferential vote. The Parliament elected in November 1919 was therefore dissolved after 18 months of chaotic activity and new elections were held on 15 May 1921.

The results of the polls disappointed the government's hopes and demonstrated that, if in an already critical moment 'an atmosphere of general struggle takes place and the groups which stay behind all parties safeguard their exclusive and immediate interests, then fractionalization can not be avoided' (Morlino 1981: 46). The atomization of the political system and the internal divisions of its actors also caused alienation amongst the electorate, a major change in alignments among parties, and contributed to the change in the democratic regime from instability to breakdown. Altogether, the liberal centre elected a mere 159 deputies (29.7 per cent of parliamentary seats, 9 per cent less than in 1919); the *popolari* gained only 8 seats and socialists lost 33, but the weight of the anti-regime parties was increased by the entry of 35 fascists, 15 communists, 10 nationalists and 27 semi-loyal agrarians. In addition the fractionalization of liberal forces was at its most extreme: in the 1921 Parliament, the ex-constitutional deputies were divided into three different groups; in 1922 they belonged to five fractions, and the growing distance between the interests and values of each of them hindered the convergence around common strategies and programmes of a coalition.

6.3 The dynamics of the second phase of the crisis: actions and reactions

Another warning emerged from the failure of Giolitti's attempt at democratic recovery: it showed that fascism had already legitimized itself as a challenger to the declining liberal regime. The trend of the crisis in 1919–20 had eliminated any opportunity of finding a governmental solution based solely on a parliamentary coalition for three reasons: (1) the semi-permanent unrest orchestrated by mass movements had promoted a series of extra-institutional actors who decided to play their cards; (2) while the specific weight of parliamentary representatives in the process of decision-making was waning, the influence of those holding non-electoral resources was rising; and (3) due to its organizational and activist potential, to the support of economic forces and newspapers, and to the complicity of many bureaucrats and army officers, fascism counted in the country for much more than in the parliamentary assembly.

Even if the strength of fascist and nationalist movement was a major problem, the fragmentation of the Italian party system was itself of great importance for the breakdown of democracy. The crumbling of the liberal majority which had ruled the country without interruption since unification in 1861 was a major factor in the worsening crisis, and Giolitti, aware of the danger of a political vacuum, invested a great part of his prestige in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain the collaboration of the PSI's reformist fraction. After the fall of its cabinet, the liberal centre, which had always been an unstable and not very ideological grouping, disintegrated into factions and lost the initiative.

If the old liberal élite suffered a major setback, none of the other parties knew how to take advantage of the situation and bring about a realignment of political forces and a new majority. Both *popolari* and socialists had internal divisions, so that any decision they could take to support specific coalitions or policies was exposed to the danger of a sudden loss of support or was contingent on bargaining between the party's deputies and its leadership.

The Catholic PPI was divided from the beginning into four fractions: a pragmatic Centre, a Right close to landowners' interests, a left composed of peasant syndicalists, and an 'intégriste' and populist wing (Jacini 1951). Each of these groups possessed a strong identity, solid social roots and resources which enabled them to carry on a permanent internal fight for influence as long as the party kept its freedom of action. The common religious sub-culture acted as an adhesive and prevented splits, but differences of opinion compelled PPI policy to fluctuate between anti-liberalism and governmental alliances, anti-socialism and dreams of 'great coalition' with the PSI's reformist wing. Between 1919 and 1922 the Catholic Party played the role of a pivot in all cabinets because of its ideological heterogeneity, but at the same time this prevented the establishment of stable coalitions, with long-term programmes.

As Farneti (1975) has stressed, the PPI and the PSI shared an important feature: in both parties, parliamentary fractions represented the opinions of the electorate, whereas the executive voiced membership feelings; so the

distance between their respective attitudes reflected a national cleavage and confirmed the failure of political society to re-equilibrate the conflicts of civil society. Of course, in the socialist case internal fragmentation and disagreements on tactics and strategy did not originate from the heterogeneity of the followers but from different degrees of ideological rigidity. Although it was not strong enough to prevent divisions and splits, the class character of the party limited its potential electoral expansion in a period of great social transformation: at the height of the crisis the total vote for the socialist parties, including the PCd'I, dropped from 32.3 per cent (1919) to 29.3 per cent (1922), and the decrease was greatest in the large cities of northern and central Italy, where the mobilization of the middle classes was more evident. The situation was not improved by the communist split of 1921, which caused a haemorrhage of militants and did not push the party towards the centre where it could profit to some extent by the irresolution which afflicted moderate democratic forces. The incompatibility between the right and the left wings was so profound that no agreement on a single line of conduct was possible. When at last (October 1922) the reformists decided to split and create a new party, the PSU, this did not cause much reaction because of the gravity of the hour. It did not attract the attention of the political community, which was fast moving towards the right, nor did it open up possibilities in a Parliament whose options were conditioned by the pressure of external agents.

7 The actualization of the crisis and the forces involved

7.1 The narrowing of the political arena

After Giolitti's resignation, the image of the democratic regime deteriorated further with a loss of decision-making efficacy and a further decline in legitimacy. This time, the main problem was a political one: the peak of social conflict had passed; unemployment and inflation were under control, but the crisis had eliminated all available solutions and no alternative leadership had emerged. As the multiplication and disaggregation of interests and demands deprived the parties of any aggregative potential, many of the problems on the parliamentary agenda proved to be insoluble. As a result, the legislative assembly began to place its confidence in single-issue governments, 'coalitions of ministers' based on unstable majorities, whose composition changed according to the problems they were facing.

To solve the most urgent problem, that of the re-establishment of order, the Italian Parliament chose as prime minister a deputy who had not been elected in the 'constitutional' lists – the social reformist Ivanoe Bonomi. Due to his political origins – he had been a member of the PSI until 1912, and had chosen the interventionist tendency two years later – Bonomi was the most suitable person to mediate between fascists and socialists, and in fact he spent most of his energy in such an attempt; but the authority of the State was by then so weak that his cabinet

was not in a position to impose a truce on the parties involved; so it tried to foster direct negotiations between them to arrange a 'pacification pact'.

Although this revealed the inability of government to mould the political environment and decide the priority of its actions autonomously, the proposed agreement was the most effective attempt at re-consolidation accomplished by the democratic élite during the second phase of the crisis. Being unable to put together a large dominant coalition to sustain the regime or to propose an attractive compromise to the vast and powerful anti-system forces, Bonomi tried to sow discord among them, relying on the discontent stirred up by the high costs of a civil war. At first his initiative met with success. Fascists, as well as socialists, had consumed a large amount of energy and resources in their duel, but neither of them had overwhelmed its enemy, and even if the spread of their violence had decreased the legitimacy of the old order, it had not affirmed a new one. The further they went with their 'private war', the stronger the risk became that the middle classes – who longed for social peace – and the working class – who were fascinated by the idea of revolution – would be disappointed and decide to look for other spokesmen. For this reason, the suggestion of a truce, which would allow both movements to concentrate forces to achieve new and more ambitious goals, was welcomed by moderate leaders; in contrast, the extremists refused to accept it and denounced the danger of neutralization that was hidden behind the poisoned gift. Because of its weak internal institutionalization, fascism was especially shaken by the proposal. When the local leaders of armed militias took sides against Mussolini's acceptance of the pact the movement found itself on the verge of a split. Only the refusal of its charismatic leader to submit to the mutiny of 'hierarchs', his provisional withdrawal and the resumption of conflict – which frustrated the substance of the agreement – could change the situation.

The aftermath of the failure of the pacification pact brought the regime to a virtual standstill. Political initiative had passed to the disloyal opposition. Anxiety was growing in the army and in the court too. The loss of executive legitimacy deepened the centre-periphery cleavage; many local administrations refused to carry out government orders or were attacked by fascist militias which replaced mayors, dissolved town councils and threatened to occupy towns. So the authority of prefects and police forces had to be reinforced and the emergency atmosphere spread rapidly. Government instability was by no means a minor aspect of the crisis. The average duration of the first six governments of postwar Italy was of 204 days, and in 1921–2 it declined: Bonomi's cabinet lasted 237 days, Facta's first cabinet 156, his second only 91 (see Table 12.2).

Bonomi's resignation was a sign of the progressive marginalization of the parliamentary arena within the Italian political system. If Giolitti had decided to retire in spite of the vote of confidence he obtained from the *Camera*, the social reformist leader was compelled to surrender by another extra-parliamentary factor, his inability to control social and political unrest. As Parliament was no longer the centre of decision-making, parties dictated their demands: in order to

obtain the support of PPI deputies for his first cabinet, Facta was compelled to accept Catholic claims for confessional schools in advance. Absenteeism increased and extremists used the floor of the House as a platform for propaganda. The undermining of the legitimacy of representative institutions was the first act in the breakdown of Italian democracy.

Government action was also handicapped by growing polarization on the streets and at the level of 'invisible politics'. The ideological conflict revolving around the crucial issues of public order and national integration altered the old social coalitions and monopolized the political game. The democratic concept of representation, based on the relation between control and responsibility, and articulated in a plurality of competing arenas and actors (Parliament, parties, interest groups, etc.), was challenged by the fascist suggestion of 'virtual' and organic representation. This provided only one focus ('the Nation') and simplified proceedings for conflict resolution which was submitted to the sole and unquestionable authority of the State.

Faced with this critical situation, the liberal ruling class tried, after the failure of Bonomi's attempt, to find a solution through a change in the fundamental rules of the democratic game. But it lacked both the force and the firmness required in the emergency climate. During the last eight months of the crisis, Facta planned to give the executive a free hand and to co-opt some semi-loyal nationalist forces in order to enlarge the institutions' room for manoeuvre. The official political arena was therefore restricted by the exclusion of a majority of deputies and liberal leaders from decision-making, and another unofficial, secret and reduced arena took its place (Linz 1978). With their informal meeting and bargaining, the extra-parliamentary actors aimed to reduce the temperature of political struggle by sterilizing mass politics and entrusting the task of mediating between public opinion and institutions to a few influential personalities.

7.2 The widening of the extra-parliamentary arena

The efficacy of these stop-gap arrangements was limited by the simultaneous enlargement of the political arena through the entry of other extra-parliamentary actors, mobilized by the disloyal opposition (Dobry 1986). The appointment of Facta, whose government was tolerated by Parliament only through the personal agreement of the leaders of diverse fractions, did not make a positive impression on the large sectors of the middle classes which had not found an appropriate representation within the party system. Public order deteriorated every day and the disintegration of the moderate forces peaked: Giolitti's and Nitti's followers were disposed to co-opt socialists and populists into the governmental coalition; De Nava's liberal democrats had chosen a 'wait-and-see' attitude; Salandra's conservative wing and the Democrazia Sociale deputies were resolutely shifting to the Right. For many the belief was growing that pluralism was only a luxury which was bad for the preservation of order and civic harmony. Fascism offered a clear solution to this, the denial of any free organization of social interests and the promise

of an authority above parties, able to control their competition. In this way it increased its membership and broadened its field of action. Thus in November 1921, to avoid new acts of insubordination or internal crises, Mussolini could transform his movement into a well structured party, the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF), which paved the way both for the conquest of the monopoly of violence and for the co-optation of conservative personalities.

Between February and October 1922, decision-making in the executive coalitional arena produced some ineffective policy measures. Facta's cabinets wasted their time in discussing abstract projects of constitutional engineering. In the meantime, in the coercive arena, things were taking a turn for the worse. The fascists, whose action was no longer confined to anti-socialist 'class reaction', were openly defiant and occupied towns like Ravenna, Ferrara and Cremona, imposing their law on the legal authorities. It was no more than a simple question of *coups de main*, which aimed at stressing the vacuum of power caused by the inefficacy of liberal governments. With these new tactics, every action, like the massing of 40,000 members of fascist trade unions in Ferrara to force the State administration to finance public works (Corner 1974), or the call for a 'fiscal strike' which culminated in the devastation of the tax office (Demers 1979), was an opportunity for propaganda, and an attempt to induce citizens to place confidence in the black shirt movement. By compelling public power to accept the *faits accomplis* caused by the escalation of violence and at the same time by mobilizing its trade unions, which had allowed the movement to expand its social base in a short time (Cordova 1974; Roberts 1979), the fascist opposition not only boasted of disloyalty to the regime, but also stood as a candidate to succeed it.

For these reasons, just before the collapse of the democratic regime, the loyal forces were weak and deeply divided, both at the level of the élites and of mass movements. The potential pillars of an emergency coalition, the PSI and the PPI, rejected any compromise. The remnants of the Centre were inactive and set their hopes on the king or the ability of Giolitti to involve the fascists in an emergency cabinet. The Councillors of the Crown and the army hesitated

Table 12.6 Italy: occupational subgroups of the Fascist trade union members

Category	1922		1925	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Agriculture/Fishing	277,084	60.46	716,045	40.58
Industry	72,000	15.71	559,714	31.72
Employees	31,000	6.76	185,000	10.47
Intellectual work	11,300	2.47	103,799	5.88
Transport	43,000	9.38	100,145	5.68
Others	23,900	5.22	99,720	5.65
Total	458,284	100.00	1,764,423	100.00

Source: Schieder (1976: 79).

to risk a trial of strength. Only socialist trade unions, after the fall of the first Facta cabinet, took the initiative in an open anti-fascist mobilization, calling a *sciopero legalitario* 'strike for the respect of legality' at the end of August, 1922.

The resounding failure of this strike meant that a large sector of public opinion had made its choice for fascism and against democracy. The selective violence of the *squadristi* had always aimed to present Mussolini's movement as a 'potential State', able to replace the ineffective liberal institutions. Now fascists could pass from words to deeds: they replaced the strikers as volunteers in some sectors and harvested the fruits of the spreading distrust of the regime. The *authoritarian potential* in Italian society was by this time so high that the abdication of democratic forces occurred in a few hours without disruption. The national congress of the PNF gave out an ultimatum and announced an imminent insurrection against the illegitimate ruling class. A late and heterogeneous anti-fascist coalition tried in vain to head off the nationalist challenge by opposing the charisma of d'Annunzio to that of the future Duce. After the refusal of Vittorio Emanuele III to call a state of siege, and the resignation of Facta, who was no longer able to guarantee public order, the fascist leader was appointed prime minister and offered the king 'the Italy of Vittorio Veneto', that is a nation unified by the war, 're-consecrated by the victory'. Three days later, his government was formed.

7.3 The outcome of the crisis

The success of the 'disloyal' opposition had not required a formal break in the constitutional continuity of the State, and fascism could present its victory as the outcome of a *legal revolution*. In fact, Mussolini's investiture was the result of two converging trends: the gradual loss of power and legitimacy by the democratic institutions, and the growth of the fascist mass movement which had a base in the liberal electorate of southern Italy. The king certainly undermined the principles of democracy by appointing the leader of a party which held only 35 parliamentary seats as prime minister, but he made the only available choice to reunite *legality* and *legitimacy* in a government.

Many members of the old élite regarded the accession of the Fascists to power in late 1922 as a necessary precondition for the re-establishment of law and order, and as the first step on the way to the 'normalization' of the black shirts. Judging by appearances, the composition of Mussolini's first government could be interpreted in this way as it comprised only a minority of fascist members together with liberal, nationalist, Catholic and independent ministers. Besides, the formal prerogatives for the maintenance of polyarchy still existed: the majority of the members of Parliament were connected with non-fascist forces; neutral groups were loyal to the laws in force; parties and trade unions could guarantee the survival of political and social pluralism; popular control of the work of the new ruling class was ensured by the electoral system. In spite of this, the recovery and re-consolidation of Italian democracy was destined to fail.

The conditions for institutional change, which started immediately after the March on Rome, even if Mussolini made it official only in January 1925, had been arranged beforehand by the undeclared *state of emergency* that had been superimposed on social conflicts since 1921. The strong loss of specific support (Morlino 1980) during the 1919–20 period had changed in the following years into a widespread withdrawal of diffuse support and of legitimacy, so that among ordinary people indifference to the democratic form of government was very strong. Encouraged by this, Mussolini and his followers were not satisfied by a mere stabilization of the status quo, and endeavoured, by mobilizing the masses under the flag of the nation, to re-establish to their advantage an authoritative and undiscussed political arena. So began the *political re-integration* phase of the Italian crisis.

Behind the appearances of coalitional policies and professions of loyalty, the new government exploited its prerogatives to reduce the space for competition within the system. The use of decrees increased, the fear of a dissolution and of new elections led the *Camera* to accept a radical reduction of its functions, even when crucial issues were under discussion. As the survival of democratic institutions did not allow a direct passage to authoritarian rule, fascists wanted to eject from both civil and political society all values and ideologies which could not accord with the goals of the new leadership. The existence of two strong sub-cultural aggregates (Catholics and the working class) and the influence of important 'neutral' social actors (such as the king, the Church and the army) was nevertheless a serious obstacle to radical purges. Thus the period of transition between the breakdown of democracy and the establishment of a fascist regime (1923–4) was mostly characterized by compromises which aimed to *absorb* resources from the liberal system in order to empty it from inside. Nevertheless, in December 1922 the creation of the Gran Consiglio del Fascismo altered the relation between the State and the fascist party in a substantial way.

The use of neutral powers allowed Mussolini to suppress democratic opposition through actions of the police and the *Carabinieri*. In the meantime, important and successful efforts were made to keep the promise of a demobilization of labour conflicts and to make the 'patriotic' opinion quite sure of its choice. The double path to the definitive fascist seizure of power aimed in fact on one side to disarticulate all the means of expression of potential or actual opponents, and, on the other, to enlarge the audience of the movement, by exploiting State institutions to reflect its message. Thus the executive alternated its policies. There was tolerance towards *squadristi* violence, which was legalized, controlled and channelled after January 1923 through the creation of the *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* (MVSN), and repression of any organized dissent or mass demonstrations. By these means, the new dominant coalition sowed discord among opponents and gradually got rid of the 'fellow-travellers' it had used as a cover in order to legalize the hegemony it had acquired in the streets. Before the murder of the PSU deputy Matteotti in June 1924, splits within democratic parties and individual co-optations of personalities into the new majority followed, while some of the most influential social actors, starting with the Catholic Church and

the trade unions, withdrew, other groups, like the PPI and the PSI, had chosen intransigence. Moreover, the policy of free trade adopted by the government encouraged financial operators and entrepreneurs to increase investment, and, in return, the rise in GNP and industrial production strengthened popular confidence in the new ruling class.

The disintegration of the Centre was another key point in this last phase of the crisis. The decision of the Catholic Church not to support the PPI, and the migration of some of its potential competitors into the PNF guaranteed fascist success in the semi-competitive elections of 6 April 1924. With 64.9 per cent of the vote and 403 seats, the enlarged list presented by PNF – with the collaboration of the liberal right – celebrated the triumph of fascism and the death of Italian democracy, even if some resistance was offered by the regions where subcultural identities were still alive.

The memory of recent disorder and the fear of a new period of instability was so strong for a large part of Italian public opinion – and above all for the influential actors who sponsored Mussolini – that the serious crisis caused by Matteotti's murder, and the withdrawal of many democratic deputies from Parliament that followed, could be overcome without major problems. On the contrary, the rebellion of democratic opposition allowed the prime minister to accuse his enemies of aiming at a change in the fundamental rules of the game, and to 'anticipate' them by declaring the end of the liberal State. Fascism was now strong enough in terms of elective influence and coercive resources to throw off its mask. The 'legal revolution' was by then a reality.

8 Conclusions

The crisis of Italian democracy, which led to the birth of a new model of a mobilizational 'totalistic' regime (Fischella 1992), cannot be explained by a single cause. Of course, specific factors, like the lack of adaptability by the old post-unification liberal leadership to the conditions of modern politics, the adoption of a new electoral law in 1919, the intensity of the class struggle, and the frustration of the old and new middle classes, can be considered as the most relevant. But none of them by themselves could have opened the way to the fascist rise to power. International problems, so important in many other cases, played a secondary role here. Italy was the first successful example of an anti-democratic mass movement, and the only one for a whole decade.

The collapse of the liberal State was rooted above all in the complex heritage of the First World War. The eruption of new actors onto the political scene, the subsequent realignment of cleavages, and the fragmentation of the interests and electoral choice for many economic and professional sectors, all caused a sudden disintegration of the social order and the eclipse of the traditional notion of the 'common good', so raising discontent and protest among groups which were neither identified in a subcultural milieu nor protected by an efficient organizational network. Fascism exploited this crisis of identity to gain credit as the

prophet of a 'reconciled' national community, delivered, thanks to the sacrifices of war generation, from the social, economic, and cultural 'egotisms' represented by the old parties. The appeal of this myth of 'Nation' created the political space for the first 'latecomer' – Mussolini's movement. But to overcome the resistance of the more established political families – socialists and catholics – the black shirts had to support their propaganda with the 'persuasive' force of paramilitary militias. The efficacy of this new 'political style', which was destined to exert a widespread influence on interwar Europe, dealt the decisive blow to the weakened parliamentary regime.

13

The Netherlands: Early Compromise and Democratic Stability

*Frank H. Aarebrot**

1 The pacification of 1917

In terms of political stability Dutch politics began the interwar period in rather favourable conditions. First, the Netherlands had been neutral during the First World War in which all its neighbours were involved on one side or the other. This isolation forced the central actors in Dutch politics to compromise after a period of intense political conflict in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Secondly, in the 1913 election the non-confessional parties, the Liberal parties and the Social Democrats, had gained a majority. Despite this victory the new majority proved unable to form a government, and a minority cabinet under the Liberal van den Linden was formed. This further enhanced the willingness of the old power-holders to seek a mode of accommodation with these new forces, and therefore to compromise.

In a comparative perspective a third point worth mentioning is the Netherlands' relatively simple cleavage structure. (Although this is not to be confused with the complexity of its party system which was enhanced by an electoral system with an extreme form of proportionality, and further complicated by confessional differences between the Protestants and splits amongst the Liberals.) Basically in Rokkan's (1970) terms Dutch politics was centred around Protestant vs Catholic, Confessional vs Secular, and Worker vs Owner cleavages. The Protectionist vs Liberal cleavage was notably absent in the party system since conservatism, as known in Britain, Germany or Scandinavia, was no longer an issue of any significance. The Netherlands did not produce a Mussert as a somewhat pale analogy to Hitler; rather, he was a figure analogous to von Papen and had already lost his power base when the Dutch

* Professor Aarebrot was prevented by illness from revising his initial draft of this chapter; this version was produced by the editors and is based on Professor Aarebrot's early draft.

The Netherlands



Conservatives left their last government in 1888, never to return. The powers of old in 1917 were the Protestant Confessional parties and the Liberals, both with a relatively broad social base, and not a land holding nobility and/or monarchist traditionalists.

Fourth, this impasse between the old, dominant confessional forces, the revived liberals and the new forces of social democracy, formed the background for the solution of one of the major issues of Dutch politics – the question of state subsidies for private, confessional schools. The result was the great

Pacification of 1917. This compromise forms the background to Dutch politics in the interwar period, and can be summarized in three points:

1. Financial equality between private and public schools
2. The introduction of proportional representation (PR) to replace majority elections in single-member constituencies over two rounds of balloting.
3. Full manhood suffrage – universal suffrage was introduced in 1922 (Daalder 1966)

For Dutch politics the Pacification created a platform for political stability, but not necessarily for governmental stability. Manhood suffrage was a major concession to the left, and to some extent to the Catholics; the school compromise helped cooperation among the non-socialist parties and reduced the need for cooperation between parties in electoral campaigns on the former, local single member constituency level of politics (Kuiper 1988: 22–4). An important consequence of this was that parties were able to present themselves to the voters with clearer and more ideologically consistent national programmes.

Proportional representation was a structure that enhanced political stability in the Netherlands. This was in striking contrast to Weimar Germany, where many saw the system as one of the *causes* of instability during the interwar period. There is, however, an even more important contrast between the two countries. In the Netherlands, the Pacification was a unifying pact for the political system as a whole, where the Weimar Constitution became a symbol of dissent from its very inception and excluded major political forces and actors from the previous regime – notably the rural conservatives from east of the Elbe. The Pacification compromise excluded the Social Democrats and reduced the influence of the Liberals in the Netherlands, but these same forces were at the centre of Weimar politics, and far from originating in a compromise, Weimar was born in national dissent. Finally, an opposition comparable to the important conservative opposition to Weimar was more or less absent in the Netherlands during the immediate postwar period and the only political force which played a central role in both regimes was the Catholics.

2 Politics and the structure of Dutch society in the 1920s and 1930s

Lijphart's (1968) concept of 'verzuiling' has long served as a basic framework for understanding the nature and stability of Dutch politics. The picture of a political system characterized by cooperating elites with the masses 'pillarized' into confessional and lay segments has been quoted so often that Dutch scholars often find it difficult, but also necessary, to try and modify this analysis of their country.

For our purposes we should point out that the Pacification of 1917 did indeed strengthen this segmentation. A PR system with one national electoral ballot forced parties to operate on the national level, making redundant the strategy of local

cooperation within the old constituencies. This reduced the moderating effect that localism had on the nationally dominant cleavages of confessionality, liberalism and socialism.

Moreover, the recognition of equal right for different schools became a pattern for similar demands, and solutions, relating to other areas of social life. Housing, health and trade union rights were also distributed among organizations with different confessional ties on the basis of the same principle of equal treatment (Kuiper 1988). Catholics, Calvinists and socialists could live within their political parties which became the guardians of their identity.

As a principle for organizing society, confessional segmentation was strengthened, not weakened by the Pacification. But still, the more common left-right conflict also gained in importance during the interwar period. Kuiper has pointed out that a shift from left to right had already taken place in Dutch politics by the election of 1918; among the confessional parties a shift from the Calvinists to the Catholics; and among the non-confessionals, a shift from Liberals to Social Democrats. Admittedly this shift probably owed more to the extension of the suffrage than to individual voters changing their preferences, but despite this change in electoral support under the new electoral system, it was still the confessional parties that formed the nexus of the government.

Basically the confessional parties continued to rule the Netherlands during the 1920s even though their cooperation became increasingly strained. A new confessional government was formed in 1918 under de Beerenbrouck, the first Catholic ever to become prime minister of the Netherlands, reflecting the new strength of the Catholics. Despite its traditional, confessional power base, this new government proved to be responsive to the challenges of the November revolution in Germany, and the subsequent unrest in some Dutch military camps, as well as a major strike in Rotterdam harbour in 1919. It enacted several social laws:

A 'Hoge Raad voor Arbeid' was instituted to discuss social arrangements. Employees and employers were represented on this advisory council together with outside experts.

A social security system was introduced for the disabled.

The old age pension scheme was modernized giving every employee over the age of 65 a guaranteed state pension of 3. – per week.

A 45-hour working week was introduced in 1921; after 1922 this was extended to a 48-hour working week.

An accident insurance scheme for maritime workers started in 1919, and for agricultural workers in 1922. Accident insurance was extended to cover almost all industrial sectors in 1921.

Unemployment and sickness compensation were discussed but not introduced.

The Catholic trade unions took the lead in this legislation, in close cooperation with the government. The Social Democrats (the SDAP) responded with their trade union, the NVV, putting forward more radical proposals. But their

possibilities for aggressive opposition were limited when the relationship between employers and employees was regulated by law in 1927, which also legalized collective bargaining.

Overall, the changes in the political system can be summarized in two points:

1. There was a largely positive response to the potential social crisis in the postwar years.
2. But there was also an attempt to keep social organizations within the 'pillarized' social segments through the official institutionalization of owner-worker relationships, using forms of corporatist arrangements. This put the political parties in charge of the process and reduced social organizations like the trade unions to the status of client organizations for their respective political parties.

The response of the voters to these policies was remarkably calm. Table 13.1 shows the remarkable stability of Dutch electoral politics in the 1920s. If the social legislation was a response to the threat of social unrest after the war, then these policies seem to have been successful in meeting the demands of the voters, many of whom were newly enfranchised.

The reaction of the voters does not indicate any significant pressure for a change of government and we have to look elsewhere for sources of system change and adaptation when Dutch politics was affected by the world economic crisis in 1929. Even under these circumstances, these pressures are to be found more among the political elite in parliament than in mass behaviour.

Immediately after the war there was a remarkable degree of consensus over the need for a budget cutting policy to stabilize the Dutch economy in the postwar economic crisis. This was mainly due to the fact that the first scheme to reduce public expenditure was aimed at the military budget – always a target of the left. The policy was strongly associated with the ARP politician Colijn. As minister of Finance, and later as prime minister, he pursued a consistent monetarist line to stabilize the Dutch economy. So in 1925 the guilder was linked to the gold standard.

However, these policies created increasing internal pressures within the governing confessional coalition, particularly after the budget cuts imposed a limit on popular public expenditure apart from defence spending. The government had given public financial support to mining and transport, the national railways in 1920, and the national airline KLM in 1923. In 1922 expenditure on the school system was reduced. In 1923 this led to a short cabinet crisis when the Catholics joined the Social Democrats in criticizing some of Colijn's expenditure cuts.

The Catholics were in general more in favour of social legislation and public works than the Calvinists, while on the non-confessional side, many liberals of a *laissez-faire* persuasion understood the need for a strong guilder and a balanced

Table 13.1 The Netherlands: electoral results, 1918–37

	03.07.1918		05.07.1922		01.07.1925		03.07.1929		26.04.1933		26.05.1937	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Anti-Revolutionary Party	13.4	13	13.7	16	12.2	13	11.6	12	13.4	14	16.4	17
Roman Catholic States Party	3	30	29.9	32	28.6	30	29.6	30	27.9	28	28.8	31
Liberal Union	6.2	6										
Liberal Democratic League	5.3	5	4.6	5	6.1	7	6.2	7	5.1	6	5.9	6
Free Socialist												
Christian Historical Union	6.5	7	10.9	11	9.9	11	10.5	11	9.1	10	7.5	8
Social Democratic Workers' Party	22.0	22	19.4	20	22.9	24	23.8	24	21.5	22	21.9	23
Free Liberal League	3.8	4										
Christian Democratic Union	2.0	3	1.4		0.5		0.4		1.0	1	2.1	2
Communist Party	2.3	2	1.8	2	1.2	1	2.0	2	3.2	4	3.4	3
Economic League	3.1	3										
Farmers' League	0.7	1	1.6	2	2.0	1	1.0	1	1.3	1	0.2	
Middle Class Party	0.9	1										
Political Reformed Party	0.4		0.9	1	2.0	2	2.3	3	2.5	3	1.9	2
Socialist Party	0.7	1	0.4		0.4							
Liberal States Party			9.3	10	8.7	9	7.4	8	7.0	7	3.9	4
New Reformed State Party			0.7		1.0	1	1.1	1	0.9	1	0.6	
Roman Catholic People's Party					1.2	1	0.7	0	1.1	1	0.7	
Middle Party for City and Country							1.2	1				
Revolutionary Socialist Party							0.6					
League for National Renewal									1.3	1		
National Socialist Movement									0.8	1	0.2	
Others	2.6	2	5.5	1	3.3		1.6		3.9		4.2	4
											2.3	

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 322).

budget. Thus, at the time of the 1929 crisis, the basis of Dutch government was being re-shaped. Calvinists and Liberals found each other more often defending the budget policies, whereas Social Democrats and many Catholics more often argued for an expansionary, Keynesian-style policy. This restructuring was formalized in 1933 when Colijn formed his second government which was made up of the confessional parties as well as one of the two liberal parties, the VDB. This very broad coalition was weakened by the fact that many Catholics often joined the Social Democrats in opposition.

This non-socialist coalition held in various different governments throughout the 1930s, but its links to a parliamentary majority were weak since the Catholics, in alliance with the Social Democrats, were in a position to put pressure on the government. In 1936 the Netherlands left the gold standard, in 1937 an extensive programme of public works was started and, in addition, the public purchase of agricultural products and industrial goods were a form of public subsidy.

But the government did not only react to the parliamentary opposition, it was also challenged by extra-parliamentary action from extremist groups on both left and right. On the left, there was unrest among the unemployed in Amsterdam and Rotterdam in 1934 and, in 1933, a much-publicized mutiny on the naval ship *de Zeven Provinciën*. The four communist parties formed one organization and experienced some – not decisive – electoral success in the Rotterdam area.

Lack of success at the polls had not prevented the far left from influencing or even destabilizing politics in other European countries in this period. A response to deteriorating living conditions in the form of social unrest such as strikes was one alternative means of putting pressure on the political system. Table 13.3 indicates the number of strikes and working days lost in the Netherlands throughout the interwar period.

Labour unrest in the form of strikes seems to decline steadily from its peak in 1919. In terms of working days lost, the years before the crash of 1929 were more turbulent than those which followed. However there was an increase in labour unrest in 1932, but after 1933 the turmoil seems to decline and stabilizes at a low level for the rest of the decade. The left was not able to mobilize effectively either at the polls or on the factory floor. However, it is tempting to suggest that it was fortunate for the Dutch political system that 1932 was a mid-term year with no general election.

Many small fascist groups emerged on the right. In 1931 when Mussert founded the NSB there were 71(!) registered fascist groups in the Netherlands. Some degree of consolidation took place and in the provincial elections of 1935 the NSB obtained almost 8 per cent of the vote (see van der Wusten and Smit 1980). However, two years later the fascist vote fell to 4 per cent. Three factors account for the relatively weak performance by the NSB:

1. The government change toward a more expansionary economic policy in the latter part of the 1930s.
2. Legislation directed against extremist political movements. The government banned political uniforms and prohibited public servant from being 'members of organizations considered subversive'.
3. The widespread fear of neighbouring Nazi Germany. In the Netherlands it became increasingly difficult to combine a 'national attitude' with fascist sympathies.

These factors combined to reduce the threat of extremism to Dutch democracy, but more importantly, they helped to further unite the democratic parties in the Netherlands towards the end of the 1930s. The Pacification of 1917 set a new agenda for politics, and it included important institutional changes, but it was not a constitution nor did it have the status of a constitution. Three points suggest that the parties involved never considered the Pacification to be more than a very important compromise: (i) the Protestant splinter party, the SGP, was formed as early as 1918, and it was based on a rejection of the Pacification on anti-Catholic grounds; (ii) throughout the 1920s and early 1930s the Social Democrats, and other parties of the left, only adhered to the functioning of the Pacification political system since they were more or less constantly in opposition; (iii) last, but not least, most of the confessional politicians had come to regard the Pacification as a thing of the past, less important than the requirements of day-to-day politics around 1930. So it can be argued that the Liberals were the only consistent supporters of the 'great compromise' during the interwar years.

The threat of extremism, and particularly the combination of a strong Germany and Dutch fascists, formed the basis of a new democratic consensus toward the end of the 1930s. It is an open question whether this consensus comprised a renaissance of the Pacification or if it constituted a new compromise. This we will never know as the Second World War, and the German occupation of the Netherlands, interrupted this further process. However, it is clear that the very issue of democratic survival was discussed widely in political circles, and it is equally clear that such democratic survival more and more became associated with national survival.

Thus, in the 1930s, the Dutch Social Democrats found themselves faced with a basic choice between 'revolution' and 'democracy'. Politicians joined defence organizations for democracy such as 'Einheid door Democratie'. One can argue that both the external and the internal threats to democracy greatly facilitated their choice so it seems almost obvious that the party was ready to join both confessionals and liberals in sharing the burden of government on the eve of the Second World War. In addition, the increasingly expansionist economic policies of the governments, and further improvements in social legislation such as sickness compensation from 1930, helped ease the way for a united front of all democratic forces. Incidentally this ideology of unity survived the war –particularly among

politicians interned in camps by the Germans – and was also important in the years immediately after liberation in 1945.

3 Some theoretical considerations on the Dutch case

What can be learned from the Dutch case in relation to general explanations of the response to the political crisis of the interwar period? Three types of theory seem particularly important:

1. Those theories concerned with the weakness of institutional arrangements within democracies, particularly those related to party fragmentation and lack of governmental stability.
2. Theories concerned with social and economic deprivation and consequent social unrest, together with extremist or populist electoral response.
3. Theories of political culture in a broad sense. These include the importance of past experiences within the system as well as patterns of interaction within the elite, electoral loyalties and institutional structures to sustain such patterns and loyalties. In the Dutch case Lijphart's model of 'Consociational Democracy' based on the concepts of 'verzuiling' and 'cooperating elites' is of major importance. (Lijphart 1968; Daalder 1966, 1981). In addition cultural influences in the form of negative examples from neighbouring countries have a major impact in a highly interdependent country such as the Netherlands.

3.1 Weak institutional arrangements as an explanatory factor

Hermens's extremely controversial model of the relationship between PR, party fractionalization, cabinet instability and democratic survival is one of the relevant theories (Hermens 1941, 1951, 1958; Karvonen 1991). Since PR in the Netherlands was a direct consequence of the Pacification, and since both Germany and the Netherlands entered the interwar period with this new electoral system, some remarks on the Dutch case, particularly relating to Mayer's reconstruction of Hermens' implicit causal model, are in order (Mayer 1980; Karvonen 1991).

Hermens' 'prime mover', PR, is certainly present in the Netherlands during this period. Moreover the number of parties with seats in parliament was also relatively large (see Table 13.1). But this is modified by the fact that the three confessional parties, the Liberals and the SDAP managed to retain the vast majority of the seats throughout the entire period. The smaller parties, with a few exceptions, were only represented sporadically. So, between the wars, the loyalty of Dutch voters to the major parties was probably very high. When Karvonen categorizes the Netherlands as a case of high party fragmentation, he is right in a formal sense, but, if we consider the overwhelmingly dominant partisan actors, we can make a strong argument for the Dutch party system as a five-party one (Karvonen 1991: 17).

Basically, the Netherlands retained her party system relatively intact throughout the period, certainly if we consider the relevant parliamentary parties. Party splits did occur, notably the formation of the SGP. Party mergers were at least as

common a phenomenon: the formation of the RKSP from local Catholic support organizations, the unification of the Liberals in the *Vrijheidsbond*, and, among the more extreme groups, the unification of the left splinter parties into the CPN and the consolidation of the many fascist groups into the NSB. To account for this after the introduction of PR, one should consider the influence of localism under majority election systems of the French type. In single-member constituencies with a run-off election, well organized constituency parties can often be more important than national parties. The Catholics formed the largest group in the Dutch parliament in 1918 and were only based on this kind of organization until forced to form a national party following the introduction of the PR system in 1926. On the other hand, political relationships and local forms of cooperation, which were encouraged by the old electoral system, and were particularly common among the confessional parties, survived the Pacification in the form of cooperation in government, although this cooperation came under increasing pressure as time went by. Finally, the voters did not seem eager to change their allegiance despite the opportunities of voting for new parties which existed under the PR system.

So in the Dutch case, the link between PR and party fragmentation must be examined in relative terms, namely relative to the previous electoral system that was replaced by PR. To find a modern version of the old Dutch political system as it might have developed had the Pacification never occurred, one can look at French politics today with its patchwork of modern, national parties together with local allegiances and candidate organizations. In the Netherlands the centralizing effect of PR turned out to be more important than its possible implications for party fragmentation.

In contrast, Germany's experience with PR under the Weimar Republic should be viewed relative to the old electoral system and the practice of politics during the Reich. The Prussian system of single-member constituencies with automatic and mandatory run-off elections between the two front runners of the first round clearly reduces the need for local bargaining. In addition, the history of repressive measures against socialists and Catholics, a legacy of Bismarck, was also part of the background to the effects of the introduction of PR under Weimar. Finally, the continued existence of regionalism as a political factor in German politics enabled parties with a regional base to enhance their positions under PR. It must be more than a coincidence that the NSDAP, during its breakthrough election of 1928, polled well in Protestant parts of Bavaria, in Schleswig-Holstein and in the Hanover region – all areas with regional parties during the Reich.

It is, however, the resulting cabinet instability that does not occur in the Netherlands. While the country had ten governments between 1918 and 1939, only two of these lasted less than a year, and most lasted longer than two. The ARP and the CHU were represented in all governments, and the RKSP was only in opposition briefly between 25 July and 10 August 1939, hardly a period of political exile. Rather than speaking of ten governments, we might as well speak of a continuous ruling regime of the confessional parties – a case of extraordinarily high

cabinet stability! (Karvonen correctly classifies the Netherlands as such in his discussion; see Karvonen 1991: 17.) This is illustrated in Table 13.2.

The Dutch case only confirms the old discussion about the operationalization of 'cabinet stability'. True, the Netherlands had many governments in the interwar period, but the continuity in personnel was considerable. Moreover many cabinet crises were caused by disagreements over a single acute issue, and were 'resolved' by a 'change' of government with the same government being reinstated. This 'new' government would then modify its policy on the specific issue which had caused the crisis. In general the link between the Cabinet and its parliamentary base was weaker than in most other western democracies, but this was compensated by a greater responsiveness to negative majorities in Parliament through changing policy. It should be remembered that governments based on virtually the same parties changed their economic policies from monetarism to something similar to Keynesianism during the 1930s, mainly through the influence of opposition-based negative majorities *vis-à-vis* minority governments with no lasting influence on cabinet formation itself.

The main reason why PR did not have disastrous effects in the Netherlands can be summarized in two points, both suggesting why the institutions of parliament and cabinet were not weakened, but strengthened during the interwar period, despite the existence of potential instability:

1. Voter loyalty – Dutch voters were not seriously tempted by the new national parties and movements, or by the splinter groups that presented themselves under PR.

Table 13.2 The Netherlands: government composition, 1913–40

Duration	Government	Parties in government
Aug. 1913–Sept. 1918	van der Linden	Lib.
Sept. 1918–Sept. 1922	de Beerenbrouck	ARP CHU RKSP
Sept. 1922–Aug. 1925	de Beerenbrouck	ARP CHU RKSP
Aug. 1925–Mar. 1926	Colijn	ARP CHU RKSP
Mar. 1926–Aug. 1929	de Geer	ARP CHU RKSP
Aug. 1929–May 1933	de Beerenbrouck	ARP CHU RKSP
May 1933–June 1937	Colijn	ARP CHU RKSP VDB
June 1937–July 1939	Colijn	ARP CHU RKSP
July 1939–Aug. 1939	Colijn	ARP CHU Lib.
Aug. 1939–Sept. 1940	de Geer	ARP CHU RKSP VDB, SDAP

Source: Kossman (1986: 438).

Note:

Lib. = Liberals

ARP = Anti-Revolutionary Party

CHU = Christian Historical Union

RKSP = Roman Catholic States Party

VDB = Liberal Democratic League

SDAP = Social Democratic Workers' Party

2. The adaptability of government policies: the three major governmental parties and their leadership were quite flexible in adopting new policies as the economic crisis developed, reached a peak and then tapered off.

3.2 The severity of the economic crisis as an explanatory factor

The second point raised above serves as an important explanation for why the Dutch masses did not rise in anger during the economic crisis. Some did take part in protest activity, as shown by Table 13.3, but strikes, even in 1932, had a lesser impact in the Netherlands than did similar activity in other polities during the 1930s, and this directly contradicts any Marxist-based understanding of the consequences of social deprivation.

An examination of the severity of the economic and social crisis is necessary and is illustrated in Table 13.3. It shows, among other economic data, the percentage of the workforce that was unemployed over the period from 1919 to 1939.

First one should note that unemployment in the Netherlands as a result of the 1929 crash rose to a level which was fully comparable to, and perhaps even higher than, that reached in Germany – 35.2 per cent in 1936. In comparing the trend in unemployment to work days lost in strikes (Table 13.3) we can note that whereas social unrest rose with unemployment until 1932, this unrest was not sustained by a continued rise in unemployment until 1936. On the contrary, strike activity declined sharply.

We can also observe that the Dutch government changed its policies in a more expansionist direction without any change in the composition of the government. Budget deficits rose sharply between 1931 and 1935 (De Vries 1988: 390). Moreover, the electoral support given to anti-democratic parties did not grow rapidly. At the peak of the crisis, in the regional elections of 1935, the Dutch Fascist movement, the NSB, obtained only 8 per cent of the vote, and in the general election of 1937 the combined vote for communists and fascists was only about 7 per cent (see Table 13.1).

A direct relationship between economic hardship and anti-democratic voting is therefore hardly in evidence. The tendency was there but the magnitude of the response was missing. Even if we make the wholly unrealistic assumption that all votes for the NSB in 1935 came from unemployed voters, still only about one in six of the unemployed would have turned to fascism. In actual fact the ratio was, of course, much lower.

3.3 Consociationalism and political culture as explanatory factors

We have to turn back to the workings of the Dutch political system as described by Lijphart, Daalder and others to account for the remarkable ability of the Dutch political elite to resist the onslaught of anti-democratic forces. Equally, we have to look at Dutch societal organization to understand the remarkable loyalty to democracy that is found among Dutch voters, as discussed above.

In their struggle against the established political system, the Dutch enemies of democracy lacked momentum in their goal of winning over a majority to their

Table 13.3 The Netherlands: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
NDP (m. hf)	2535	5136	5838	5228	4957	4862	5053	5181	5240	5359	5691	5922	5658	5119	4659	4552	4570	4463	4517	4942	4993	5360
in 1938 prices	2966	3395	3539	3619	3892	3923	4077	4181	4348	4447	4722	4914	4977	4791	4659	4552	4570	4621	4849	5117	4993	5550
NDP/cap. (hf)	413	761	856	755	705	680	696	703	701	707	741	761	718	640	574	553	548	529	530	575	575	610
NDP (m. US-\$)	1019	2064	2346	2101	1992	1954	2031	2082	2106	2154	2287	2380	2274	2057	1872	1829	1837	1794	1815	1986	2007	2154
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	166	306	344	304	283	273	280	283	282	284	298	306	288	257	231	222	220	213	213	231	231	245
Population (thousands)	6145	6752	6820	6921	7032	7150	7264	7366	7471	7576	7678	7781	7884	7999	8122	8237	8341	8433	8516	8598	8684	8781
COST (1913 = 100)	100	177	193	169	149	145	145	141	141	141	141	141	133	125	117	117	117	113	109	113	117	113
Unemployment (%)	5.0	7.7	5.8	9.0	11.0	11.2	8.8	8.1	7.3	7.5	5.6	5.9	7.8	14.8	25.3	26.9	28.0	31.7	32.7	26.9	25.0	19.9
B. o. Trade (m. hf)			-1635	-870	-807	-706	-703	-647	-693	-649	-698	-763	-699	-581	-453	-483						
Lost working days (millions)	1057	2355	1282	1224	1216	1216	3156	781	281	202	635	890	229	766	1636	483	90	244	77	32	125	91
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.								100	103	114	130	133	136	127	112	121	123	121	122	137	138	151
Cost of Living		100	88	86	86	86	83	83	83	83	83	83	79	74	69	69	69	67	64	67	69	67
Unemployment		100	122	124	98	90	81	83	62	66	66	66	87	164	281	299	311	352	363	299	278	221
NDP		100	95	93	97	99	100	103	109	113	108	98	89	87	87	87	87	85	86	95	96	103
Strikes		100	95	95	246	61	22	16	50	69	18	60	128	38	7	19	6	2	10	6	2	10

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 65–6, 357); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 168ff., 357, 744ff., 787, 823); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 182).

Note: hf (Dutch guilders) is US\$0.4019; NDP is at current market prices; interpolated estimates for the number of NDP

various 'brave new worlds'. That the extreme parties gained strength from one another and weakened those democratic centre parties loyal to the Constitution is a well-known argument in the case of the Weimar Republic. We have observed that the exact opposite happened in the Netherlands. When faced with only the weak beginnings of the kind of support that the KPD and the NSDAP could muster in Germany in the late 1920s, the Dutch parties of the Pacification rallied in mutual support, and even adopted Bismarck-style *Extremistengesetze*. Moreover, the SDAP was forced to make up its mind and join an alliance in favour of democracy.

This points to two conclusions:

1. The important fact that Dutch governmental alliances and politics were already being transformed at the time of the world economic crisis. New pragmatic alliances were possible in the 'pillarized' Netherlands, whereas in the early years of the Weimar Republic in Germany many new governing coalitions had already been tried, and had failed. Notably, the German Social Democrats had been given governmental responsibilities whereas their Dutch counterparts had not. Since potential alliances, which had not yet been tried, existed among the democratic parties in the Netherlands, possible changes could still offer potential solutions or new crisis governments.
2. But geopolitics and the timing of political events were also relevant. It is clear that the example of Germany and the threat of Nazism played a direct part in the consolidation of Dutch democracy. Van der Wusten and Smit argue convincingly that – 'one of the ironies in the situation was that the Germans probably harmed the growth potential of their Dutch supporters in two ways. To the extent that their war economy boosted Dutch economic activity, they undermined the size of the NSB's potential audience. To the extent that Nazi policy inspired Dutch resistance, the Germans helped to raise the barriers against joining for those who still had any inclination to do so' (Van der Wusten and Smit 1980: 540).

In any case the basic tendency in the Netherlands was that extremist action, left or right, only served to extend the base of the government, first to include the Liberals again, and in the end even to include the Social Democrats. So Dutch democracy was strengthened by some of the same external forces that caused the collapse of democracy elsewhere in Europe during the same period.

14

Poland: From Post-War Crisis to Authoritarianism

Jerzy Holzer

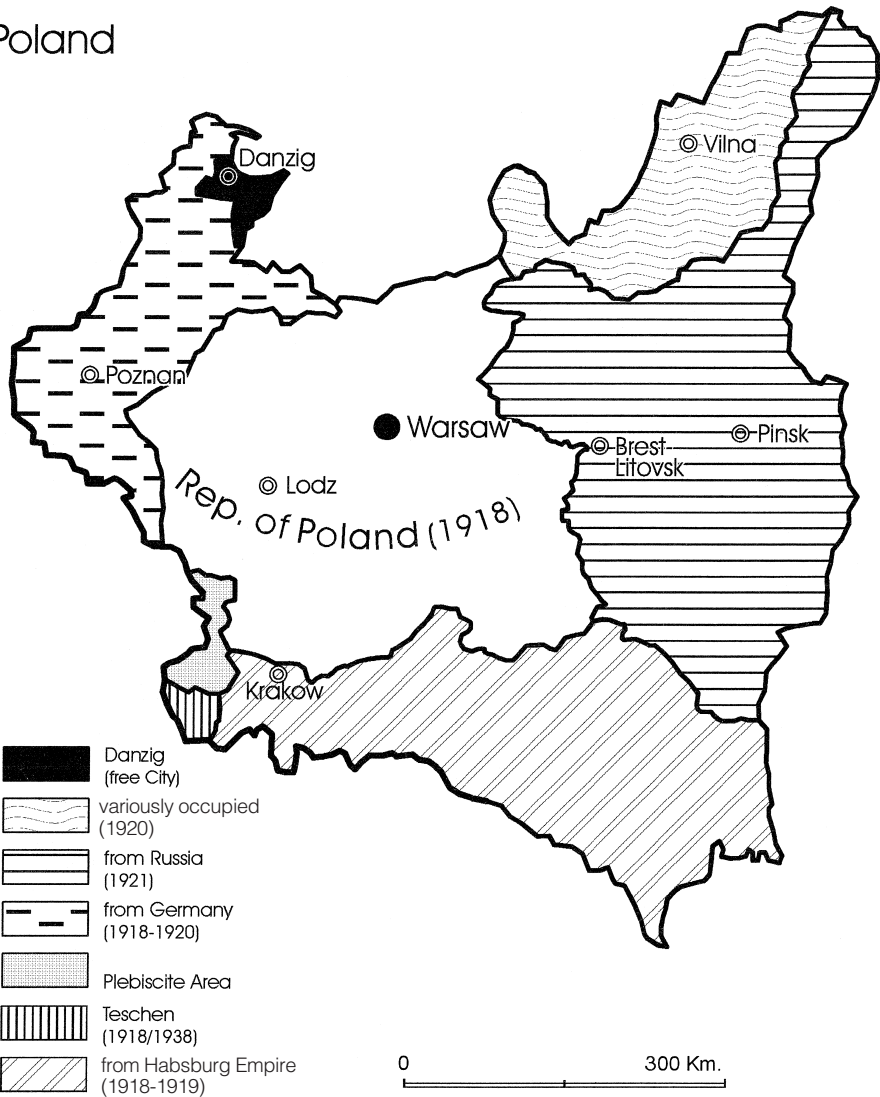
1 Introduction

Poland was one of the new Central and South-East European states which came into existence after World War I, its previous tradition of independent statehood having ceased at the end of the eighteenth century. Through much of the nineteenth century the Polish people waged an extremely persistent and passionate struggle to rebuild a sovereign Polish state – a tradition which distinguished Poland from all the other newly formed states. It was important, too, that the Polish nation was one of the largest ethnic groups in Europe. Just as in all new states Poland had to define its borders with both military and political actions, before a multinational Polish state emerged. Polish parliamentary democracy in the interwar years was not deep-rooted and it soon struggled under the influence of economic, social and national problems. The collapse of parliamentary democracy followed relatively early, some years *before* the world depression of 1929, but it was only partial – many democratic institutions and democratic civil rights survived. The discontent brought out by the crisis was directed against the ruling authoritarian forces and stimulated three mutually contradictory tendencies: the democratic, the communist and the more or less fascist. This later phase of political development was then interrupted by the outbreak of war in Europe.

2 The social setting

Interwar Poland was a relatively large European state, with an area of 389,000 sq km and a population of 35 million in 1939. 72.3 per cent of the population lived in the countryside, 14.5 per cent in towns of under 50,000 inhabitants and only 13.2 per cent in the relatively big cities (*Maly Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*: 29, 34). The population was multinational and multi-religious. Official statistics may overstate the number of Poles, but according to the census of 1931 (using a question concerning mother tongue) there were

Poland



68.9 per cent Poles, 13.9 per cent Ukrainians (and Ruthenians), 8.6 per cent Jews, 5.3 per cent Belorussians (and Polesians) and 2.3 per cent Germans. The religious statistics confirm this data: Roman Catholics 64.8 per cent, Greek Catholics 10.4 per cent, Orthodox 11.8 per cent, Protestants 2.6 per cent, Jews 9.8 per cent (*Maly Rocznik Statystyczny* 1939: 23, 25). Just over 60 per cent of the population gained a living from agriculture and under 20 per cent were employed in industry. This was reflected in the social structure: 67.4 per cent of the population were self-employed, mostly peasants. 51.4 per cent had a landholding, but

Table 14.1 Poland: class structure, 1931

Population (millions)	32.1
Employment rate	52.4
Rate of agrarian employment	65
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	2
Family farms	51
Agrarian proletariat	9
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	1
Old middle class	11
New middle class	8
Proletariat	19
Sub-proletariat	
Total	101

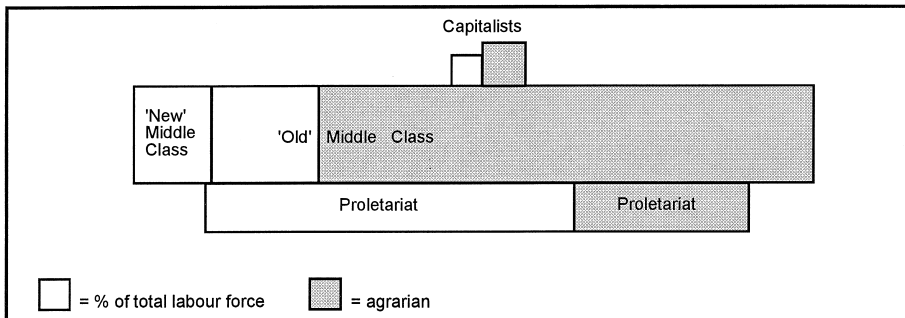
Sources: Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 219); Kaser and Radice (eds) (1985: 76); Berend and Ránki (1974b: 306); Zarnowski (1973: 21).

only a small proportion of them were landlords. 32.6 per cent were wage earners – mostly manual workers (28.3 per cent) – and 4.3 per cent were white-collar employees.

The standard of education was low: 23.1 per cent of the population over the age of 10 years were illiterate and only a small percentage had been to school for more than four years (1931). In 1937/38 there were only 312,000 secondary-school pupils and 48,000 university students (Maly Rocznik Statystyczny 1939: 31; 1937: 41).

Polish society was split deeply along different lines, divisions which related to interactions between social, national, regional, religious and educational differences (Zarnowski 1973). The Poles were the largest national group, but only a more or less numerous minority in many regions of eastern Poland. They

Figure 14.1 Poland: class structure, 1931



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 14.1.

were not a majority in many medium-sized and small towns of the former Russian and Austrian parts. To the north-east the most numerous national groups were Belorussians, to the south-east Ukrainians, in the towns Jews. The national and religious divisions corresponded with each other. The majority of Poles were Roman Catholic. The Ukrainian population was either Greek Catholic or Orthodox, the Jewish population was of course Mosaic, Belorussians were Orthodox, the majority of Germans were Protestant (Maly Rocznik Statystyczny 1936: 23).

The differences concerning the educational level were pronounced too. According to the census of 1931 the level of illiteracy in the former German part was only 1.5 per cent in the Silesian, and 7.6 per cent in the Poznan, *voivodeship*; in the former Austrian part and in the mostly Polish *voivodeship* of Cracov 13.0 per cent, but in the mostly Ukrainian Stanislawow *voivodeship* 36.6 per cent; in the former Russian part in the mainly Polish Lodz *voivodeship* 22.7 per cent, and in the city of Warsaw 10.0 per cent. It was highest in the Belorussian and Ukrainian Polesia *voivodeship* – 48.4 per cent. There were also significant differences with age and sex: only 9.8 per cent men aged 15–19, but 55.6 per cent women aged over 60 were illiterate (Maly Rocznik Statystyczny 1939: 28f.).

The social structural differences interacted with the national, religious and, of course, with the educational ones. Roman Catholics were 64.8 per cent of the total, 62.8 per cent of the agrarian, 69.9 per cent of the industrial, but only 36.6 per cent of the commercial population. Greek Catholics were 10.4 per cent of the total, 15.2 per cent of the agrarian, 3.1 per cent of the industrial and only 1.2 per cent of the commercial population. The Orthodox were 11.8 per cent of the total, 17.9 per cent of the agrarian, 2.1 per cent of the industrial and 1.2 per cent of the commercial population. Jews were 9.8 per cent of the total, only 0.7 per cent of the agrarian, but 21.3 per cent of the industrial and 58.7 per cent of the commercial population. Protestants were 2.6 per cent of the total, 2.6 per cent of the agrarian, 3.2 per cent of the industrial and 2.1 per cent of the commercial population. So there was an over-representation of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox (or nationally Ukrainian and Belorussian) agrarian population, an under-representation of the Roman Catholic (Polish) commercial and of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox (Ukrainian and Belorussian) industrial and commercial population as well as an over-representation of the Jewish industrial and even more commercial population.

We could reach the same conclusions from other data. The agrarian population constituted 58.8 per cent of Roman Catholics, 88.1 per cent of Greek Catholics, 92.4 per cent of Orthodoxes, 59.2 per cent of Protestants and only 4 per cent of Jews. For the industrial population the situation was quite different. It constituted 20.9 per cent of Roman Catholics, 5.8 per cent of Greek Catholics, 3.4 per cent of Orthodoxes, but 23.7 per cent of Protestants and 42.2 per cent of Jews. More specifically of the commercial population 3.4 per cent were Roman Catholic, 0.7 per cent Greek Catholic, 0.5 per cent Orthodox, 4.8 per cent of Protestant, but 36.6 per cent Jewish (Maly Rocznik Statystyczny 1939: 3).

Separate data for large landowners is not available but, by a large majority, they were Polish and Roman Catholic, a minority were German and Protestant or, mostly as leaseholders, Jewish. Followers of different religions (and so also nationalities) were thus very unequally represented in every social group.

Several consequences followed from these national–religious–social interactions. Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants and farm-hands were contrasted with landowners who were not only socially but also nationally and religiously different, many Polish workers were in conflict with their Jewish employers. In addition, large foreign companies were in a powerful position. The Polish, Belorussian and Ukrainian agrarian population had conflicts with Jewish tradesmen living in small towns. Another level of conflict lay in the competition between different national groups within the same social strata. This played a very important role for the life of the lower middle class and the learned professions. For example, representatives of the Polish and Ukrainian population were in favour of boycotting Jews, and especially of limiting Jewish participation in, and access to, the professions.

3 Intermediate structures

These cleavages were also apparent in the intermediate structures. Thus, the farmers' commercial and professional organizations were split according to nationality. Only the socialists and the communists – although of limited influence – tried to bring together the different national groups in multinational trade unions. However, they succeeded only in part, and conceded a large measure of autonomy to the non-Polish organized labour force.

The major area of conflict concerned the agrarian question. According to the census of 1921 more than 30 per cent of the cultivated land belonged to large landowners – defined as those who possessed over 50 hectares (*Maly Rocznik Statystyczny* 1935: 31f.) The demands for agrarian reform, which meant breaking up estates and giving more land to the peasants, played a crucial role in the years after 1918. Radical protagonists of reform demanded the break-up of large landed properties without compensation. Moderates suggested a gradual and voluntary sale of land to the peasants under the auspices of the state. Although both laws on agrarian reform, passed in 1920 and 1925, were moderate in this sense, they were not fully implemented. In the 1930s the demands of the peasantry became more radical, often leading to rural strikes and riots. The total area of large estates diminished and quite a number of peasants acquired their own land.

Towards the end of the First World War a comparable anti-capitalist attitude prevailed among the workers in the former Russian part and to an extent in the former Austria-Poland. These changed during the Polish–Soviet War in 1920, which mobilized feelings of nationalism that lasted, to some extent, until 1939 due to high rates of unemployment.

4 The economy

The most important problem for Poland was the creation of an independent, sovereign state and the unification in one independent state of the territory which before the war had belonged to Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary. This prewar division had a number of lasting economic consequences. After the war the Polish economy lost its connection with the German and Russian markets. The first was very important for the sale of coal and steel from Upper Silesia as well as Posnan agricultural products; the second for textiles from Lodz or the railway equipment from Warsaw or Sosnowiec, and also for the import of raw materials used by Polish industries (Landau and Tomaszewski 1985: 12, 14).

The former division was also reflected in differences in economic development. The Prussian part of Poland was more modern with an advanced infrastructure, a concentration of industry in Silesia and an intensive market-oriented agriculture. The former Russian part represented an example of the development of enclaves without strong linkages to the rest of the territory. In many regions it had a modern industry and a limited number of modern large estates or medium-sized farms, but these coexisted with an old-fashioned extensive agriculture and with primitive handicraft and trade. Least developed was the former Austrian part. Another consequence of the former division was the incoherence of the transport system. The only extensive railway connections and highway links were between Warsaw and the most important cities in the west and the south of the country.

Furthermore, the Polish economy was unfavourably influenced by the consequences of the First World War. For more than a year the largest part of Poland was near the major front line which for two years afterwards shifted to the eastern peripheries of the prospective Polish state. In addition, the country suffered from German occupation. The occupying forces ruined the textile industry and carried out a wasteful exploitation of agriculture and the mining industry, together with a policy of starvation with regard to the Polish civil population. After 1918, the war continued in the form of conflicts on nearly all borders. Of special importance was the Polish–Soviet War in 1920 when the Red Army advanced to the vicinity of Warsaw.

The formation of the new state under these circumstances brought about severe financial problems. Initially there was no system of taxation and the wages for the civil service and the expenses for the newly organized Polish army were urgent and unavoidable. The result was sharply increasing inflation.

Industry changed in the interwar period more qualitatively than quantitatively, traditional trades declined and modern industry recovered. The general estimates of output differ, but they all suggest that the levels of 1913 and 1938 were equivalent even though industry had changed both in structure and efficiency (Landau and Tomaszewski 1985: 121f.).

The development of the infrastructure in transport and communications, the power industry, the new Gdynia harbour as well as the reconstruction of the financial infrastructure of banking and other credit institutions were important

achievements. After the monetary reform in 1924, and despite a short slump in 1925, the Polish currency became very stable.

Agriculture suffered most from the economic transformation, and from the European structural agricultural crisis. The former Prussian parts – with their highly efficient agriculture – were affected more severely than the other regions which suffered from the depression but profited from the improvement of elementary and agricultural education. As rye and potatoes were the most popular crops, their production was an important indicator – the yield of rye in 1934–8 was equal to the level of 1909–13, only 11.2 quintals (1 quintal = 100 kilograms) per hectare. The yield of potatoes increased a little (*Maly Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*: 77).

Poland, like many other European countries, lived through a period of postwar unemployment in the years 1918–19, through an economic depression during the war with Russia in 1920, and through the inflation which had started during the First World War, but which reached its peak in the years 1921–3. This led to a decrease in real wages and severely reduced the value of money savings and was followed by further depression and unemployment in the years 1924–5, and another shorter and less severe inflation in 1925. After less than three prosperous years between 1926 and 1929 Poland lapsed again into an economic crisis affecting both industry and agriculture between 1929 and 1933.

This later crisis brought unprecedented unemployment among both among manual and white-collar workers. The number of the unemployed was only 3 per cent of manpower in 1929, but increased to 43.5 per cent by 1933 and was still at 39.9 per cent in 1935 (Landau and Tomaszewski 1985: 6). Moreover, the depression ruined agriculture because of rapidly declining prices for its products, threatened the existence of the middle classes and the properties of business and large landowners. Only in the few years before the Second World War was there some slow improvement.

The economic and social consequences of the crisis of 1929–3 produced a very heterogeneous condemnation of capitalism. Not only communists, but democratic socialists too, demanded the nationalization of the economy and the implementation of a system of planning. The condemnation of capitalism came not only from the workers. The pauperization of the intelligentsia and, partly, of the lower middle classes shook their confidence in capitalism, too. A strong conviction was established that state intervention should be introduced on a larger scale. This idea was popular among many supporters of the Pilsudski regime and among many radical nationalists and Christian democrats. The peasant movement was influenced by the ideology of agrarianism which in its radical interpretation considered co-operatives appropriate for a modern agriculture and at the same time demanded a broad nationalization of industry.

5 Poland in the international arena

The independent Polish state came into being when the old political order in Europe was collapsing and when a chance appeared – though for a short time

only – to realize Polish wishes for independence without the disastrous interference of outside forces (Rollet 1984: 101). However, this far-reaching freedom was not to last for long. In the following years developments outside Polish frontiers had a far greater impact on her position in the new political order in Europe than the policies pursued by Poland herself.

Those in charge of Polish politics after the First World War put forward two basic programmes. The first one expressed the views of Józef Pilsudski, head of State up to 1922. The other programme was drawn up by the nationalist party and especially its leader Roman Dmowski (Albert 1989: 55). Both programmes showed that Polish politicians anticipated a worsening of the international situation, a weakening of Poland's position, and were seeking various ways to remedy this situation. According to Pilsudski's programme Poland could become a strong state only as a great power or a would-be great power, and as a multinational state stretching far into the east, outside the indigenous Polish territories. Pilsudski wanted to realize his plans in the east by setting up a federation, in order not to arouse open hostility to Poland among Lithuanian, Ukrainian or Belorussian national forces. Events thwarted these plans for a great federal state. There were a number of reasons for this lack of success. Even after three years of civil war, Soviet Russia remained strong enough to oppose Poland. Pilsudski also underestimated the strength of social movements in the Ukrainian and Belorussian territories which linked them to Russia and set them against Poland. From a historical perspective too his plans were anachronistic. Ideas of national self-determination in Europe were at that time so strong that a model of a state with a dominant Polish minority had no chance. Thus, the Poland which came into being in the East was the Poland as the nationalists wanted to have it. They were aware of the force of national movements and to avoid disruptive conflicts wanted Poland to be a state dominated by the Polish majority. According to their plans, Poland was to be strong enough not to become Russia's satellite and for this purpose they envisaged political cooperation with a reconstructed white Russia. Not a satellite and not a great power, but a medium state assisted by the more powerful neighbour, this was the basic idea behind nationalist foreign policy.

In March 1921, following the signing of the Polish–Soviet peace treaty in Riga, the Polish eastern frontier was fixed broadly in accordance with the plans of the nationalists. But with its territorial programme won, White Russia ceased to exist and political coordination between Poland and Soviet Russia was impossible. Thus, as Pilsudski had wished, Poland was opposed to Germany and Russia, but it was not a great power. As the nationalists had wanted, Poland was a medium-sized state with a dominant Polish majority, but was entangled in lasting conflicts with both its large neighbours.

In general, there were two directions and conceptions for Polish foreign policy. Both were continuations of ideas that had been developed earlier (Wandycz 1988: 17). One was put forward by the nationalists. Its central point was the need for close political cooperation between Poland and France as a substitute for cooperation with Russia. The Nationalists, however, were aware that French

assistance was less effective because France was too distant to take a direct interest in Polish affairs. France's weakening position in world politics, and her failure to prevent the restoration of German power, undermined the very foundations of the nationalist programme. This was disclosed at Locarno when the French representatives contented themselves with international guarantees for the French frontiers with Germany while neither Poland nor Czechoslovakia obtained a similar guarantee.

An alternative policy was advocated by the groups close to Pilsudski – the Belweder camp. Pilsudski's followers contemplated bringing the small countries on the border of the Soviet Union closer together. They wanted to set up a bloc under Polish guidance and hoped that this bloc could play an independent role in Europe. They were also keen on maintaining and stepping up separatist and nationalist trends in the Soviet Union. However, they succeeded only partially both in their bloc policy and in their internal Soviet policy.

6 The political setting

Up to 1926 Poland was a parliamentary democracy (Ajnenkiel 1988: 71, 91) established in 1918 and confirmed by the March Constitution of 1921. From the legal point of view the whole population, Poles as well as non-Poles, enjoyed equal civil and political rights. The accomplishment of democratic freedoms was somewhat limited with regard to national minorities, particularly the Ukrainians and Belorussians. Another problem concerned the communists because the communist party was treated as a threat to the State and remained illegal. There were no major changes in civil rights after the 1926 coup and even under the new April Constitution of 1935. But the reality was different and changing restrictions were applied to all opposition parties although they were mostly not very severe. Nevertheless opposition activity was impeded by censorship.

During the first period up to 1921 Poland had no constitution, but the separation of powers was regulated by the so-called 'Short Constitution'. The head of state was chief of the executive. He appointed the prime minister and could dismiss him; he was also commander-in-chief of the Polish Army. As the head of state Pilsudski supervised external policy too, even though this was not explicitly stated. None the less the prime minister needed the consent of a parliamentary majority which could dismiss him or any minister. Parliament, the Sejm, controlled the government and had the full legislative powers even if it could delegate them to the head of state or the government. The judiciary was independent.

The first electoral law applied to the election of 1919. It provided for proportional representation, relatively extensive constituencies and a dominant role for political parties. Proportionality was weakened only by the lack of a national list and these first elections did not include the later Polish eastern territories. Jews were only weakly represented due to a lack of consensus amongst themselves – and a lack of a national list as well – as were the Ukrainians and Belorussians who suffered from the disadvantageous division of voting areas.

The constitutional law passed in 1921 endowed the president with representative functions only. The cabinet was dependent on the Sejm which, with its supervising, appointing, discharging and legislative powers, dominated political life. The constitutional rules for elections, and the electoral law in force up to the 1930 elections, increased the proportionality of the system. This benefited national minorities. The most important change was the introduction of a national list to correct deficits in the proportionality between votes and seats. The constitution also introduced an upper chamber, the Senate, with the same electoral rules but very limited powers.

Before Polish independence there were two political groups competing for control of the state (Holzer 1974: 102). One was the Democratic Left, also called the 'independence group'. The second was the right. Both were attacked by the revolutionary left, prospective communists, who were weak within Poland but received support from their Russian and German allies. At this critical moment Pilsudski, the founder of the anti-Russian Polish legions that had fought on the side of Austria-Hungary, and later a prisoner during the German occupation, reappeared on the political scene. His popularity was immense. The moderate left saw in him the embodiment of Polish aspirations for independence. The right, despite considerable mistrust, was ready to come to an agreement with him, considering that his social outlook was moderate. In this way Pilsudski came to power in November 1918 as head of State (Garlicki 1988: 204).

The moderate left constituted a bloc of various groups. The most important were the Polish Socialist Party and the left-wing peasant parties. Apart from the leadership of the political parties, there was a group of people near to Pilsudski himself. This group was particularly influential in the army which up to 1922 remained under his direct and almost exclusive control.

Pilsudski, in fact, was rather indifferent towards the programme of the moderate left-wing parties. His two central political aims were the realisation of political expansion to the east and the consolidation of his own position in the state. For him the union with the moderate left was a marriage of convenience. The democratic parties gave him support and broadened his popular base. Their own programme provided for the foundation of a democratic state and social system, but they did not hold a uniform view over the extent to which social privileges should be abolished. Apart from statements referring to the introduction and maintenance of parliamentary democracy and democratic freedoms, they only envisaged carrying out agrarian reform and maintaining the eight-hour working day introduced in 1918. For the left-wing parties their alliance with Pilsudski was, to a great extent, a marriage of unrequited love.

The right was another large bloc of parties. Its programme was a blend of nationalistic traditions stemming in part from the First World War, hostility to Germany and friendship towards the Western powers. The nationalist National Democratic Party was the leading force in this bloc (Wapinski 1980: 171f.). The idea of the national interest and of the nation struggling for life were their unifying themes. The social appeal of these parties was subordinated to policies which satisfied the interests of the propertied classes. The right-wing parties

adjusted their tactics to the general atmosphere of democratization and pretended to agree to a democratic state system – but wanted to limit democracy as far as possible. A similar tactic was applied with respect to social problems. Their attitude towards the land reform was most characteristic. They did not come out against reform but opposed all concrete programmes.

In fact the right wanted to create a state in which the social privileges enjoyed by the propertied and upper classes would be supplemented with national privileges enjoyed by Poles and denied to national minorities, and by denominational privileges enjoyed by Roman Catholics at the expense of other religious denominations. The right-wing parties rejected Pilsudski's claim to be the leader of the state and the nation, but they agreed to recognize him as a state leader for a transitional period. They hoped that later they would gain the upper hand with the assistance of the centre parties, among which the peasant party 'Piast' led by Wincenty Witos played an important role.

The first general election to the Sejm, which took place at the end of January 1919, showed that the right was stronger than the left. Nevertheless the right could not form a majority without the assistance of the central groupings – and it could not win their support because of the major political importance of the draft proposals on land reform.

An agreement between all the parties was only concluded in the middle of 1920 because of the critical situation in the war against Soviet Russia. An all-party Government of National Defence was formed with Witos as prime minister. The national emergency induced all political parties, except the communists, to take joint action. The unity was only temporary, however, and did not survive the war. After its conclusion deep political and social differences returned. The main object of conflict was the future constitutional law which was drafted at the time.

The first parliamentary election carried out after the passing of the new constitution in 1922 again proved that no political group could gain an absolute majority. Nevertheless, the right-wing parties gained a relative majority. The democratic left took a defensive attitude and the right tried to secure a permanent majority with the help of the centre groupings. There were also tendencies in the rightist groups that wished to go beyond constitutional rights and impose its rule by force. Nationalism was the ideological motivation in this plan. Although it was not true, the right-wing parties maintained that only the presence of deputies elected by national minorities deprived them of a majority in the Sejm.

Pilsudski refused to be a candidate for the presidency. Soon after the presidential elections he also retired from active work in the army and chose a voluntary 'exile' in a settlement near Warsaw. As time went by and the popular discontent grew, Pilsudski gradually became the hope of an increasing number of people who wanted reform of the republic.

The 1922 presidential election was won by Gabriel Narutowicz, a candidate of the democratic left who also enjoyed Pilsudski's support and that of the part of the centre and the national minorities. The rightist groupings unleashed a

Table 14.3 Electoral results (Poland), 1922–30 (seats at given date)

	15.02.1923	10.06.1928	01.03.1932
National People's Association	98	37	62
Christian National People's Party	28	0	0
Christian Democratic Party	43	18	15
Polish Agrarians' Party Piast	70	21	0
Polish Agrarians' Party Wyzwolnic	48	40	0
Peasant's Party	0	26	0
Agrarian Party	0	0	48
Radical Agrarians' Party	4	0	0
Peasants' Association	0	3	0
National Workers' Party	18	14	10
National Workers' Party – Left	0	5	0
Polish Socialist Party	41	63	24
Communist Party	2	7	4
Agrarian Leftist Association	0	0	1
Ukrainian Club	20	0	18
Ukrainian Socialist-Radical Party	0	0	3
Belorussian Club	11	0	0
Ukrainian-Belorussian Club	0	30	0
German Club	16	19	5
Jewish Club	34	13	6
Non-Party Block BBWR	0	122	247
Others and Non-Party	11	26	1
Total seats	444	444	444

campaign against him and one of its supporters assassinated Narutowicz. The result was a temporary consolidation of the left and centre parties which found expression in their solidarity in the election of the new president Wojciechowski and the appointment of General Sikorski as prime minister.

The president and the prime minister were not linked to the left. They were nearer to those centre parties to which the right had to appeal in any efforts to create a majority in parliament within the framework of the constitution. The murder of Narutowicz caused the isolation of the right and only gradually, as general indignation decreased, did plans for a new agreement with the centre groups meet with a warmer response on the part of their potential partners. The central aim of the left was the maintenance of the existing balance of forces. So they were unable to enforce even a minimum programme of social reforms – even in the area of agriculture.

In the first half of 1923 the right-wing parties came to power after having succeeded in gaining a majority with the support of centre groupings. An agreement was signed which provided for the formation of a joint parliamentary and government bloc. The pact envisaged compliance with the demands of the moderate peasant party for the implementation of some land reform, but on conditions more favourable for large landowners than those envisaged by the Law of 1920.

The sharp increase in inflation, which was fuelled by the economic policy of the government, undermined its popularity. The wave of protest stimulated by the

left-wing parties reached its peak in November 1923 when a general strike of workers was proclaimed which caused riots in Cracow. These events dealt a mortal blow to the government of Witos, which lost its majority and was compelled to resign. This brought the situation full circle again. More and more the inefficiency of the system for ruling the country was emphasized. The permanent political crisis was aggravated by the impossibility of overcoming economic difficulties. This situation induced the most important groups to look for compromise again, which resulted in Grabski forming a government. Grabski was an outstanding statesman and economic leader. For many years he had been active in the nationalist party but at this time he was not directly linked with any political group. Both in interior and foreign policy, he found his own way between the opposing sides and played both sides against the middle. Grabski wished to save the political and economic existence of the Polish state, but realized that this would involve great efforts. He made all groups in the population share the cost of economic improvement, the reform of the monetary system and the defeat of inflation. He also realized the danger of a breakdown in the parliamentary system which might result from the conflict between the political parties. He managed to maintain his government which was not based on a stable parliamentary majority, leaning sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left. He succeeded in doing what none of his predecessors had been able to do and his government exercised power for two years (Tomaszewski 1961).

When Grabski's government finally resigned in the autumn of 1925, in the face of new economic and international difficulties, the only possible solution was another all-party compromise. The new government under Skrzynski was made up of representatives from almost all parties. But this compromise differed from that of the previous government. The ministers implemented directives of their respective parties and the government policy was thus deprived of any clear line.

7 The *coup d'état* and the authoritarian regime

In May 1926 the struggle for power in Poland entered a new phase. The right again came to an understanding with the centre. The centre-right bloc was revived and a new government was formed with Witos as prime minister. This government came to power at a time when the political crisis reached its peak. The cabinet changes, which were in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution brought, no economic or political improvement and were unpopular. All agreed that the situation could not last any longer. This was the most favourable moment for Pilsudski to go beyond the provisions of the constitution and seize power (Garlicki 1988: 319). He came out against the right and hoped to win the support not only of the left, which he gained – for a short time even of the communists – but also of a considerable part of the right. He outlined a programme which was so vague that each side could expect something after his coming to power.

The form of *coup d'état* chosen by Pilsudski avoided any open cooperation with the leadership of the political parties. He carried it out with the help of that part of the army which was ready to follow his orders. It was only after the beginning of the coup that the moderate and extreme left declared its support. This was a result of the spontaneous support given to Pilsudski by the great majority of workers and the intelligentsia – perhaps with the exception of the western regions – and of the sympathy for his actions in a large part of the peasant population.

Only a few days were needed to change the political system. The government resigned as well as the president. Pilsudski now became a real dictator. The left considered the coup its victory, although many experienced party leaders felt some anxiety at the course of events. The democratic party leaders were apprehensive about a situation in which they were faced with a *fait accompli*. The lack of a political programme behind the coup, and the fact that the new ruler set himself at a distance from the left, was another reason for their misgivings. The right lost their chance because they were not bold enough to come out against the political system. After the coup the right could no longer hope to gain power through parliament. Only one possibility was left – that of overthrowing the system by force. But Pilsudski had been the first to follow this route. So to oppose Pilsudski the right looked for a policy that could win greater popularity.

Attempts to do this were made by Dmowski, an experienced leader of Polish nationalism. Their aims were to be represented by a new organization, the Great Poland Camp. But from the very moment of its foundation there were essential inconsistencies in the programme of the new organization. On the one hand it was influenced by the example of Italian fascism; on the other, it was to be a platform for cementing the traditional right and centre parties. When plans for the merger proved unrealistic, the camp became both a partner of the traditional nationalist party and its rival.

The constitutional amendments after the coup in 1926 strengthened the position of the president, but President Moscicki still remained largely a figure-head. Constitutional law and reality had little in common because the dominant position of Pilsudski was not reflected in law. Even with amendments the Constitution reaffirmed parliamentary democracy, but non-parliamentary pressure allowed the government exemption from parliamentary control. Under the Polish authoritarian regime the administration and the citizens took little account of the law, which was interpreted rather loosely.

Pilsudski began to put his own political line into practice. He did not dissolve the compromised parliament to allow a new one to be elected, nor did he accept the post of the president of the Republic. He cooperated with individual leaders from the democratic parties, but only those who for many years had been his faithful followers and placed his orders above the directives of their party leadership. At the same time he established close contacts with small groups of Polish conservatives. In this way a new political group was formed composed of individuals from different political origins. It was called 'Sanacja' ('recovery')

because it proclaimed itself as based on new relationships. Pilsudski avoided making analogies to fascism. He did not proclaim nationalist slogans and, in particular, he never made any antisemitic statements. On the other hand, he liked to emphasize his own role and made many statements stressing the importance and role of the state authorities and the state apparatus.

Pilsudski was a political leader in a nineteenth century style. He did not try to influence and organize the general political activities of the population. On the contrary, he relied on its passiveness without active cooperation. Over time this concept of power aroused increasing reservations among Pilsudski's followers because it was based exclusively on his personal prestige, and it presaged future problems as he was already old and ill.

Pilsudski's policies were opposed by the left in the name of defending the rights of the parliament and democratic freedoms, although up to 1928 these rights were attacked no more than by some previous governments. The joint opposition of the left was accompanied by numerous splits which were provoked by Pilsudski's followers. Pilsudski had to show that the alignment of political forces existing before 1926 had radically changed. This, and the necessity of holding elections, were the reason for the establishment of the Non-party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government in 1928. The Bloc was almost completely non-ideological and had a poorly developed organizational structure. In the 1928 elections it won a considerable percentage of votes, but it did not obtain an absolute majority. The election marked the beginning of a difficult period for Pilsudski's internal policy, because he had to face a newly elected parliament, containing a majority of opposition deputies.

The result of the elections encouraged the left-wing parties to action. It won them the support of the centre parties too. In 1929, a 'centre-left' agreement was concluded. In the face of the ineffectiveness of parliamentary action, and a growing discontent stimulated by the beginning of the economic crisis, it started to organize mass public meetings under slogans of the defence of parliamentary democracy and civil rights. The regime reacted very sharply. It wanted to demonstrate its decisiveness and decided to terrorize the opposition and to hold a new election. These aims were served by dissolving parliament, arresting opposition leaders and holding the parliamentary election of 1930. This resulted, however, in only a small majority for the Bloc.

The 1930 experience and the development of the economic crisis influenced the political changes that took place in all opposition parties. An anti-capitalist mood was growing and the influence of extreme political trends was increasing, trends that proclaimed the need for radical changes. The nature of these changes differed depending on who proclaimed them. The public feeling encouraged the communists. On the right it stimulated the increasing popularity of radical slogans. The 'centre-left' coalition disintegrated. This was accompanied by the consolidation of peasant parties which merged in 1931 into one uniform and powerful Peasant Party, much more radical than the former groups had been.

The dominant bloc did not change its previous political line. This worried many of its leaders, as the years of the crisis reduced the popularity of the

regime. Pilsudski was already unable to direct the Sanacja policy into any channel that could give hope for a brighter future (Garlicki 1988: 704). The regime depended upon the prestige enjoyed by Pilsudski and the power of its military and civil apparatus.

The constitution of 1935 was an attempt to bring together the law and the political reality (Ajnenkiel 1988: 102–7). The powers of the president were extended. The government and its prime minister were responsible only to the president who appointed and dismissed the cabinet. The legislative role was partially fulfilled by the president, too. The powers of parliament were limited to a part in legislation and a more advisory role. On top of all this the electoral law was not only based on majority rule, but there was a limit the number of candidates. The upper Chamber received more powers, but an important part of its membership was nominated by the president and the others elected by a small intellectual and political elite. In consequence nearly all nongovernmental parties boycotted the election.

Paradoxically, this constitution did not work as expected. The position of Moscicki was rather weak, the government was continuously influenced by different rival groups and Rydz-Smigly, as commander-in-chief, exercised powers which were not provided in the Constitution. The constitution aimed to create a strong central power but, in fact, the Polish authoritarian system remained very weak irrespective of the rules of law.

The stabilization of power carried out by Pilsudski after the *coup d'état* of 1926 also improved Poland's standing in the international arena. Poland now inspired greater confidence, which had beneficial economic results. Although the tariff war started by Germany in 1925 did not end, unexpectedly, after the first difficulties had been surmounted, in the longer run it made Poland economically independent from Germany upon which she had formerly relied heavily.

For seven years Pilsudski manoeuvred in foreign policy. He sought rapprochement with Great Britain but did not want to sever the alliance with France, weak as it was. He did not make concessions to Germany but tried to avoid conflict. He also tried to improve relations with the Soviet Union and this led to the conclusion of a non-aggression treaty in 1932. When Hitler seized power in January 1933 the balance of forces in Europe changed completely. In the longer term, Poland was greatly menaced, but the immediate effect was favourable. Germany became isolated in Europe and the sympathy of world public opinion turned to Poland. German pressure on Poland relaxed for a period, allowing a non-aggression agreement to be concluded with Nazi Germany in 1934.

The death of Pilsudski in 1935 shook the deepest foundations of the regime. Ever new ideas were put forward, often contradicting each other, to find ways to prevent power slipping out of the hands of the Sanacja. Soon after Pilsudski's death one idea was put forward by Slawek, his unofficial heir. Under this, the Bloc, and all the other parties, were to be dissolved. Then an organization would be set up to encompass the whole community. But Slawek failed to cope with the difficulties of the struggle for power as his opponents could take advantage

of the provisions in the new presidential constitution that was passed shortly before Pilsudski's death. President Moscicki, who up to that time held only a representative function, unexpectedly became one of the main 'pretenders' to the post of actual ruler of the country. He was supported by other Sanacja leaders who were in conflict with Slawek. The presidential group adopted a diametrically opposed idea based on relaxing the political struggle against the democratic parties.

When Slawek's defeat became obvious another group began to see power led by Rydz-Smigly, Pilsudski's successor as general commander of the Polish Army. Moscicki could not refuse a compromise. A new government with the representation of both groups was formed. They had some common political plans. Both wanted to divide the opposition and try to find a common platform with the Peasant Party. Rydz-Smigly hoped to find it under a policy of increasing the defence potential and Moscicki through espousing a certain liberalization. When the negotiations with the Peasant Party did not bring any result, Rydz-Smigly radically changed his position. In 1937, a new political organization, the Camp of National Unification, was officially established. Nationalist features were obvious in its programme. It also wished to encompass the whole population, to introduce strict centralization and a military-type discipline (Majchrowski 1985). At the same time efforts were made to establish contacts with the extreme groups from the tradition of the Great Poland Camp which had been dissolved by the government in 1933. These groups were aggressively antisemitic and anticapitalist. The leadership of the oppositional nationalist party adopted similar slogans and carried on a policy of rivalry with Sanacja.

The changes in Sanacja, and in the nationalist groups, influenced the policy of the democratic parties. Socialists and agrarians rejected the communist proposal of forming an 'anti-fascist' popular front. They watched the controversies inside Sanacja with hope, but feared the possible victory of Moscicki's opponents and tried to reach an understanding with the presidential group. At the same time a new political plan took shape. Leaders of smaller centre parties, and some members of the Peasant Party, together with moderate nationalist leaders, began to form a coalition, which included leading politicians such as Witos, Sikorski and Paderewski. The coalition hoped to reach an agreement with the more liberal circles of Sanacja.

The attempts to transform Poland into a more or less totalitarian country reached their peak in the autumn of 1937, but there was a strong opposition both within Sanacja, and among higher officers. A new compromise was reached. The struggle of opposition parties was no longer as sharp as before and the reason for this was the threat of approaching war.

At first the Polish policy towards Hitler's expansionist moves had been very cautious, stressing some Polish aspirations and emphasizing her neutrality. But during the *Anschluss* Poland forced Lithuania to renounce its claims to Wilno, and during the crisis over the Sudetenland demanded the part of Cieszyn Silesia which both countries had been claiming from Czechoslovakia since 1918.

In 1938 Poland flatly rejected the German demand to revise the Versailles decisions, not consenting either to the incorporation of Danzig into the Third Reich or to the building of a highway and railway line across the Polish territory to connect the Third Reich with Eastern Prussia. In view of Poland's intransigent stand the Western powers took stronger diplomatic actions. Great Britain gave Poland guarantees which were soon replaced by bilateral guarantees, the Polish–French alliance became vital again. But after the Soviet–German treaty was signed on 23 August 1939 the military isolation of Poland became inevitable and the alliance with western powers turned out to be more or less illusory.

8 Conclusion

The experience of democracy in interwar Poland was ambivalent. Parliamentary democracy was not a success during the first years of independent statehood. For both the new democracies of Eastern and Southern Europe, and for the democracies of Western and Northern Europe, the times were favourable neither economically nor politically. In Poland all the problems were cumulated which contributed to a rapid collapse of democracy. Thereafter an authoritarian regime emerged, but this new political system did not, in the long run, accomplish economic stability, social equilibrium or command the loyalty of national minorities.

The Polish defeat in 1939 was a consequence of the internal and external policies pursued by the authoritarian regime. This may be a one-sided opinion and an unfair judgement on the last Polish governments as by then the situation was beyond the means of a weak country, irrespective of its political system. To Polish opinion, the responsibility for the economic crisis in 1929–33, for the slow recovery and for the collapse of the independent state, lay with the authoritarian regime. The result was a reaction against the extreme right and left and a democratic orientation in the Polish wartime government-in-exile and the Polish underground.

15

Portugal: Crisis and Early Authoritarian Takeover

Antonio Costa Pinto

1 General background

Portugal entered the 'age of the masses' without several of the problems which characterized other democratic regimes in interwar Europe. As an old 'nation-state' whose political frontiers had remained basically unchanged since the late middle ages, Portugal on the eve of the twentieth century corresponded closely to the ideal model of liberal nationalism. 'State' and 'nation' co-existed well and there was strong cultural homogeneity; there were no national or ethnic-cultural minorities in Portugal, nor were there Portuguese populations in neighbouring countries; furthermore, there were no religious or ethnic-linguistic minorities (Martins 1971). In Portugal there is a nearly complete absence of the historical and cultural variables which typified other breakdown cases (Costa Pinto and Monteiro 1994).

The most important historical variable relating to Portugal was the country's imperial and subsequently colonial character. From the seventeenth century Portuguese imperial power had been complemented by its political and economic dependence on Britain; only at the end of the nineteenth century was Portugal confronted with the threat posed by the European powers to Lisbon's 'historic rights' in Africa (Alexandre 1991).

Tensions with Britain increased dramatically during the 1880s and led for the first time in contemporary history to strong anti-British sentiments following the British 'ultimatum' of 1890 (Teixeira 1990). London foiled Portuguese aspirations to the territory of what is now Zimbabwe and, in 1890, forced Portugal to abandon her intention to unite Angola and Mozambique. This episode helped to cement modern Portuguese nationalism and marked symbolically what up to the 1970s was to be the main variable of Portuguese foreign policy: the defence of her colonial heritage. In fact, one might say that 'the identification of the colonial empire with nationalism in Portugal provides a kind of functional equivalent to the divisive nation-state issues' present in other European societies at the time (Martins 1971: 63).

Portugal



In the second half of the nineteenth century Portugal could be categorized as a non-industrialized country with a stable system of 'oligarchic parliamentarianism'. The dynamics of social and economic change did not differ much from that in other 'semi-peripheral' countries which Mouzelis (1986) has defined as exhibiting a combination of 'early parliamentarism and late

industrialisation'. This system of oligarchic and clientelistic liberalism began to disintegrate at the turn of the century after the exploitation of the African colonies had been intensified and a timid policy of industrialization based on import substitution initiated. This crisis saw the emergence of the Republican movement which mobilized large sections of the urban middle (and lower middle) classes hitherto 'excluded' from politics (Almeida 1991).

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the Republicans in Portugal were able to erode the limited clientelist system of monarchic 'rotativism' both in electoral terms and in terms of political and social mobilisation. The Republican Party had an extremely flexible programme which exhibited a great capacity to exploit such themes as nationalism, anti-clericalism, the expansion of political participation, the right to strike and other demands of the weak labour movement. On the eve of the 1910 Revolution, the party assembled under its policy umbrella a broad spectrum of political groups ranging from moderate electoralists to proponents of Jacobin authoritarianism. It also included secret organizations with a strong popular base in Lisbon which united radical Republicans and anarchists. One of these organizations, the 'Portuguese Carbonaria', subsequently succeeded in establishing a foothold in many of the party's local committees (Valente 1974; Wheeler 1978).

In October 1910, the Constitutional Monarchy was overthrown by a revolt in Lisbon. This swift revolution was co-ordinated by Republican members of the armed forces and carried out by determined action on the part of both civilian and military Carbonaria members. Most military units remained neutral. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Portugal thus became one of Europe's first republics.

The Republican elites initiated a tentative process of 'mass nationalisation', always conscious of the social and political influence of the rural areas which continued to determine the structure of Portuguese society as a whole. These elites were the principal agents behind the break with the country's long-standing national symbols and the traditional apparatus of school socialisation which came to characterize Portugal in the twentieth century. They were also instrumental in 'sanctifying' Portugal's colonial empire as a factor essential to providing the 'nation' with a viable identity. The changes of 1910 were further characterized by the adoption of a new national flag and anthem, new civil rituals and holidays, a model for 'citizen building', populist-style political mobilization and a 'nationalization' of the teaching programmes which accompanied the expansion of the school system.

2 The socioeconomic constraints of political change

Although there was a significant acceleration in social and economic change between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1930s (industrial development, urbanization), this process remained moderate in comparison to most other Western European countries. During this period Portugal can be said to

have been situated on the 'semi-periphery of the world economy' (Schwartzman 1989). Its economy was backward and its industry weak and sparse (Reis 1993). The changes in the workforce give a more accurate picture of this backwardness. In 1911, Portugal had about 5½ million inhabitants and an active population of 2.5 million, 58 per cent of whom worked in agriculture, 25 per cent in industry and 17 per cent in the tertiary sector (Nunes 1989). By 1930, the agricultural sector had decreased by 3 per cent, the tertiary sector had increased by 3 per cent while the secondary sector remained stable.

In rural Portugal, the base of the social pyramid was formed by the poor peasants. In 1915, approximately 57 per cent of agricultural landowners had very small holdings and many of the remainder owned only small pieces of land. By 1930, few changes had taken place and we find 'almost one million men, women and children who belonged to a type of activity not directly dependent on capital and whose main productive activity was to scrape a living out of tiny pieces of land which they partially or totally owned' (Medeiros 1978: 34; author's translation). These small and very small holdings were concentrated in the north and centre of the country, although there were also some large landholdings in these areas. North and central Portugal were also responsible for most of the country's wine production. This was the main element of capitalist agriculture and the main concern of interest groups connected to agriculture and commerce, wine being Portugal's most important agricultural export product.

In central and southern Portugal, especially in the area north of Lisbon and in the Alentejo, cereals were the main crop; these were the regions in which agricultural production was the most modern. In the Alentejo, where very large holdings (*latifundia*) predominated and most of the country's agricultural proletariat (ca. 3.8 per cent of the active agrarian population) was concentrated, wheat and cork – the latter Portugal's second largest agricultural export – were produced. The most modern farming methods were to be found in the Ribatejo, which supplied both urban and external markets. Portuguese exports consisted mainly of agricultural products, which relied upon an isolated labour force remunerated in kind.

Fruit, wine (mainly Port), raw cork and wool made up for more than half of Portuguese exports while approximately two-thirds of the produce from the colonial possessions was re-exported. England was still the major trading partner, accounting for 22 per cent of all exports and 27 per cent of imports in 1910 (Schwartzman 1989: 57).

Portugal's industrial sector requires more detailed analysis. Employment in industry increased only negligibly during the period under consideration. Of the 25 per cent listed in 1911, most were craftsmen and small factory owners who 'use[d] family labour at home or irregular seasonal labour' (Telo 1989: 127). Outside the Lisbon and Oporto areas, the 'industrial proletariat' was a statistical 'fantasy' according to which the number of 'factory owners' exceeded the number of workers and included 'mill owners', carpenters, smiths, tailors, bakers, cobblers, etc (Guinote 1989: 190). In 1917, 81.2 per cent of such 'factories'

Table 15.1 Portugal: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1910	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
GDP (m. Es)	950	1846	2629	3366	5405	8049	10263	11368	12075	12680	14802	16632	16304	15795	16117	16450	17093	17306	17532	18289	19123	19427	
in 1938 prices	11001	8067	7318	6496	8941	9210	8970	10269	11295	11191	13550	14736	15068	16087	16694	17054	17563	17751	17639	17812	19123	20396	
GDP/cap. (Es)	158	304	432	547	870	1284	1618	1768	1856	1927	2223	2472	2393	2286	2301	2318	2378	2378	2376	2446	2524	2531	
GDP (m. US-\$)	1026	1995	2841	3637	5840	8697	11089	12283	13047	13701	15994	17971	17616	17066	17414	17774	18469	18699	18943	19761	20662	20991	
GDP/cap (US-\$)	171	328	466.9	591.6	939.5	1386.9	1748	1910.6	2005.1	2082.2	2402.2	2670.7	2586.1	2470.5	2486.7	2504.8	2569.1	2568.9	2567.2	2643.3	2727.7	2734.3	
Population (thousands)	6004	6082	6084	6148	6216	6271	6344	6429	6507	6580	6658	6729	6812	6908	7003	7096	7189	7279	7379	7476	7575	7677	
COST (1913 = 100)	100	265	416	600	700	1012	1325	1282	1238	1312	1265	1307	1253	1137	1118	1117	1127	1129	1151	1189	1158	1103	
Unions	223					334			507														
Confed. Unions	100					200			200														
Confed. Union Membership	35000					90000			70000														
% of Tot. Union Membership	53					60			25														
B. o. F. Trade (m. Es)	-54	-122	-469	-708	-808	-1545	-2009	-1622	-1606	-1940	-1650	-1456	-1461	-862	-916	-1103	-1056	-1371	-968	-1151	-1161	-741	
Crisis Indicators																							
Cost of Living			100	117	169	221	214	206	219	211	218	209	190	186	186	188	188	188	192	198	193	184	
GDP			100	161	239	305	338	359	377	440	494	484	469	479	489	508	514	521	514	521	543	568	577

Sources: Nunes, Mata and Nuno, (1989); Freire (1992: 206).

Note: Es (Escudo) is US\$1.0805 (consider distortion caused by hyperinflation and change in exchange rate 1:24); GDP is at current market prices.

employed from 1 to 20 workers only, 14 per cent employed up to 100 and 4.4 per cent more than 100 workers.

A sizeable part of the industrial proletariat was employed in the textile and food industries. These industries were scattered throughout the country – the largest units being located in the Lisbon and Setubal area and in central Portugal while smaller, cottage-type industries predominated in the north. In the food industry, there was a process of concentration in milling, and fish canning experienced considerable growth during the years of the First World War. The metallurgical industry employed only 9 per cent of the industrial proletariat and was concentrated in Lisbon. Another of the great centres of Portuguese ‘working class culture’ developed during the war as a result of the growth of the chemical industry. This phenomenon did not, however, alter the nascent, scattered and almost family character of the industrial sector as a whole.

On the eve of the 1910 Revolution, the Portuguese upper classes were dominated by a small group of property owners who lived in the cities and derived its income from urban or, mainly, rural rent. This group was linked via financial or family ties with the old commercial elite which, for the most part, invested its capital abroad (Telo 1989).

On the basis of the 1911 Census, 10 per cent of the active population (approximately 600,000 persons) can be considered as belonging to the ‘middle classes’ (Guinote 1989: 198). The state bureaucracy, which had grown during the late nineteenth century, and medium-sized commerce constituted the backbone of this segment of society. During the war, however, the cleavages which existed between the ‘business’ sector and the impoverished civil service sector increased considerably.

The level of urbanization was low. Between 1900 and 1930, the number of Portuguese living in cities or towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants grew from 10.5 per cent to a mere 13.9 per cent (Nunes 1989). Lisbon stood apart as the only truly large city in the country with 8 per cent of the population. It is in Lisbon and Oporto that we find the only major centres of ‘urban political culture’. From an administrative point of view, few Portuguese cities corresponded to the norms of their average European counterparts since most were in fact no more than towns or large villages. Yet, even if we choose to define concentrations of more than 10,000 inhabitants as being ‘urban’, the relationships would not change significantly since the rural and village world accounted for more than 80 per cent of the population in 1930 (Machado 1991: 3). Following the significant upswing during the first decades of the twentieth century, urban growth was extremely slow after the 1920s and maintained a modest pace throughout the period under analysis. Only in the 1960s did the rate of urban growth once again begin to increase, the urban population accounting for 23 per cent of the total in 1960 against 77 per cent in the rural areas (Machado 1991: 4).

Since the mid-nineteenth century, peasant emigration had had a significant affect on the structure of the economy (Pereira 1984). Between 1900 and 1930, close to 1 million Portuguese emigrated abroad, mainly to Brazil and the USA.

Only the war years witnessed a temporary drop in this nearly constant flow. In spite of much rhetoric and the modest yet genuine development of the African colonies, however, very few Portuguese emigrated to Angola or Mozambique during this period. This is aptly illustrated by comments made by Afonso Costa, the leader of the Portuguese First Republic, who, being fully conscious of the difficulties a weak economy faced in exploiting its colonies, repeatedly stressed that 'what the colonies need is not working people but men with initiative and money, lots of money' (Marques 1978a: 41). Remittances from emigrants in the New World continued to be of central importance for the Portuguese economy throughout this period.

Finally the country's low literacy rate during the period should be pointed out since it constitutes a decisive element in the debate over access to political participation after the 1910 Revolution. In 1911, the majority of the Portuguese population – 70 per cent of those over seven years of age – was illiterate (Novoa 1992: 475). This was particularly characteristic of the rural and provincial industrial world and it increased from north to south (Ramos 1992; Reis 1993). In the north, with its small landholdings, illiteracy was lower than in the Alentejo where large holdings predominated. Literate culture was concentrated mainly in the urban areas, where the level of newspaper readership was quite high (Martins 1970).

3 Intermediary structures

3.1 Political parties

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Portugal experienced the consolidation of the system of 'oligarchic parliamentarism' which had emerged in 1852. For several decades and especially between 1871 and 1890, the Regenerator and the Progressist parties rotated in office according to a reasonably stable two-party arrangement known as *rotativismo*. Clientelism was also a major factor in Portuguese politics and government manipulation of local and national elections was a common practice (Almeida 1991). Although their political programmes differed slightly, the two *rotativist* parties were for all intents and purposes indistinguishable.

In the late nineteenth century, two small 'ideological' parties emerged, the Socialist and the Republican parties, both of which originated from within the same urban cultural milieu. However, the reformist 'ouvrierisme' of the Socialist Party, together with its pursuit of a 'social' rather than a 'political' strategy, severely restricted its capacity to expand beyond the bounds of the small Portuguese working class.

The Republican Party thus rapidly became the country's 'third party', constituting the central political vehicle for the urban petty bourgeoisie at the turn of the century. Republican ideology took its main inspiration from the Third French Republic. Among the main elements of its propaganda campaign against the oligarchy of the Constitutional Monarchy were demands for universal male

suffrage, a greater secularization of education, municipal autonomy and the separation of Church and State.

As the main instrument in the transition to post-oligarchic politics, the Republican Party might have played a role similar to that of other urban populist movements of the same period (Mouzelis 1986). At the beginning of the century, the party was acting to incorporate the masses into the political arena through a process of weak 'horizontal' political integration. As the 'vagueness' of its programme increased, it temporarily gathered under its political umbrella various secret societies, socialist and anarcho-syndicalist groups, anarchist student organizations and radical republican associations.

On the eve of the 1910 Revolution, the Republicans had already partially distanced themselves from their initial urban middle class and petty bourgeois base, having succeeded in mobilizing some segments of the working classes and penetrating into the middle and lower ranks of the armed forces. The party possessed both a national organization and strong local branches in the cities. It had sent 14 deputies to parliament and controlled the Lisbon city council. Not surprisingly, therefore, organized factions – ranging from moderate liberals to Jacobin nationalists – were already becoming discernible within the party's ranks. However, despite attempts to mobilize the rural areas, especially the latifundia region, the countryside remained virtually outside the Republican party structure and was perceived as a world hopelessly inaccessible to the Republican intellectual and political elites.

3.2 Interest groups

The predominance of the anarcho-syndicalists over the socialists within the Portuguese labour movement was a major factor contributing to the 'anti-system' role played by the trade unions after the turn of the century and especially during the Republican period. However, organized labour in Portugal, at least within a number of confederations, did not suffer from overt fragmentation as a result of ideological and party cleavages.

In the late nineteenth century, the socialists had dominated the small and dis-united Portuguese unions but were subsequently challenged by the anarchists (Monica 1985). The labour congress of 1909 and the wave of strikes of 1909 and 1910–12 mark the beginning of the anarcho-syndicalists' offensive at the confederation level. They succeeded in consolidating their hegemony with the founding of the National Workers Union (1914–19) and, in 1919, of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT). (Table 15.1 above shows the strength of the trade union movement during this period.)

The majority of 'class associations' existed outside the political arena. Such organizations were to be found in modest numbers in the artisan milieu and that of the corporations, the most active and 'class oriented' of them being centred in the Lisbon industrial belt (Monica 1986). In the southern areas, where latifundia predominated, social mobilization had already reached its peak in the years before the First World War (1910–12). During this period,

the rural unions claimed 40 per cent of total union membership and had been engaged in numerous strikes and terrorist forms of social action. After 1915, however, the number of rural unions declined, reaching a mere 11 per cent of the total in 1920. Accordingly, the rural workers had no significant part in the modest *biennio rosso* of 1919–21, in which the anarcho-syndicalist CGT played a major role.

Despite the efforts of the socialists (who were strongly supported by the Democratic Party) and their success in gaining a foothold in some of the more moderate segments of the labour movement, the 'anti-politics' strategy of the anarchosyndicalists, together with their 'ignoring' the new Republican system, was to constitute an important factor in the political arena of the interwar period.

Before the Republican period, examples of political mobilization on the part of employers' associations were few and largely irrelevant. Industry was very poorly represented in the political arena while commercial and agricultural interests were organized on a local or regional level only. Of particular importance here were the Commercial Association of Lisbon and the Central Association of Portuguese Farmers (ACAP), both founded in 1860. After the turn of the century, the ACAP came to be dominated by the powerful interests of the latifundia owners of the Alentejo. In 1918, this organization comprised a total of 200 local associations representing some 50,000 members (Telo 1980: 95).

The wave of strikes in 1911–12 and the radicalism of the first years of the Republic led to the emergence of more active employers' confederations which subsequently lent their support to the brief Pais dictatorship in 1918. Despite this increased activity, however, the unification of the interest groups associated with industry and agriculture did not take place until after the First World War.

The 'Employers' Confederation' (CP) was founded in 1920 at the initiative of the 'small and middle-sized commercial and industrial bourgeoisie' (Schwartzman 1989: 144) and comprised 60 local associations. This was the employers' first attempt to react to the 'workers' threat' following a wave of strikes and assaults on Lisbon shops which coincided with the 'golden period' of the anarcho-syndicalist CGT. Symbolizing the politicization of the employers' associations, the CP organized a small militia and also created its own information service (Telo 1980: 100). With the end of the crisis, however, the CP swiftly declined and vanished entirely from the political arena in 1923.

The Union of Economic Interests (UIE), a political front organization of employers' associations, was created in 1924 for the explicit purpose of participating in the anti-democratic conspiracies of the post-the First World War period. The UIE was the first employers' association ever to take part in elections (1925) and espoused an explicitly anti-parliamentary programme. It symbolized the disaffection of important segments of the Portuguese economic elites towards liberal institutions and the Republican party system and was to play a central role in the final years of the liberal Republic.

4 The political system of the First Republic: parliamentarism with dominant party

The brief account presented above provides a basic outline of the social fabric in 1910 when the Republicans overthrew the constitutional monarchy and began to implement parts of their political programme. Even without recourse to more 'extreme' theories on the stages of economic and social development and the consolidation of democratic systems, it is clear that the structure of Portuguese society in no way fulfilled the economic, social and cultural requirements necessary for 'the formation of a civic political culture' (Martins 1970: 6).

The Republican elites adopted a programme of universal suffrage, anti-clericalism and nationalism based on Portugal's struggle against dependence on Britain and the defence of the country's colonial heritage. As early as 1910, legislation providing for rapid secularization was passed. These measures necessarily had a profound impact on the Catholic hierarchy. Suffrage, however, was not extended as originally intended. The pretext for this was the outbreak of monarchist revolts in Spain and the fact that the Democratic Party, which had inherited a part of liberal monarchy's electoral machine, had rapidly become the ruling party in Portugal.

Several characteristics of the Republican political system closely resembled what Dogan has termed 'mimic democracy' (1987: 369–89). There were, however, significant differences which need to be stressed as well. Most important of all, the political game was no longer – as had been the case during the constitutional monarchy – limited to a small elite. The landed gentry had lost direct access to the state apparatus or had at least found new social and political mediating partners. State and Church had ceased to provide each other with mutual support, thus opening up new cleavages within the political arena. The Republican state proved less immune to ideological pressure than had been the Monarchist state which, essentially, had served as a tax collector for traditional functions. Political clienteles had begun to shift away from semi-traditional forms of clientelism towards a new system of party patronage or, as it has also been called, transitional clientelism. A significant and destabilizing breakthrough of the urban world into the political arena had also taken place.

The 1911 Constitution, which was approved by a parliament consisting entirely of Republican Party deputies, established a parliamentary regime in which the president of the Republic, elected by parliament, had no substantial powers and was specifically not empowered to dissolve the Chamber. The Republican elite decided against adopting universal suffrage, preferring instead to preserve the situation existing under the constitutional monarchy. Agitation in favour of universal suffrage was extremely weak, if not wholly absent, within the Republican Constitutional Assembly of 1911. 'Pressure from below' also remained negligible, due in part to both the political 'absence' of the rural world and the non-participatory ideology and practice of the active minorities within

the urban working classes (Lopes 1994: 76). Curiously, the problem of universal suffrage was only occasionally debated by the more conservative segments of the Republican Party which split very soon after the 1910 Revolution.

The Republic's electoral laws confined proportional representation to Lisbon (which was the electoral fief of the Democratic Party) and to Oporto, maintaining the majoritarian system throughout the rest of the country. Even within the confines of an adult male literate franchise, political participation remained small. Compared to the final phase of the constitutional monarchy, the size of the electorate had contracted, comprising a mere 10 per cent of the total population or 30 per cent of adult males. The strongest disproportionalities were to be found at the regional level and in the relationship between city and countryside. Whereas only about between 50 and 60 per cent of the electorate came from rural constituencies, Lisbon and Oporto were overrepresented, with a total of 30 per cent (Martins 1970: 8).

The Portuguese Republic replaced the constitutional monarchy's two-party system with a multiparty system centred about a single dominant party. The first semi-mass party to emerge within the new liberal system was the Republican Party. After the 1910 Revolution, some of the Republicans' more conservative leaders formed the Unionist and Evolutionist Parties which, however, never amounted to more than small groups of notables.

The electoral hegemony of the Democratic Party, which inherited the Republican Party machinery, was evident from the start. Its instrumentalization of the state apparatus also made it 'the main supplier of patronage' (Martins 1970). Due to the fact that the Portuguese electoral system was based on limited suffrage, the Democratic Party was able to achieve a compromise between its electorate within the urban petty bourgeoisie and a number of provincial notables which guaranteed the party's dominance within the existing system.

After the turn of the century, the Democratic Party succeeded in acquiring a strong and reasonably stable electoral and political base, developing the only national party structure. Its organizational networks within the radical petty bourgeoisie and the urban population were central to its survival, both electorally and in the streets, especially when faced with attempts by extra-parliamentary groups or by the president to force it out of government. Until the war there was no erosion of this support. Moreover, the party complemented the legal functioning of the system with violent attacks on its electoral and extra-parliamentary opponents: Monarchists, conservative Republicans and the military.

The pattern of political articulation between the urban and rural areas was basically the result of a strong 'governmentalization' of local administration. 'District Governors' constituted the basis of clientelistic pacts that ensured the victory of the party in the rural areas. The swift enlistment of notables from the old parties, especially from the 'Regenerators', is also well documented. In this way, the Democratic Party managed to 'acquire a "double" structure and a "double" clientele with non-competitive yet asymmetric ideological orientations' (Martins 1970: 9). Still, this uneasy coalition of urban 'Jacobin' and rural

notables, while enabling the Democratic Party to win virtually all elections during the Republican period, was not 'sufficient to ensure a genuine, permanent monopoly of political power ... in the manner of dominant parties in semi-liberal politics' (ibid.).

Both the Unionist and the Evolutionist parties were created by leaders of centre-right parliamentary factions that had left the Republican Party in 1912. As the main 'system' parties, they bargained for electoral and constituency reforms and for moderation in Church-State relations, searching for clienteles in the provinces where they had localized 'fiefs'. However, the highly personalized rivalry which existed between their respective leaderships proved stronger than their will to unite in an anti-Democratic Party coalition. Until the war, no left-wing groups split away from the Democratic Party. The small Socialist Party's two parliamentary seats were not won outright but constituted a 'gift' from the Democratic Party which, in the attempt to gain control over moderate elements within the working classes, had co-opted a number of Socialist candidates onto its electoral list.

If, up to the Sidonio Dictatorship (1918), we can still speak of the existence of a semi-loyal opposition represented by the conservative Republican parties, by contrast the 1920s saw the failure of all attempts at reforming the political system and at unifying the conservative forces into an electoral party. This quickly led to the irreversible conviction on the part of their elites that they would never be able to achieve power by electoral and constitutional means.

5 Dynamic factors of the interwar period

5.1 Endemic cabinet instability

The Republican period was characterised by electoral stability and cabinet instability. Between 1910 and 1926, Portugal had 45 cabinets of various types: 17 single party, 3 military and 21 coalition governments, as shown in Figure 15.1.

Although single-party cabinets of the Democratic Party clearly predominate between 1912 and 1917, Republican conservative parties did manage to form a number of independent governments. The first serious challenge to Democratic hegemony came in 1915 when an attempt was made to by-pass parliament through military intervention. The Democratic cabinet was toppled after a military coup carried out with the complicity of the president and the conservative parties. Under pressure from the army, the president installed General Pimenta de Castro as prime minister in January 1915 and he formed a cabinet with a strong military component. There was also pressure to suspend parliament, change the electoral laws and call new elections. Several months later, an uprising supported by some military units and armed civilians reinstated the Democratic Party in power (Wheeler 1978: 123). In June 1915, parliamentary elections were held in which the Democratic Party once again won a clear victory.

Figure 15.1 Portugal: cabinet instability, 1910–29



From 1915 until the Sidonio Pais coup of 1917, the Democratic Party, preparing for participation in the war, led several coalition governments which were formed with the cooperation of the conservative Republican parties. Cabinet turnover was endemic throughout the entire Republican regime, but it reached its peak in the immediate postwar period.

Other government coalitions, both those initiated by the conservatives and 'neutral' governments reflecting the parliamentary majority, proved to be no more stable. On the contrary, these coalitions experienced the highest turnover rate and the lowest average duration: 91 days compared to an average of 156 days for single-party governments (Schwartzman 1989: 132).

Nevertheless there are two major differences between prewar and postwar cabinet instability. First in the later period, matters pertaining to economic policy had begun to outweigh the 'political access' factor, thus underscoring the growing role of socioeconomic cleavages and interest groups in Portuguese politics. An analysis of cabinet composition, economic policies and government turnover during this period clearly indicates the major role played by interest associations in the formation and dissolution of cabinets (Schwartzman 1989: 135–42). It also highlights the qualitative increase in the influence exercised by the 'extra-parliamentary arena' in promoting cabinet instability.

As is shown below, the second new factor in the postwar period was the growing fragmentation of the party system. This included left-wing splits from

the Democratic Party, unsuccessful attempts at founding a conservative electoral machine based on the prewar Evolutionist and Unionist parties, and the appearance of the Sidonist conglomerate. It should be stressed too that the success of the 1926 coup did not produce a clear-cut break with the cabinet instability of the Republican period.

5.2 Political violence

Political violence was a constant occurrence in urban Portugal towards the end of the Constitutional Monarchy and during the years of the First Republic. The early 1920s were the most violent period of all. Although there were no Fascist-type paramilitary formations, militias or even veterans' associations similar to those that developed in other parts of Europe after the First World War, armed party factions, or secret societies associated with them, were to be found across the whole political spectrum.

Moreover, further focal points of political violence developed after 1910 associated with attempts to overthrow Republican governments with the support of sections of the armed forces. In 1911–12, the Monarchists launched two attacks by volunteers with rudimentary military training who had entered Portugal with the complicity of the Spanish Monarchy. In addition, the waves of workers' strikes (which had become further aggravated by the unions' strategy of non-participation in the war) were met by considerable repressive violence. More important and more unusual, however, was the presence of significant para-police or militia-type structures during the period between 1910 and the post-First World War years.

The overthrow of the constitutional monarchy in 1910 had been supported by a variety of secret organizations which commanded a sizeable number of 'civilian gunners'. Between 1910 and 1913, several of these secret organizations encouraged acts of repression and intimidation against Monarchist and Catholic groups, thus 'accompanying' within the political arena the flood of legislation which was being produced by the provisional governments (Valente 1992).

These groups, in particular the Battalions of Volunteers and the Social Vigilante Groups, soon gained widespread notoriety. Those of them dominated by the Democratic Party became popularly known as the 'termites' while similar organizations of a right-wing and mainly Monarchist character were subsequently referred to as the 'scorpions'.

The assassination of King Carlos and Prince Filipe in 1908 was the first of a series of attacks on high-ranking political leaders carried out by individuals or secret societies. During the Republican period, numerous assassinations, ambushes and summary executions took place. In the course of the Sidonio dictatorship, hit squads were formed by Monarchists and other right-wing elements. These were used to pillage offices, party headquarters and newspaper offices associated with the Democratic Party. Such violence also marked the brief period of Monarchist rule in Oporto between December 1918 and February 1919 where the attempt to restore

the Monarchy almost ended in civil war. Finally, at the end of 1918, the dictator himself was assassinated in the Lisbon railway station.

During the period of chronic government instability which followed the restoration of parliamentary rule in 1919, the streets were used by various military and police forces to support or overthrow individual governments. One such example was the GNR (National Republican Guard), a military police force created by the Republican regime in order to defend it from the army which was not felt to be trustworthy. The GNR was involved in an act of violence which, according to public opinion, constituted one of the most traumatic events of the period. In 1921, after a series of attacks on the GNR and its leader, the Guard rebelled. Seeing that he had lost control of the situation, the prime minister resigned. On the same night, however, a group of military men, including both members of the GNR and armed civilians, kidnapped and executed the prime minister and a number of other political figures. Among those murdered was the military leader of the 1910 Revolution, Machado Santos.

Although not specific to the anarcho-syndicalist elites, strike-related labour violence was particularly chaotic during the first three years of the postwar period. In 1920 and 1921, 'bomb and fire arms attacks' against judges, politicians and employers were common occurrences, representing 'a pattern of "political bargaining" in which a weak working class movement unable to enforce strict trade union or class discipline in its ranks is able to secure economic gains through the use or the threat of violence' (Martins 1970: 15).

5.3 Basic sociopolitical cleavages

The first political cleavage to emerge as a result of the 1910 Revolution was religious in nature. One of the main themes of Republican propaganda had been secularization; consequently, in the first few days after the Revolution, a strong wave of anti-clericalism swept through Lisbon. A number of monasteries and convents were closed in anticipation of the closure of all such institutions at a later date. Religious orders such as the Jesuits were immediately banned and its members expelled from the country.

Legislation on secularization was introduced in parliament. A divorce law was passed on 3 November and a new marriage law came into effect the following month, giving matrimony an 'exclusively civil status'. Strict limitations were imposed on religious ceremonies held outside of church and all religious rites pertaining to state institutions were abolished. By the beginning of 1911, some 150 priests were being held in prison on charges relating to various acts of disobedience. The fact that the government forbade the reading of a pastoral letter containing the reaction of the Church hierarchy to its secularization programme brought about the severance of Portugal's relations with the Vatican and ruptured the bishops' ties with the state. By 1912, only one Portuguese bishop had not been dismissed from his diocese.

The *religious-secular cleavage* soon became a major focal point of Portuguese political life and remained so until 1926, despite subsequent attempts at pacification. It was in conjunction with this cleavage that a new Catholic movement,

closely linked to the Church hierarchy and with clear authoritarian tendencies, emerged (Cruz 1980). The political space which, in other European societies, was occupied by Christian-Democratic or 'popular' parties was thus taken up by the Catholic Centre Party in Portugal. The brand of social Catholicism espoused by the Centrists rapidly developed into a corporatist-authoritarian alternative which was demonstrated by the party's support for the Sidonio Dictatorship in 1917–18.

The second cleavage came to be known as the 'regime question'. It centred about the resistance to the Republic by a small but relatively powerful nucleus of Monarchists who had little affinity to the liberalism of the parties which had been dissolved in 1910. In 1911 and 1912, two military incursions from Galicia had taken place under the leadership of Paiva Couceiro, a caesarist ex-officer who had served in the Portuguese African campaigns at the turn of the century. Some of the young men who had accompanied Couceiro returned from exile in 1914 having been pardoned by the government on the outbreak of the war. They proceeded to found *Integralismo Lusitano* (IL), a movement based on the Maurrasian principles of the *Action Française* whose influence was soon to make itself felt within the young Catholic Party (Cruz 1987).

In 1916, IL set itself up as a political movement, launching a daily newspaper in which it popularized its political programme. Its objectives can be summed up as the restoration of a corporatist, anti-liberal, decentralized and traditional monarchy. The Integralists left a profound intellectual mark on twentieth-century Portuguese political culture. Having been deeply influenced by the example set by the *Action Française*, they succeeded in laying the foundation of a new and durable brand of Portuguese reactionary nationalism (Costa Pinto 1994).

Put in simple terms, IL established a coherent political and intellectual alternative based on an ideology of its own making which was then codified into a political programme. In place of the idea of popular sovereignty, IL propagated the concept of a traditionally organized and hierarchically structured nation in which the principle of universal suffrage would be rejected in favour of the corporatist ideal. Parliament was to be replaced by a purely advisory National Assembly in which the 'life forces' of Portuguese society – the traditional family, the town halls and professional associations – would be represented. Instead of the centralism of the liberal state, perceived by the Integralists as an acute danger to local life and the main instigator of uncontrolled urbanization, decentralized structures of an anti-cosmopolitan and 'ruralizing' nature were to be introduced which would allow an eminently agricultural country the fulfilment of its historic mission. Corporatist representation was also seen as the remedy for the evils of the liberal economy and the disastrous agitation of its class struggle (Costa Pinto 1994: 29).

From a sociological point of view, Integralism constituted a typical ideological reaction to modernization. This is why it was able to infiltrate those segments of society which were most threatened by the modernisation process, especially after Portugal's participation in the war had destabilised the fragile Republican regime.

Its method of political intervention was largely elitist, seeing that IL recruited its membership from within a relatively small network of university academics and through the reorganisation of old cliques of provincial Monarchist notables. IL's ideological vigour and its ability to penetrate intellectual circles and interest groups at the elite level also influenced the development and diffusion of Fascism in Portugal. As Martins wrote, 'at the time when Italian Fascist and Nazi models assumed "world-historical" importance, those most predisposed to learn and emulate them had all been grounded in the teachings and intellectual style of IL'. In fact, almost all attempts at founding Fascist parties after the war used IL as a model so that it 'pre-empted the ground from other influences and paradigms of the extreme right' (Martins 1969: 305).

None the less, the main sociopolitical cleavage in Portugal, particularly in the postwar period, remained the city–countryside or urban–rural cleavage, both at the level of interest intermediation and that of access to the state and the decision-making process. In the 1920s, the political expression of intra-elite economic conflicts (for example, those between the interests of the 'traditional elite' of the rural latifundia and industry) as well as the inability of cabinets to deal with these conflicts were to become a major factor in the breakdown of the Republican regime. This is aptly demonstrated by the way in which Salazar's 'New State', in order to protect the 'traditional sector' and prolong its sociopolitical dominance, reshaped the political arena of the 1930s with regard to the political intervention of interest groups, economic policy and the political system (Costa Pinto 1994).

5.4 Participation in the war

The First World War had an immediate and destabilizing impact on Portugal which eventually destroyed the fragile edifice built by the Republic. The Republicans had unanimously agreed upon the possibility of entering the war on the side of the Entente because of the danger posed to the African colonies. Ever since the turn of the century, it had been known that Britain was considering handing over some of Portugal's colonies to Germany. For the Democratic Party, the strongest supporter of active military intervention on the European front, neutrality would thus have seriously endangered Portugal's colonial heritage while an allied victory promised to consolidate Lisbon's position in the ensuing peace negotiations.

However, the problem of the African colonies *per se* was hardly sufficient to justify active intervention on the European front. Indeed, such action was never called for by Great Britain – even under the terms of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance. Limited intervention in Africa, an option supported by conservative Republicans, would certainly have constituted a possible and reasonable policy, both with regard to the internal and external situation. Thus, it was obvious that the Democratic Party's interventionist strategy also had domestic political objectives. These were: to ensure the party's control over the political system via a campaign of nationalist and patriotic mobilization; to force the collaboration

of the other parties by establishing an *union sacrée*-type coalition; to legitimise greater repressive control over political dissent; and to smooth over political and social cleavages (Teixeira 1994).

The Democratic Party's expectations were soon to prove deceptive. Its interventionist strategy provoked an almost immediate split within the armed forces, giving rise to a faction in favour of intervention in Africa rather than in Europe. The government, for its part, was mistrustful of the army and began to build up a special intervention force, the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps, under the leadership of officers loyal to the Republic, many of whom were mobilised from the militia. In October 1914, a group of officers opposed to Portugal's participation in the European war occupied an army barracks, thus providing a taste of what was to come in 1915, when a military government temporarily assumed power, and in 1917 after the Sidonio coup. Nevertheless, the government was able to enforce its policy of military participation. In 1916 and in 1917, about two thirds of Portugal's army was serving abroad: 55,000 soldiers in Flanders, of whom 35,000 were either to be killed or return home wounded, and 45,000 in the colonies (Teixeira 1992: 91–113).

The Democratic Party's interventionist strategy had taken for granted the participation of the remaining the Republican parties in a *union sacrée*-type coalition. However, although the Evolutionist Party was initially willing to join the proposed coalition government, the Unionist Party declared itself categorically opposed to military intervention in Europe. Both parties subsequently withdrew from the scene of governmental responsibility in reaction to the first social and political repercussions of the war effort: riots in Lisbon, raids on shops as a result of food shortages and the intensification of the strike movement by the trade unions which were dominated by revolutionary syndicalists openly opposed to the country's military engagement. The government confronted these developments by declaring a state of siege in Lisbon on 12 July 1917; in September, it harshly suppressed a general strike and ordered the mass arrest of revolutionary syndicalists.

6 The Sidonio dictatorship (1917–18): A brief authoritarian interlude

Although he used his past military career to project a charismatic image, Sidonio Pais, the leader of the December 1917 *coup d'état*, was in reality a member of the conservative Republican elite. A professor at the University of Coimbra and member of Parliament for the Unionist Party, he had twice held a ministerial post and was ambassador in Berlin when Germany declared war on Portugal in 1916. The easy success of his coup, initially planned with the support of conservative Republican notables mainly affiliated with the Unionist Party, is explained by the rapid erosion of support for the Democratic Party's interventionist policy. Not surprisingly, therefore, some of the military units that

played a decisive role in the uprising had been in the midst of preparing to leave for the front. The ambiguous nature of the coup – that is its spectrum of collaborative neutrality – was aptly demonstrated by a visit paid to Sidonio by a trade union delegation when the former was still directing military operations in the centre of Lisbon. At that time, the delegation promised to support Sidonio in return for the release of those trade unionists who were being held as political prisoners.

The Sidonio regime exhibited a number of traits which were to become typical of the modern postwar dictatorships (Costa Pinto 1994). After a brief period of hesitation, Sidonio sent part of the Republican elite into exile, suspended the 1911 Constitution and attempted to institutionalize a plebiscitary presidential dictatorship. Encouraged by a triumphant visit to the provinces where, largely at the instigation of the clergy, he was hailed by huge crowds as the 'saviour of Portugal', Sidonio introduced universal suffrage, had himself elected president and assumed full control of the executive from which the conservative Republican parties had resigned. He then founded the National Republican Party (NRP) which assumed the role of a single governing party. The subsequent elections were not contested by any of the opposition Republican parties which, together with the trade unions, soon suffered repression at the hands of the regime. Accordingly, apart from the NRP, only the Monarchists and Catholics continued to be represented in parliament (Lopes 1994: 32). The Monarchists gave their support to the regime and, in return, were reinstated in a number of institutions including the military. The Catholics, for their part, supported Sidonio to the end in recognition of his having re-established relations with the Vatican and repealed the most radical parts of the Republic's anti-clerical legislation.

A further novelty of the new regime's political system was its experiment with corporatist representation. Although Sidonio maintained the previous bicameral system, certain members of the Senate were now required to be nominated by organizations such as employers' associations, trade unions, industry and professional groups. As was the case with the House of Deputies, however, the Senate soon earned the scorn of Sidonio who recessed both chambers and proceeded to govern alone, relying to an ever-greater extent on his presumed charismatic qualities.

Sidonio confronted the general shortages brought about by the war effort with a campaign of anti-plutocratic political rhetoric. By emphasising the struggle against party oligarchies and evoking an atmosphere of messianic nationalism, he was able to unite the Monarchists and conservative Republicans under a single umbrella. Simultaneously, he used his charismatic appeal to surround himself with a clique of young army officers who accompanied him at mass rallies. In late 1918, however, Sidonio was assassinated by a former rural trade unionist, an event which triggered off a Monarchist revolt in northern Portugal. The Republicans mobilized in the cities and several military units declared themselves neutral, thus enabling a victory of the democratic forces and the subsequent return to constitutional rule.

The Sidonio regime was thus unable to survive the assassination of its leader. Its collapse hastened the emergence of an army which was divided and politicized as a result of its participation in the war. At the same time, the survival of the old cleavage pertaining to the 'regime question' shattered the unity of the conservative forces and nearly plunged the country into civil war. The military juntas which were formed in a number of cities after Sidonio's assassination began to put pressure on the government, issuing pronouncements which reflected a variety of political orientations. Several 'military barons' associated with the Monarchist, Sidonist and Republican camps made lasting impressions on public opinion during this period of crisis. The division within the armed forces reached its peak after the restoration of the Monarchy was proclaimed in Oporto at the initiative of the local military junta, and a small insurrection took place in Lisbon. These moves were opposed by a sizeable number of officers who had seen active duty and who were displeased both with Sidonio's strategy of 'abandonment' (that is, leaving Portuguese battalions at the front without reinforcements and his general diminution of the war effort) and with the Monarchist officers who had joined his regime. By the end of January 1918, the provisional Monarchist government in Oporto had suffered military defeat while in Lisbon rallies and demonstrations had forced the dissolution of parliament and the Monarchist-dominated political police. A few days after the Lisbon government had been compelled to take refuge in a barracks, the Sidonists resigned from power. There then followed several unsuccessful attempts at forming a conservative party capable of posing an electoral alternative to the Democrats. In the 1919 parliamentary elections, however, the Democratic Party succeeded in winning 53 per cent of the seats, thus enabling them to form the new government and to reinstate the Republican constitution of 1911.

7 Final crisis and breakdown: the main arenas and agents

Portugal's participation in the First World War did not cause any severe damage to the productive or social structure comparable to that suffered by the contenders in Central Europe. Neither did it favour the conditions for the emergence of groups able to form the basis for Fascist movements through the enlargement of the original nuclei of intellectuals that had founded them. Portugal suffered her war 'humiliations', the decimation of her battalions at the front, right in the middle of the Sidonio dictatorship. It was under the same regime that she ended her military participation in the war. The Republicans managed to mobilize many veterans and turn them against the Sidonio Pais dictatorship – veterans who had been 'betrayed' by the Monarchists that had supported the war and by the military regiments that had refused to leave for France. There was, however, no 'veterans' phenomenon as these elements were either rapidly absorbed into rural society or emigrated. The *vitoria mancata* was

also moderate as Portugal managed to safeguard her colonial heritage and had no territorial claims in Europe.

7.1 The parliamentary and electoral arena

The Sidonist Dictatorship and its outcome, the near state of civil war that followed the end of the regime, led to the first pact among political parties to revise the 1911 Constitution in order to give more stability to the political system. The conservatives were strongly pro-presidentialist and the Democrats allowed the President the power to dissolve parliament, after a clear definition of the restricted executive powers between dissolution and elections. The supervision of this power subsequently proved difficult, opening a direct channel from extra-parliamentary pressures to the President.

There were important changes in the party system in the postwar crisis: the 'historic' leaders of the pre-1917 period went. Afonso Costa, the strongman of the Democratic Party, did not return from exile and Antonio Jose de Almeida and Brito Camacho left the Evolutionist and Unionist Parties; the Democratic Party suffered splits on the left and on the right; small but highly ideological parties appeared both in the parliamentary (Catholics, the 'Democratic Left', etc.) and extra-parliamentary arenas (the Communist Party in 1921, the Sidonists in 1919, etc.). However, the main characteristics of the prewar period remained. Universal suffrage was not implemented and the formal political system remained basically unchanged and the postwar period was characterized by an increasing fragmentation of the party system:

Table 15.2 Portugal: electoral results (seats), 1919–26

	1919–21	1921	1922–25	1925–26
Democratic Party	86	54	71	83
Evolutionist Party	38			
Unionist Party	17			
Independents	13	5	5	19
'Reconstituintes'		12	17	
Socialist Party	8			2
Catholic Party	1	3	5	4
Liberal Party		79	33	
Monarchists		4	13	7
'Dissidentes'		3		
Regionalists		2	2	
'Populares'		1		
'Gubernamentais'			13	
Nationalist Party				36
Democratic Left				6
Union of Economic Interests (UIE)				6
Seats Total	163	163	159	163

Source: Marques (1978a); Lopes (1994: 33).

In 1919, the conservatives (Unionist, Evolutionist and Centrist Parties) were able to unite under the aegis of the new Liberal Party, an embryonic electoral machine opposed to the dominant Democrats. For the first time in the electoral history of the Republic, the Democratic Party was defeated (1921) and its monopoly appeared to be in some jeopardy. The Liberal cabinets, however, fell due to an insurrection by the National Republican Guard which pursued the explicit aim of dissolving the 1921 parliament (Wheeler 1978: 203). From 1921 onwards, conservative representation was again split into several parties (Governmentais, Nationalists, Populares) and authoritarian ideological pressures increased.

Despite some splits the Democratic Party survived as the system's dominant party. However, the 'asymmetric' nature of its clientelistic machine caused it to suffer severe losses among urban voters while the manipulation and violence surrounding elections increased dramatically. The lack of definition in the Democratic Party's policies when in government was also reinforced by the emergence of two main tendencies within the party structure – one moderate and one more left wing – which broke away during the 1925 elections.

Having survived the postwar economic and social crisis, the 1925 elections once again confirmed the Democratic Party in government. By now, however, the main arenas of the political battle were to be found outside of parliament. The emergence of one new element should none the less be stressed: the direct political representation of the federation of employers' associations (UIE) with a clearly anti-democratic platform using elections and parliament to express itself.

7.2 The extra-parliamentary arena

7.2.1 A small 'class war'

The period 1919–22 was perceived by both the state and the employers in urban industry, commerce and the service sector as the years of the 'red threat'. The golden period of the anarcho-syndicalist CGT, with the first communist split from its ranks, was marked by a wave of strikes affecting sectors ranging from industry to the civil service and commerce. As the union movement declined in strength, terrorism emerged and clandestine organizations such as the Red Legion began to be publicized by the conservative media. The Democratic Party gave some help to the Socialist Party, through its electoral machine by providing seats in parliament (an average number of two, although the socialists secured eight seats in 1919); however, all attempts at political integration failed.

As stressed above, the employers' associations most affected by these almost exclusively urban movements dramatically improved their organization and increased their intervention in politics. None the less, by the end of 1922, the 'red threat' was over and labour confrontations were on the decline. Recent studies on the relationship between the politicization of employers' associations and authoritarian takeover of power (best illustrated by the UIE's activities from 1924 onwards) show convincingly that 'intra-bourgeois [economic] conflict far outweighed that of the bourgeois-worker conflict' (Schwartzman 1989: 184).

7.2.2 *The extreme right*

The most striking characteristic in the rise of fascism in postwar Portuguese society is, on the one hand, the reception of its first external paradigm – Italian Fascism – contrasted with the feebleness and fragmentation of its expression as a national party.

The extreme right was initially represented by the small Sidonist parties and the Integralists. The former consisted mainly of young right-wing Republican intellectuals, military officers and students. The growing participation of the military in these groups can be seen by the fact that of the 33-member central committee of the Sidonio Pais Centre, 19 were army officers in 1920. A similar proportion of military officers was to be found in the National Presidentialist Party in 1921 (Costa Pinto 1989: 47). The Integralists, who had become less sectarian on issues pertaining to the ‘regime question’, increased their strength significantly in employers’ associations, particularly those representing land-owners’ interests, and within the army. In 1921–3, several attempts to create Fascists parties did not succeed in transcending their original student and intellectual milieus despite the initial support of several employer organisations (Costa Pinto 1994).

The most important unifying factor within the new extreme right of the 1920s was the ‘postponement’ of the Republic–Monarchy cleavage. Here, both external influences (Italian Fascism and the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain) and a new generation of young Sorelian Integralists played an important role. The results of this change were already apparent in organizations such as the Nuno Alvares Crusade, an elitist nationalist pressure group founded by military officers during the Sidonio Pais dictatorship which, after its reorganization in the 1920s, included among its members Sidonists, Catholics, Integralists and Fascists.

The role of groups such as the Integralists was more important in terms of conspiracy and propaganda for the dictatorial option than it was for the Catholic Centre (which was connected to the Church hierarchy and thus more cautious). The Integralists enjoyed significant support within the armed forces and played an important role as an anti-democratic radicalizing element within certain conspiratorial groups. The fact that they were both present in organizations like the Nuno Alvares Crusade and influential within the army shows how, on the one hand, this important segment of the radical right was able to lend support to the coup within the civilian sector and, on the other, provide the military with a political programme over and above the mere slogan ‘order in the streets and in the government’.

7.2.3 *The double strategy of the conservative Republicans*

From the outset, the conservative Republican parties and small groups of notables connected to interest groups had become accustomed to using extra-parliamentary means of gaining power. After the war, there had been a number of coalition governments and even some conservative ones, but always in connection with crisis situations. The radicalisation of the small conservative Republican parties was a key factor in the fall of the Republic. It led them to

appeal to the military when the Democratic Party was once again victorious in the elections of 1925. Several charismatic figures emerged from within this spectrum of parties, joining the small and elitist extreme right in its appeal for military intervention and, especially, for the constitution of organized groups inside the armed forces. One of these figures was Cunha Leal, a leader of the Nationalist Party. From 1923 at the latest, Leal had been advocating military intervention and negotiating a *post factum* political position with various military factions.

7.3 The intervention of the army

Military intervention in Republican politics precedes the postwar period, as does the existence of organized factions within the armed forces. Perhaps the main difference between postwar interventions and the 1926 coup consists, on the one hand, in the multiplication of 'corporatist' tensions between the army as an institution and the government and, on the other, in their increasing 'unity' when intervening in the political arena (Carrilho 1985; Ferreira, 1992). It is worth noting here that tracing the roots of the 1926 coup by examining previous conspiracies and essentially personalised role-players within the military is an *evenementiel* trap. In fact, as one American historian has put it, Portugal had been 'in the kingdom of Pronunciamento' ever since 1918 (Wheeler 1978: 193).

The pre-civil war situation of December 1918–February 1919 was particularly devastating for the army, bringing with it the creation of military juntas throughout the country and, after the proclamation of the Monarchy in Oporto, the reopening of the 'regime question'. The Sidonist dictatorship was also able to attract an increasing number of young cadets and military officers who were to join forces with civilian segments of the radical right in the various conspiracies of the early 1920s. However, there were numerous instances of civil–military tension during the final years of the Republic which must be considered as well.

The Democratic Party was confronted by a new army after the war. The armed forces had acquired a core of troops which was twice the size it had been in 1911 and had gained prestigious leaders from the battlefield as well as a new militarist ideological dimension. The main problem, however, consisted in the nearly 2000 supposedly temporary militia officers. Whereas elsewhere in Europe officer corps were being reduced in size as a result of demobilization, the government in Portugal decided to incorporate the country's militia officers into the regular army. As a result of this 'political' incorporation, there were 4500 regular army officers in 1919 compared to 2600 in 1915 (Wheeler 1978: 181). Whether a strategy of 'integration' designed to counter-balance the fear of demobilization or an instrument of political patronage, the consequence of this policy was a 'corporatist' tension with the civilian government. This was particularly apparent during the period of hyperinflation when the purchasing power of a captain's pay was eroded to 60 per cent of what it had been in 1914.

The government's suspicion of the army led to reinforcement of the GNR, especially between 1919 and 1921, with regard to both staff and heavy armament (5000 members in 1911, 11,000 in 1922). The GNR 'was strengthened as an urban defender of the State' against both the working classes and the army and 'became one more element of the bureaucracy associated with the Democrats' control of the government' (Wheeler 1978: 185). A second 'corporatist' tension was thus created. Later, a Democratic prime minister was obliged to weaken the GNR, not only to discourage insurrections from within it, but also to calm the army.

On 18 April 1925, a group of military officers, acting in the name of the armed forces, carried out a first open coup attempt. Although the resistance of the GNR and some units of the army aborted the insurrection, those involved were sent back to barracks by a military court a few months later. The appeal for a military interregnum from parliamentary politics had thus reached its height. The main difference between this coup and the one that was to follow in 1926 lay in the subsequent enlargement of political support for the conspirators in the form of an anti-system coalition.

The military coup of 28 May 1926 which ended the parliamentary Republic represented more than a praetorian military intervention in political life. Republican liberalism was overthrown by an army which had been divided and politicized by Portugal's participation in the First World War and which had received calls for a coup from organized factions within its own ranks. These factions ranged from conservative Republicans to social Catholics and included the Integralist extreme right together with its fascist appendices, which had exercised a particularly strong influence on the younger officers. It should not be forgotten that these officers had constituted the base of the brief Sidonio Pais dictatorship of 1917–18, the first modern dictatorship in Portugal, whose anti-plutocratic populism already exhibited a number of fascist traits.

Although the work of conspiratory groups, the ins and outs of the coup were common knowledge to both the public and the political parties. The splits among the different factions of conspirators were generally considered to be more important than the resistance of the government. General Gomes da Costa, who had been contacted by one of the groups of conspirators, became the leader of the coup; while moving from the northern city of Braga to Lisbon, he simultaneously negotiated his new powers with the conservative Republican faction headed by Admiral Cabeçadas. The journey took several days and the public was kept up to date on the negotiations by the Lisbon press. None the less, there was hardly any serious military resistance to the coup and no civilian mobilization, although the legacy of the Liberal parliamentary Republic – the outcome of its legitimacy crisis – was to be a long and unstable period of military dictatorship.

8 Conclusion

The most appropriate analytical perspective for analysing the fall of the Republican regime refers to the question of civil–military relations during a crisis

of legitimacy. Appeals to the military by those opposed to the dominant party were a constant factor in postwar Portuguese political life. Almost by definition, the Republican political system did not have a 'loyal opposition' (Linz), since it was obvious to the political actors that the possibility of achieving power through elections was virtually nil.

Given the heterogeneity of the elements at work in the background of the military intervention, the movement leading up to May 1926 can be located somewhere between the two patterns specified by Linz for the fall of democratic regimes. It was a military coup which co-opted part of the Liberal regime's political elite (which, like many members of the military, had the aim of establishing a reformed constitutional order) but which also included the 'disloyal opposition', thus excluding the dominant party from power (Linz 1978: 82). The outcome was a military dictatorship which, in subsequent coups, rapidly disposed of part of the Republican element but which was unable to institutionalize itself.

The small but pugnacious workers' movement under anarcho-sindicalist hegemony frightened the ruling classes in face of the Republican regime's notorious inability to promote its inclusion. However, the role played by the Portuguese *bienio rosso* in the authoritarian wave which overthrew Portuguese Liberalism should not be exaggerated. Among the factors contributing to the fall of the Republic, there were some economic and social cleavages which superimposed themselves onto this wave. Still cleavages like those between city and country or traditional and modern elites were typical of a 'dual society' such as Portugal in the 1920s, and they are of greater use in analysing the fall of Portuguese Liberalism than is the cleavage between the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class (Schwartzman 1989: 184).

If it is assumed that the processes associated with fascism leading to the overthrow of democracy are characterized by '[t]he takeover of power by a well-organized disloyal opposition with a mass base in society, committed to the creation of new political and social order, and unwilling to share its power with members of the political class of the past regime, except as minor partners in a transition phase' (Linz 1978: 82), then, in the Portuguese case, the main factor to emphasize is the absence of a Fascist movement both in the overthrow of Liberalism and the shaping of the authoritarian order. From the very start, the coalition of political forces which supported the overthrow of democracy in Portugal was characterized by the predominance of conservative and elitist pressure groups of the radical right.

The crisis of the Portuguese Republic in the postwar period is a typical example of the difficulties met by fascism in societies with a rudimentary 'massification of politics' in which political competitors have, to some extent, 'filled' all the existing political space (Linz 1980: 154–5). The religious–secular cleavage was perhaps the most important of those cleavages which were brought to the fore by the First Republic. Accordingly, even in cultural terms, the Portuguese case presents a clear example of how little space there is for the emergence of a 'fascist intelligentsia' when 'the hostile response to modern society and the

concomitant rejection of liberalism and democratization remain embedded in traditional religious forms, and reactionary or conservative politics is linked with the defense of the position of the church' (Linz 1980: 164).

The employers' associations themselves (which, in the early 1920s, had offered some support to the new and tentative fascist movements) had become organized without the help of mediators inside an electoral movement and thus negotiated directly with the military and with conservative pressure groups. The prospect of military intervention also took space away from the militias' followers who had been made redundant in 1925; by then, the centre of disorder in Portugal was no longer located in the streets of the working-class areas, but rather in parliament and inside the government (Costa Pinto 1994).

The pre-'massification' character of conservative and reactionary sociopolitical representation and the persistence of clientelistic relationships within the political system can be considered as decisive elements in the type of transition to authoritarian rule which took place in Portugal during the 1920s.

16

Romania: Crisis without Compromise

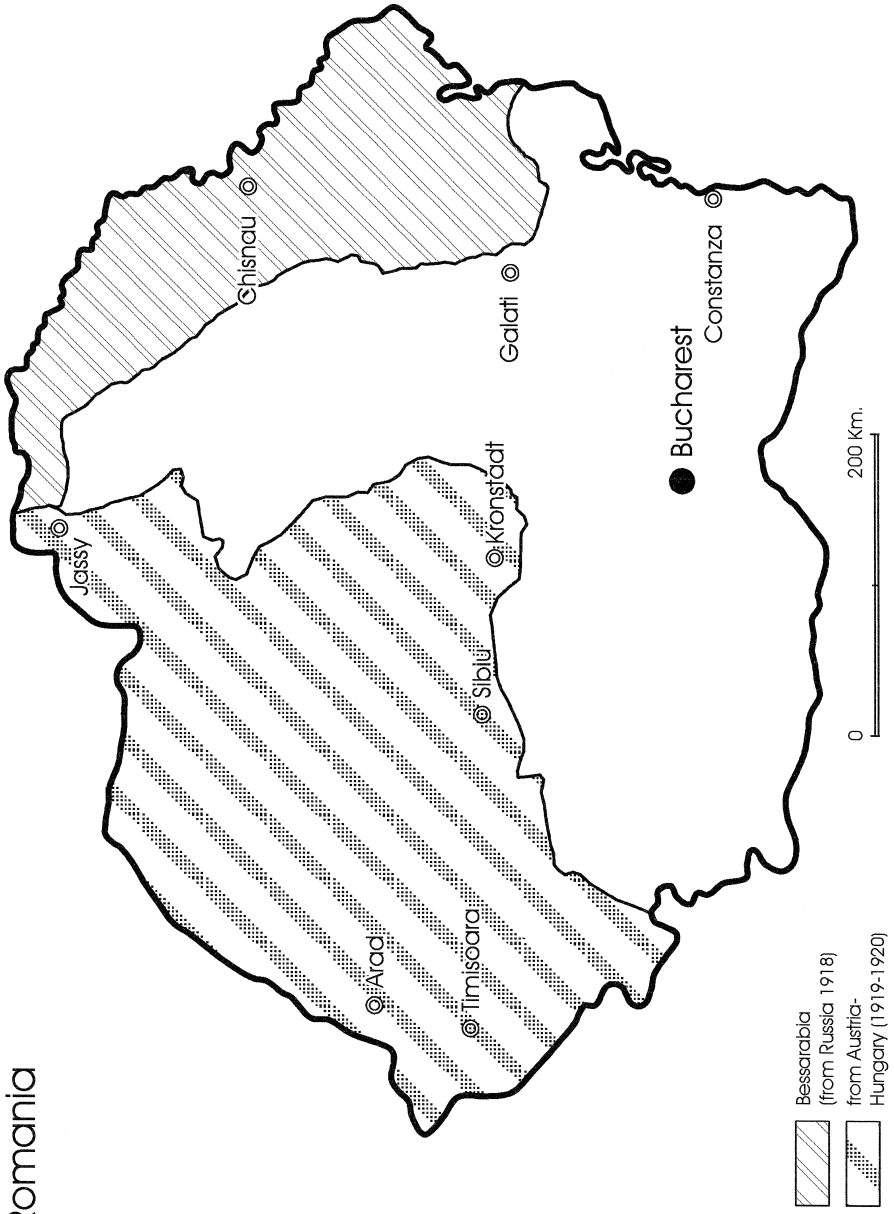
Stephen Fischer-Galati

1 Introduction

Because of the failure of the peacemakers at the end of the First World War to address and resolve the issues relevant to peace in Europe in general and in Eastern Europe in particular, interwar Romania faced numerous crises. These affected the course of its history between the two world wars, and the post-Second World War and post-communist eras. Whether the specific crises affecting the country could have been alleviated through compromises by the political protagonists of the interwar years is conjectural; however, the almost total rejection of compromise solutions by the power and social elites is also important in any assessment of Romania's political development at this time.

The root cause of all Romania's crises is the failure of its ruling classes to resolve the essential problem of integration and assimilation of the various provinces acquired at the end of the First World War from neighbouring countries into the body politic, social, and cultural of the 'Greater' Romania that had been created (see map). The contestation by the Soviet Union and Hungary of the legitimacy of incorporation of, respectively, Bessarabia and Transylvania into Greater Romania, and corollary irredentist actions, represented an actual, or at least potential, threat to the security of the country. That threat, which increased over the years partly because of changes in international relations and partly because of Romanian reactions to irredentism, merely exacerbated a more fundamental aspect of the several crises that affected interwar Romania: intolerance of diversity by the political elite of the Old Romanian kingdom. The so-called 'unifiers' – the Bucharest political leaders – regarded 'Greater' Romania as the product of their historic efforts, as the triumph of their nationalism, as an extension of Wallachia and Moldavia. Preservation of the monopoly of power in the hands of the Romanian aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie, of the old Romanian military leaders and the Orthodox hierarchy precluded acceptance of diversity – social, political, ethnic, or economic. This was most notable in Transylvania and, to a lesser extent, also in Bessarabia. The multiethnic, multicultural, and economically and socially diversified province of Transylvania was the focus of confrontations – ethnic, national, and international – from the very inception of Greater Romania.

Romania



Bessarabia, because of its proximity to the USSR and its significant Jewish population, legitimized Romanian anti-Bolshevism and antisemitism in the 1920s and, at least indirectly, fuelled the political crises which led to the collapse of democracy and the rise of right-wing totalitarianism in the 1930s.

Yet, whereas internal factors were pre-eminent in creating and not resolving the crises related to the above factors, secondary, external, factors exacerbated the political tumult. Those factors relate to the rise of Soviet power and the corresponding intensification of Soviet irredentism *vis-à-vis* Romania, to the support of Hungarian irredenta by Fascist Italy and, to a lesser degree, by Nazi Germany and the USSR, and to economic factors related to the Great Depression and, especially, to Germany's need for Romanian petroleum and food resources for its military needs. What, then, were the problems that had to be resolved through political compromises which the rulers of Greater Romania were both unwilling or unable to resolve?

2 Sociocultural factors

The principal crisis-producing issues were clearly related to the transformation of Romania society from being overwhelmingly peasant, illiterate, Orthodox, and ethnically Romanian into one which had to incorporate ethnically, culturally, religiously and socially diverse groups. At the end of the First World War, the Old Romanian kingdom was what the socialist leader Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea called a 'neo-feudal' society. Some 90 per cent of the population consisted of peasants, most of whom were illiterate and nearly all of whom were of the Romanian Orthodox faith. The industrial working class, almost entirely the sons and daughters of peasants, amounted to about 6 per cent of the population. It too was almost entirely Romanian Orthodox. The landed aristocracy, totally Romanian and Orthodox, was generally educated, versed in French culture, and contemptuous of the peasantry, working class, and commercial bourgeoisie. The state bureaucracy, comprising mostly intellectuals and members of the free professions, shared the prejudices of the aristocracy toward the lower social classes. Moreover, the aristocracy, bureaucracy, working classes, and much of the peasantry shared a common dislike of the only minorities known to them – the Jews and the Gypsies. Even though the number of Jews in the Old Romanian kingdom was small, less than 2 per cent of the total population, antisemitism was widespread. This was chiefly because of the domination of urban commerce, primarily in Moldavia, by Jews and because of the Jewish tenant farmers and grain traders who were regarded as exploiters of the poor Romanian peasant. The Jews, chiefly those of Moldavia, were unassimilated, and often did not speak Romanian. They had no political rights. The Gypsies, almost totally illiterate and mostly semi-nomadic, represented about 1 per cent of the population and were generally viewed as thieves, kidnappers and useless members of society. The intellectual community, comprising chiefly members of the urban bourgeoisie and heavily dominated by teachers and professors, was less concerned with social issues than with political ones related to the formulation and propagation

of militant nationalism. Many were ostensibly pro-peasant, populist, and strongly Orthodox. Their ranks were reinforced by the Orthodox clergy who, with the exception of the upper clerical hierarchy, legitimized Orthodox Romanianism in all aspects ranging from antisemitism, anti-communism and anti-Catholicism to xenophobia in general.

In the coming years, the structure of Romanian society was to change drastically under the impact of a radical land reform, precipitated by the threat of Bolshevism, and by the migration of Romanians and non-Romanians from the newly incorporated provinces into the towns and cities of the Old Romanian kingdom. The land reform, which destroyed the latifundia and precipitated the migration of surplus agricultural labour from the countryside into the urban centres, led to a significant increase in the size of the unskilled urban proletariat and the number of actual – or potential – students. This social mobility clashed head on with a corresponding increase in the size of the urban population resulting from a significant influx of Jews from Bessarabia into Moldavian towns, of Jewish and non-Jewish professional people and intellectuals from Transylvania into Bucharest, and of Romanian bureaucrats from all incorporated territories into the urban centres of the former Old Romanian kingdom. The ensuing social conflicts, involving Romanians and non-Romanians, Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, Wallachians, Moldavians, Transylvanians and Bessarabians, all seeking retention of their traditional privileges and status under economically and politically adverse conditions, resulted in continuing social conflicts which lasted throughout the interwar years.

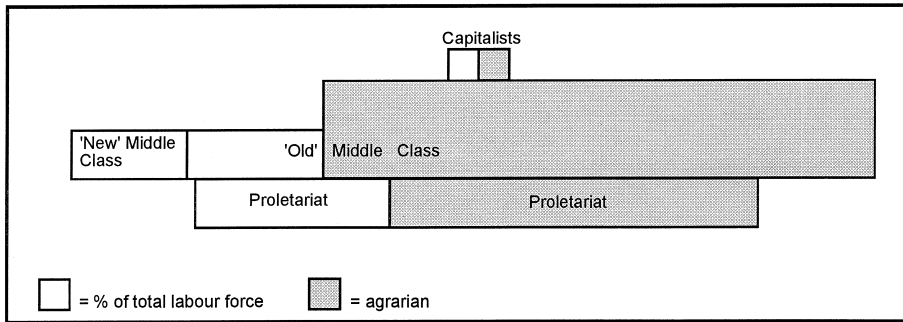
Among these conflicts, inter-ethnic or so-called ‘minority’ problems have been singled out by specialists on Romanian affairs. Indeed, the incorporation of Transylvania resulted in the inclusion of over 2,000,000 Hungarians (Magyars and Szeklers) and some 600,000 Germans in Romania. Discrimination against Magyars

Table 16.1 Romania: class structure, 1930

Population (millions)	17.9
Employment rate	
Rate of agrarian employment	78
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	1
Family farms	57
Agrarian proletariat	19
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	1
Old middle class	7
New middle class	6
Proletariat	10
Sub-proletariat	
Total	101

Sources: Kaser and Radice (eds) (1985: 76); Statistisches Reichsamtsamt (1936: 241); own estimates.

Figure 16.1 Romania: class structure, 1930



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 16.1.

and Szeklers in terms of employment, educational and cultural opportunities did indeed occur. However, the extent of such discrimination was exaggerated and exploited for political reasons by the interwar governments in Budapest which refused to accept the loss of Transylvania by the Treaty of Trianon. Magyars and Szeklers generally lived peacefully alongside Romanians even though they were frustrated by the changed circumstances which, before the end of the First World War, had favoured them over the 'inferior' Romanians. Coexistence was easier in the countryside than in urban centres since the towns of Transylvania had traditionally been enclaves of Hungarian professionals, bureaucrats, intellectuals and merchants. The fact that the urban population included a significant number of Hungarian Jews tended to aggravate urban tensions after the Romanians assumed control of government offices and the Romanianization of towns became state policy. What is more noteworthy, however, is the antagonism between Transylvania's Romanians and those of the Old Romanian kingdom since the latter were frequently envious of the higher economic and cultural levels of their Transylvanian brethren. And whereas the animosities between Romanians and Hungarians during the interwar years were based chiefly on ethnic, and associated linguistic and cultural differences, those among Romanians also involved religious conflicts. The Romanian Orthodox church and Old Romanian kingdom populists were suspicious of the Romanian Greek Catholics (Uniates) whom they regarded as tainted in their Romanianism because of their historic compromise with the Catholics. They therefore sought the reunification of the Uniate and Orthodox churches into a unique Romanian Orthodox church. The principal problem, however, was that of reconciling the economic, cultural and educational differences between the better educated, wealthier and more cultivated Hungarian peasantry and bourgeoisie and the less educated, poorer and culturally deprived Romanian proletariat and functionaries that moved into the Transylvanian urban centres during the interwar years.

No similar problems were evident with respect to the German minority. The so-called Transylvanian Saxons formed compact communities with virtually no ties

to the Romanian community. Their strength was mostly in towns like Sibiu, Brasov or Medias, where they had been engaged in commercial activities for centuries. There was virtually no intermarriage between Germans and Romanians, or even with Magyars and Szeklers, and their culture was rooted in German Protestantism. The Romanian population living in Saxon towns or agricultural areas accepted the Germans' self-imposed, de facto autonomy as did the Romanian governments of the interwar years. By contrast, the most critical social and cultural problems were related to the Jewish population of interwar Romania.

Prior to the end of the First World War the Jews of the Old Romanian kingdom had no legal status and, as such, were not regarded as an ethnic minority. As Greater Romania became a reality, Jews were permitted to become citizens – albeit under pressure from the Allied Powers – but they were still not protected by minority treaties inasmuch as they were legally classified as Romanians of Jewish faith. The massive influx of non-Romanian-speaking Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania more than doubled the number of Jews in postwar Romania and increased the level of antisemitism, primarily because of the concentration of Jews in the urban centres. The majority of the Jewish population was located in Bessarabia and Moldavia, although Bucharest and the non-German towns of Transylvania also had large Jewish communities. Whereas, as a rule Jews were regarded as non-Romanians chiefly because of their being non-Christian and, as such, incapable of sharing the values of Romanian Orthodox nationalism, there was little official discrimination in educational and cultural matters. Socially, however, contact between Jews and non-Jews was minimal, intermarriage infrequent and the exclusion of Jews from the state bureaucracy nearly total. Anti-Jewish demonstrations became the rule in Moldavian and Bessarabian towns within a few years after the end of the First World War and actions against Jewish merchants and students by youths – not necessarily students – who had migrated from the villages to the towns soon assumed a violent character. The scope of such violence expanded to other parts of Romania as economic conditions deteriorated and as xenophobia gained in intensity during the early 1930s. The Jewish question thus became a key factor in the political crises of interwar Romania.

3 Intermediary structures

It has been assumed by many historians, mostly erroneously, that Romania's political instability in the interwar years was initiated by the unwillingness of the National Liberal Party – headed by the Bratianu family and in possession of a virtual monopoly of power during the 1920s – to relinquish power to the National Peasant Party in open and fair elections. This thesis tends to attribute to the National Peasant Party the role of the legitimate and almost exclusive representative of peasant interests and, to a lesser extent, of those of the Transylvanian Romanians. There can be no doubt that almost all political parties, and especially the National Liberal leadership, were opposed to a government representing the interests of the

peasantry, but there is uncertainty as to whether the National Peasant Party was indeed the representative of those interests. While it is fair to assume that the peasantry, especially those in Transylvania, were loyal to Iuliu Maniu's National Party of Transylvania prior to the fusion of that organization with the Peasant Party of peasant leader Ion Mihalache, it is also true that the non-Transylvanian peasantry had closer ties to Mihalache and his supporters than to Maniu and his Transylvanian group. Moreover, Maniu's commitment to Transylvanian national and socioeconomic interests was far greater than to the Romanian peasantry as a whole. In fact, the active members of the National Peasant Party were often anything but representatives of the peasantry. Because of the party's largely democratic views and attitudes, a significant number of urban professionals and merchants, including a major proportion of Jewish voters, were loyal supporters of that organization despite their lack of contact with, or real concern about, the welfare of the peasantry. As a result the National Peasant Party was more the political organization of the moderate left and of anti-establishment intellectuals and professionals who would not identify with the National Liberal Party or with any of the myriad of smaller, powerless political organizations. During the 1920s, the Liberals were not unduly concerned at the opposition voiced by the National Peasants since their party posed as the champion of the national interests of all Romanians and as the protector of Greater Romania against both Hungarian and Soviet irredentism and communism. In actual fact, irredentism hardly posed a threat to Romania in the 1920s and the Romanian Communist Party – organized in 1921 and outlawed in 1924 – was an ineffectual and largely non-Romanian organization. None the less, anti-communism and chauvinism worked to the Liberals' advantage inasmuch as they could accuse the National Peasants of harbouring elements sympathetic to the left which were ideologically and ethnically incompatible with traditional Romanian nationalism.

Other political parties in interwar Romania played no significant role in the country's political life – with the exception of the parties of the extreme Right which emerged as a political force in 1937. The most notorious of the extreme Right organizations was the so-called Iron Guard, the radical Christian populist, virulently antisemitic, totalitarian formation headed by Coreneliu Zelea Codrieanu which secured the electoral support of university students, intellectuals, members of the lower clergy, junior military officers, disgruntled bureaucrats, and even some members of the proletariat.

The remaining political parties were generally splinter groups of the National Liberal Party, such as the National Liberal Party of Gheorge Bratianu, or of the National Peasant Party, such as the Ploughmen's Front. However, neither they nor the Social Democratic Party, the parties of ethnic minorities (such as the Magyar Party or the German Party), and, for that matter, even independent political organizations like Avarescu's People's Party or Iorga's National Party could or did meaningfully affect the political dynamics of interwar Romania. The principal reason for their failure was their lack of a solid social or political base and their inability to overcome either the apathy of the electorate or the control of the elections by the major parties in power.

Table 16.2 Romania: electoral results, 1922-37

	11.03.1922		02.06.1926		12.07.1927		12.12.1928		10.06.1931		17.07.1932		30.12.1933		20.12.1937	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
National Liberal Party	51.7	227	7.5	16	62.7	318	6.7	13			14.0	28	52.0	300	36.5	152
Diss. National Liberals	0.3	1														
Cons. Democrats (Ionescu)	0.6	2														
People's Party (Averescu)	7.6	12	53.4	292	2.0		2.5	5	5.0	10	2.2	4	1.6		0.8	
Jewish Party	0.6	1							2.3	4	2.3	5	1.3		1.4	
German Parl. Party	0.2	9														
Magyar Party	0.1	1			6.4	15	6.2	16	4.9	10	4.9	14	4.1	8	4.5	19
Dem. Union Party	1.3	16													1.4	
Bessarab. Peasant Party	6.6	22														
Bessarab. Dem. League	0.6	2														
National Party (Maniu)	1.7	25														
National Dem. (Iorga)	2.8	3			1.0				48.9	289	2.3	5				
Farmers' Party (Zaran.)	18.7	40	28.4	69	22.5	54	79.2	348	15.4	30	41.5	274	14.2	29	20.7	86
National Zaranist. List	1.4	4														
Socialists	1.0	2	1.6		1.8				3.3	6	3.5	7	1.3		1.0	
Independents	2.4	2														
Iron Guard					0.4				1.1		2.4	5			15.8	66
Christ. Party of Nat. Defense			4.9	10	1.9		1.2		4.0	8	5.5	11	4.6	9	9.3	39
National Agricult. Party (Goga)											3.8	8	4.2	9		
National Liberal Party (Bratianu)									6.1	12	6.7	14			3.9	16
Agrarian Union													2.5	5	1.7	
Radical Peasant Party													2.8	6	2.3	9
Dem. Peasant Party									2.8	6	1.4					
Farmers' Party (Lupu)								2.5	5	3.5	7	5.9	12	5.2	11	
Workers-/Farmers bloc			1.5		1.2		1.4		2.6	5	0.3					
Others			0.2		0.1		0.3		0.1		0.8		0.3		0.6	
Seats total		369		387		387		387		387		387		387		387

Source: Sternberger and Vogel (1969: vol.2, 1031).

Note: The Parliament elected in December 1937 was dissolved before it was constituted.

4 The central political system

To preserve their control over the Greater Romanian state, the political leaders of the Old Romanian Kingdom – and later King Carol II – relied on a strong central governmental system. The central government consisted of a variable number of ministries – ranging from 11 to 15 – and of the presidency of the Council of Ministers. The ministries performed the functions ordinarily ascribed to administrative-executive organs and were headed by ministers who, in some cases, were assisted by under-secretaries. The ministers, under-secretaries and the chiefs of the various directorates were normally members of the party in power. Other employees were protected by civil service rules, but the replacement of more important employees was customary whenever a change of government occurred. A system of rigid hierarchical subordination prevailed throughout the executive branch of the government, particularly in the Ministry of the Interior, which not only exercised control over the entire police force, but was also the agency to which the whole system of local government was subordinate.

There were few limitations on the powers of the executive. Although ministerial responsibility was a cardinal principle of the 1923 Constitution, Parliament in fact had little control over the ministers. The Romanian electoral system, guaranteeing automatic control of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies to the party in power, virtually precluded control of the executive by the legislature. In 1939, even that theoretical possibility was removed following the abolition of Parliament by King Carol. Nor was the executive limited by the judiciary, as the courts concerned themselves primarily with judicial litigation and had only limited jurisdiction over disputes between citizens and organs of government, these being settled by administrative procedure through a body called the Administrative Arbitration Court. Only the monarch, who embodied the highest state power, could repudiate the actions of ministers and order their removal from the cabinet.

The Romanian army, based on the concept of the nation in arms, consisted of a standing army of 300,000 and an active reserve of some 400,000 men. Military training was compulsory for every able bodied male citizen between the ages of 21 and 50 for periods varying between one year (for high school graduates) and three years (for other draftees). The core of the armed forces consisted of the traditional infantry, the other services – with the exception of the artillery – being poorly developed in terms of modern warfare. The officer class of well-trained men, graduates of military lyceums and academies, was entirely professional and not active in Romanian politics. Politically, the armed forces were subordinated to the Ministry of Defence which was normally (but not exclusively) headed by a general.

5 The development of the crisis situation

Romanian politics in the interwar years focussed almost entirely on the maintenance of power in the hands of the ‘unifiers’, on the challenge to that

monopoly of power by the monarchy after 1930 and on the two-pronged challenge to both the establishment and the monarchy by the radical Right after the mid-1930s (see Table 16.3). The political crises caused by these confrontations were generally unrelated to socioeconomic or sociocultural issues since both the political platforms of the contending parties and the composition of their constituencies were generally unrelated to their avowed goals and seldom represented the interests of the population at large.

The tendency to attribute political and social crises in interwar Romania to economic factors is generally unjustified. As an overwhelmingly agricultural country, Romania was only marginally affected by the economic crises which, even prior to the Great Depression of the 1930s, played a major role in the rise of authoritarianism in other parts of Europe. Statistics indicating that the standard of living in interwar Romania was among the lowest in Europe fail to take into

Table 16.3 Romania: government composition, 1919–40

1919–1920	A 'Democratic Coalition' headed by Alexandru Voievod, a nationalist Transylvanian politician – assumes political power pending elections.
1920–1921	General Alexandru Averescu, head of the People's Party, is entrusted with the governing of the country by King Ferdinand.
1922–1928	The National Liberal Party, headed by Ioan I.C. Bratianu, governs in the interest of the nationalist Bratianu political dynasty.
1928–1931	The National Peasant Party, headed by Iuliu Maniu, governs in the interest of the peasantry and the bourgeoisie but is unable to solve the country's economic problems and to cooperate with the authoritarian King Carol II.
1931–1932	A government of 'technicians' headed by the nationalist historian and politician Nicolae Iorga fails to resolve the country's economic problems and to hold together an 'ad hoc' coalition of diverse political organizations grouped into the so-called 'National Union'.
1932–1933	The National Peasant Party governs ineffectually because of continuing economic problems and its inability to cooperate with the King.
1933–1937	The National Liberal Party, under various prime ministers and supportive of King Carol, enjoys a monopoly of political power while seeking the resolution of internal and external problems caused by the rise of the political right at home and abroad.
28 Dec. 1937	A government of the extreme right, the so-called Goga-Cuza 10 Feb. 1938 government, issues major antisemitic laws, but is dismissed after only six weeks in power as a result of pressure from democratic forces within and outside Romania.
Feb. 1938	A royal dictatorship, governing through the so-called Sep. 1940 'Front of National Rebirth', seeks to protect Romania's national and territorial unity in the face of growing threats from the extremist right at home and abroad.
Sep. 1940	A military dictatorship under General Ion Antonescu, initially in June 1941 collaboration with the Iron Guard, is at first pro-Nazi and later (Aug. 1944) formally allied with Nazi Germany.

account the fact that small-scale agriculture, based on self-sufficiency, and the traditionally meagre diet of the Romanian peasant masses fully met the needs of the population and the export market. It is true that the export of agricultural products, which provided the various parts of Greater Romania with much of its foreign currency, declined because of competition from the Soviet Union and the Eastern European national states and because of reduced Western demand in the depression era. However, it is also true that the capital required for industrialization was adequately provided for by revenue derived from agricultural activities. Moreover, the export of Romania's principal source of foreign currency, petroleum, showed only a marginal decline in the 1930s. It is evident that industrial expansion was limited in the interwar years, but this was due more to a lack of interest in industrialization by the population at large and to Romania's traditional role as an exporter of non-industrial products. If anything, the industrialization of Romania advanced during the 1930s, in some measure at least, because of the increased demand for industrial products by the expanding urban population, domestic military requirements and increased exports to Nazi Germany.

The economic crisis, which largely frustrated the rising expectations of the peasantry, the working class, and, above all, the students and youths, did, however, have sociopolitical ramifications. The social dislocation resulting from urbanization, that is, from the influx of the sons and daughters of peasants into the towns and the parallel and/or corollary increase in the size of the proletariat, resulted in both unemployment and underemployment as well as in the underpayment of workers, salaried white-collar professionals and employees, especially in the educational field.

Contrary to claims by the political left and the extreme right that the working class was a militant force in interwar Romanian society because of its exploitation by the capitalists – mostly Jewish in the view of the Right – the fact is that the proletariat of Romania was generally unresponsive to appeals for strikes and demonstrations by both left and right. More susceptible to promises of economic improvements at the expense of the capitalists, again mostly Jewish in the view of the right, were those poorer peasants who were unable to manage the land they had received through the agrarian reforms of the early 1920s and who were, in fact, facing bankruptcy by the 1930s. Even so, the vast majority of both the peasantry and the lesser proletariat were passive in their reactions to economic difficulties and unrealized expectations. The most disgruntled and militant elements, however, were to be found among university students, teachers and intellectuals who were frequently unemployed, mostly underpaid, and generally dissatisfied with the economic power of Jewish bankers, industrialists, and merchants who, in their view, were leeches planted in the Romanian body social and economic. However, their message, while addressing economic issues, was primarily political and their exploitation of mass discontent was based more on sociocultural malaise than on economic difficulties.

Table 16.4 Romania: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
GDP (1000 m. Lei)									370.7	388	418.5	387.9	336	274.3	245.2	243.7	251.9	281.8	315.5	354.7	387.2	
in 1938 prices									300.1	290	306	263.8	230.8	262.7	282.6	301.3	323.2	336.2	357.6	371.1	387.2	
GDP/cap. (Lei)									21928	22587	24025	21994	18782	15100	13307	13066	13471	15029	16782	18817	20487	
GDP (m. US-\$)									2224	2328	2511	2327	2016	1646	1471	1462	1511	1691	1893	2128	2323	
GDP/cap. US-\$)									132	136	144	132	113	91	80	78	81	90	101	113	123	
Population	7291	15514	15657	15900	16136	16374	16616		16905	17178	17419	17637	17889	18166	18426	18652	18700	18750	18800	18850	18900	
(thousands)																						
COST (1913 = 100)	100			1550	2000	2950	3500	3850	4200	4550	4650	5000	4950	3550	2950	2750	2650	2850	3000	3250	3400	3650
Unemployment										10	7		25	36	39	29	17	14	14	11	7	9
(thousands)																						
B. o. Trade (m. Lei)	81			-3532	-3882	1714	5078	2096	-786	1070	4259	-668	5478	6442	4711	2429						
Lost working days				1702	81	307	291	212	210	326	58	110	412	180	185	104	57	156	361	196	73	52
(millions)																						
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.									100	116	131	145	155	151	159	137	159	192	190	202	204	204
Cost of Living				100	129	190	226	248	271	294	300	323	319	229	190	177	171	184	194	210	219	235
Unemployment											100	70	250	360	390	290	170	140	140	110	70	90
GDP									100	105	113	105	91	74	66	66	68	76	85	96	104	
Strikes				100	379	359	262	259	402	72	136	509	222	228	128	70	193	446	242	90	64	

Sources: Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 168ff., 357, 744ff); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 241–2); Kaser and Radice(eds) (1985).

Note: Lei is US\$0.006; GDP is at current market prices; extrapolated estimates for the number of population.

6 Political crises and solutions

After the death of King Ferdinand in 1927 the virtual monopoly of power held by the Bratianu family was undermined when the monarch's grandson, Mihai, became his successor. This followed the involuntary renunciation of the crown by Mihai's father, Carol II, at the instigation of the Bratianus a few years earlier. In 1930, however, the regency – although controlled by the Bratianus – was unable to prevent Carol's return to power through a de facto *coup d'état* which engendered a series of political crises that were to affect Romania for the rest of the 1930s.

Whereas Carol's presumed dictatorial ambitions were, if not unfounded, at least grossly exaggerated by his political opponents, it is evident that both the Bratianus and the Maniu wing of the National Peasant Party were out of favour with the monarch, largely because of their denunciation of Carol's 'restoration' and the return to Romania of his mistress, Elena (Magda) Lupescu – a woman of Jewish origin. Carol indeed manipulated the political system by changing prime ministers more or less at will and by condoning, if not actually organizing, fraudulent elections. The corruption of the parliamentary system, however, was less serious a crisis than the advent in the early 1930s of the Legion of the Archangel Michael – an extreme right-wing, nationalist, populist, and virulently antisemitic political organization which used terrorism as one of its major weapons. The Legion, which soon constituted itself as a political party under the name 'All for the Fatherland', later became better known as the Iron Guard. It exploited the weaknesses of the party system, the vulnerability of the king resulting from his relations with Elena Lupescu, and the disaffection of youths, peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie with the prevalent economic conditions – which the Guard chose to attribute to the malign influence of Jewish economic power. As the Legion secured the support of the lower and rural clergy and most younger intellectuals, it spread to the villages by promising land to the poor peasantry, land which was to be acquired through the confiscation of Jewish wealth. The success of the Iron Guard among villagers and a significant part of the proletariat alarmed the monarch and both major political parties, the National Liberal and the National Peasant parties. Their disquiet became especially acute after the elections of December 1937 in which the Iron Guard and other extreme right-wing antisemitic organizations received nearly 25 per cent of the total votes cast.

7 The outcome of the crisis

The appointment of a government of the extreme right headed by Octavian Goga and A.C. Cuza by Carol II in December 1937 was merely a prelude to the termination of parliamentary rule some two months later when a royal dictatorship was established. The ensuing assassination of the head of the Iron Guard, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, which had been ordered by the monarch and his entourage, brought the political crisis near to boiling-point. The outlawing of the

Iron Guard merely drove its members underground and terrorism became its main political weapon. Still, order under Carol's dictatorship continued to be enforced despite the actions of the Guard and the increasing pressures exerted upon Romania by revisionist Hungary and by Nazi Germany which was seeking control over the country's economy. It was only the next major political crisis, unleashed by the Hitler–Stalin pact of August 1939, that rocked the foundations of the dictatorship. The inevitability of Romania becoming involved in the Second World War despite Carol's attempts to maintain both neutrality and his dictatorship marked the political resurgence of extreme right-wing and anti-Carolist political leaders – identified mostly with the National Peasant Party – who finally brought down the monarch in 1940. In June of that year Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were seized by the Soviet Union and in September Northern Transylvania was lost to Hungary following the Axis Powers' Vienna Diktat; shortly thereafter Southern Dobrudja was ceded to Bulgaria under German and Italian pressure. All this resulted in the dismemberment of Greater Romania which, in the autumn of 1940, brought to power the Iron Guard and the formal dictatorship of Marshal Ion Antonescu. It was the prelude to the ultimate crisis of the interwar years: Antonescu's alliance with Hitler in the war against the Soviet Union in June 1941.

8 Conclusions

The definition of crisis in the case of interwar Romania is a very relative one. If we were to assume that Greater Romania had been committed to compromise and the modification of traditional political practices and mentalities by accepting the democratic conditions imposed by the post-First World War peace treaties and embodied in the Constitution of 1923, then the entire interwar period would constitute a record of political crises. However, as the acceptance of the conditions imposed upon Romania was largely *pro forma*, they were ignored *de facto*, being considered incompatible with the principles of Romanian nationalism and Romania's political experience. Thus, the exclusion of political opponents from power by means of fraudulent elections, the discrimination against Jews, Hungarians and other minorities, the abolition of political pluralism and the parliamentary system by the royal dictatorship of 1938, and the coming to power of the Antonescu regime, were not considered as major political crises by the vast majority of the Romanian population. Moreover, the economic crisis of the 1930s was not understood in the same terms as the Great Depression was seen in developed industrial societies; to most Romanians it was a normal course of events, an expression of God's will, a setback, perhaps, but by no means a major factor in determining political attitudes. It is worth remembering that the desire for land by the poorer peasantry, and for better working conditions by the proletariat, had constituted a permanent feature of interwar Romanian politics and that the Iron Guard had appealed primarily to these elements of the population with its promises of economic

betterment. Ultimately, the only *true* major crisis of the interwar period was the crisis of Romanian nationalism.

Greater Romania, after all, was the realization of the historic aspirations of Romanian nationalists; to them it was the realization of Romania's manifest destiny. As such, the preservation of the national state and the ensuring of its development for Romanians by Romanians was the *sine qua non* of all political leaders. Thus, the struggle for power involved Romanians only. It is true that the Romanian leaders who regarded themselves as the 'unifiers' – the Bratianu Liberals and their associates – were less tolerant of ethnic and cultural diversity than were the Transylvanian Romanians led by Iuliu Maniu or by Romanian leaders of lesser political organizations such as the small Social Democratic Party or the even smaller offshoots of agrarian organizations. It is also true that most leaders of political organizations were more tolerant of diversity than were the xenophobic and antisemitic parties of Moldavia and Bessarabia. Nevertheless, the fact is that only political organizations headed by Romanians vied for power and that the toleration of ethnic and cultural diversity was, if at all, a minor factor in intra-party confrontations. To the public at large it mattered relatively little who was in charge of the government as long as it was headed by Romanians acting for the benefit of Romanians. Ultimately, the Iron Guard became successful because it proclaimed itself to be more Romanian than the other competing political organizations; these were variously accused of lack of concern for the orthodox peasant masses and stigmatized for their association with Jews and for compromising with international capitalism, socialism, and even communism – all purportedly manifestations of Judaism. Whereas this nationalist extremism was accepted by only a minority of the population, the nationalism of the other political parties remained unquestioned by the vast majority. Thus, the dismemberment of Greater Romania in 1940 was perceived as the only major crisis in Romanian political history because it was the death-knell of historic Romanian nationalism. The scapegoats were the Judaizing King Carol II, the Hungarian minority, the Jews themselves, the communists and all those who conspired against Romania. Consequently, the advent of Marshal Antonescu and his Iron Guard allies was not regarded by most Romanians as a major political crisis in the sense of the destruction of parliamentary democracy, but rather as a positive reaction to the destruction of Romanianism. Antonescu's dictatorship was the guarantee of securing what was left of the country's destiny and the promise of safeguarding Romania's – and the Romanians' – interests against foreign and domestic enemies. It also offered hope for the future, with the prospect of recovering the territories lost to Romania's traditional enemies: the Russian Bolsheviks and the Hungarian and Bulgarian revisionists.

17

Spain: The Double Breakdown

Walther L. Bernecker

1 Introduction

For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Spain was one of the most deeply divided European societies – a factor which caused continuing political tensions and finally civil war. The years between the two world wars were ones of conflict in contrast to the political stability of the Restoration Era (1875–1923) and the long-lived Franco dictatorship (1936–75). This period saw the breakdown of oligarchic liberalism (1917–23), the *coup d'état* and dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923–30), the fall of the monarchy and the proclamation of the Republic (1931), five turbulent years of democracy (1931–6) and finally the collapse of the democratic system and civil war (1936–9). Spain was thus the only European country in which, after a short but intensive period of political mass mobilization, democracy was ended by direct military intervention.

While the crisis of the 1930s was fundamentally a class conflict, a number of secondary conflicts were superimposed on it and so it is not possible to analyse it simply in class terms. The existing class antagonisms were reinforced and cross-cut by national and regional, economic and cultural, political and religious conflicts whose cumulative effects ultimately appeared to make the crisis insoluble to republican politicians.

In 1923 Spain's constitutional order broke down for the first time. The Captain General of Catalonia abolished the Restoration political system in a bloodless coup supported by large parts of the population. But a subsequent attempt to abolish democracy, the military *coup d'état* of 1936, failed. Only after a civil war, whose outcome was influenced by foreign intervention, were its initiators able to assume power. What were the differences between these two seizures of power, and how can they be explained?

2 Social conditions and interwar Spanish politics

2.1 Economic and class cleavages

Spain was a 'late-comer' to industrialization. In the interwar period, the country was still predominantly agrarian, and the problems of the agricultural sector – the

Spain

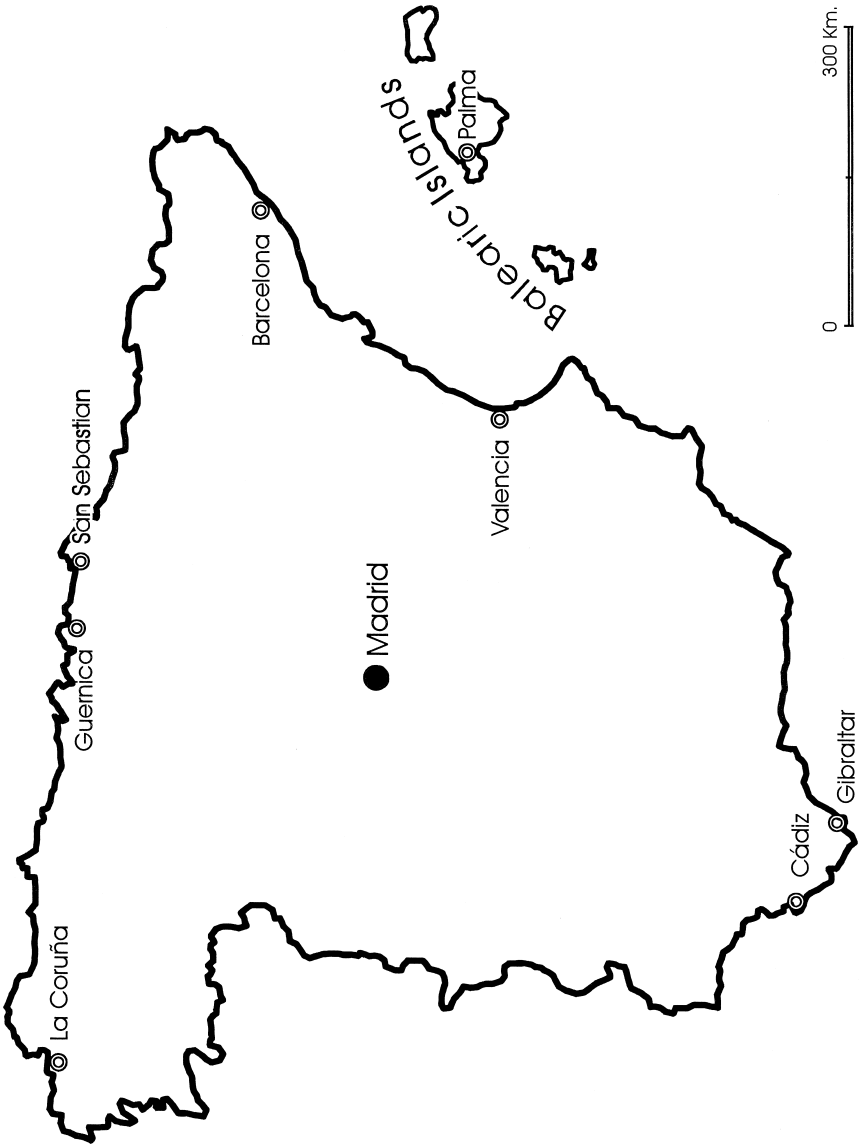


Table 17.1 Spain: class structure, 1930

Population (millions)	23.2
Employment rate	37.2 ^a
Rate of agrarian employment	57
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	1.6
Family farms	22.7
Agrarian proletariat	20.9
Non-agrarian ^b :	
Capitalists	1
Old middle class	15
New middle class	10
Proletariat	28.1
Sub-proletariat	
Total	99.3

Sources: Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 282); Tamames (1979: 59–90).

Notes:

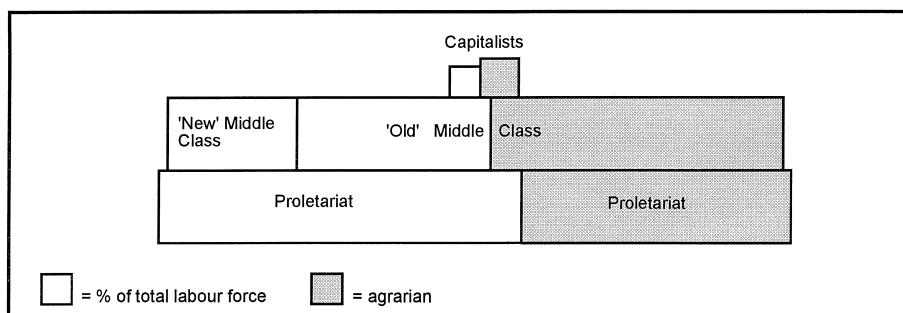
a Employment rates for the year 1920.

b The figures for capitalists, old and new middle classes have been estimated.

polarization between minifundia and latifundia, under-employment and unemployment, rural exodus, the social structure and the conditions of land tenure – can be partly traced back to the eighteenth century.

These conditions were linked to the distribution of land, and this in turn was characterized by great regional differences. While the latifundia cultivated by day labourers or tenants were concentrated primarily in New Castile, Andalusia and Extremadura, the minifundia, whose cultivation barely made possible the physical survival of a family, dominated parts of Old Castile, Galicia and Leon. Medium-sized farms (between 10 and 100 hectares) were

Figure 17.1 Spain: class structure, 1930



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 17.1.

located in Catalonia, in the Basque Country and in the Levante. In nearly all the South, especially the South-West, the latifundist economy predominated (Malefakis 1970).

In 1930, farms of more than 100 hectares occupied in total more than twice the area occupied by farms of less than 10 hectares; the great landowners controlled 66.5 per cent of the land. Farms of more than 500 hectares made up 53 per cent of the agricultural land in the south. In contrast, in the middle of the country, the area occupied by latifundia was less than half that of small farms, and in the north the latifundia represented less than 25 per cent of the land. In 1930, the latifundia represented only 0.1 per cent of all agrarian enterprises but made up 33 per cent of total agricultural land; minifundia were 96 per cent of all farms but only 30 per cent of the total land area (Vicens Vives 1964: 580).

Generally, the large landowners had very productive land, whereas most of the poor pasture land was distributed as small plots. This led to social unrest among small landowners, tenant farmers and day labourers. Up until the civil war, land ownership reflected social prestige, and control over land also implied the power to dispose the most important source of national wealth and underpinned the social structure. Land ownership regulated the economic, political and social life of the country to a high degree. The discontent of the rural masses, and their latent inclination to revolt, from which they expected the redistribution of the great estates, partly explain the enormous success of rural anarchism and revolutionary socialism. The frontier line that divided the Spain of agrarian revolution from the Spain of rural conservatism was the same line that divided the latifundia from the small and medium-sized farms.

One consequence of the distribution of land ownership was the seasonal unemployment and migration of landless rural labourers to the northern industrial centres. Another was the social structure of the South. Up until the founding of the Second Republic in 1931, less than 10 per cent of all those employed in agriculture were owners of the land they cultivated and the landless day labourers working on the latifundia represented 75 per cent of the working population in the South.

Spain in the interwar period experienced a slow industrialization process, concentrated mainly in the periphery of the country (Catalonia, the Basque Country, Asturias). By applying protectionist measures, Spain had reached a high degree of economic autarky by this time. Its links to the world economy were very weak: In 1935 its share of the world trade amounted to only 1.4 per cent of imports and one per cent of exports. Half of the Spanish imports and a third of the exports went through Barcelona.

Reflecting the predominantly agrarian structure of the Spanish economy, and the slow process of industrialization in the periphery, 28 per cent of the working population were self-employed in agriculture, 17 per cent were agrarian workers, 9 per cent worked as artisans and industrialists, 17 per cent were workers in industry or construction workers, a further 17 per cent had a service enterprise of their own or worked as officials, and 11 per cent were workers in service enterprises or domestics (Tamames 1979: 59–90).

2.2 Regional and linguistic cleavages

The creation of the Spanish state in the late fifteenth century brought together several linguistic groups: the Castilian (Spanish)-speaking people of Castile, the partly Catalan-speaking people of Aragón, the *Gallego*-speaking people of the northwest and the Basque-speaking people of the Basque Country.

The relationship between these language groups was asymmetric. Spanish has always been the language of the court and the only official language in the whole Spanish territory; it was used in the administration, the judiciary and the army. By contrast, Catalan, Basque and Galician speakers were only found in their respective regions, and even there they were a minority. Those who aspired to some social advancement for their children would teach them Spanish. Furthermore, Spanish was a widely diffused language with a tradition and literature, spoken in large parts of Latin America, whereas the use of the other languages was limited to their respective regions (and the Basque and Catalan parts of southern France, respectively).

For centuries, the relationship between central government and the linguistically and culturally different regions at the periphery of the country had been characterized by conflict. Before the Civil War in 1936, most of the problems centred on the two 'classical cases': Catalonia and the Basque Country. These two regions were already characterized by a political regionalism which was more than just cultural nationalism. In terms of a regional identity, the Basque Country had lagged some decades behind Catalonia. In the latter region, strong cultural nationalism arose in the 1840s; in the Basque provinces at the end of the nineteenth century; the beginning of a political mass movement can be dated in Catalonia around the turn of the century, in the Basque Country not before the Second Republic (Brunn 1978; Waldmann 1989).

Although the Basque provinces and Catalonia were the richest and most developed areas of Spain, their economic progress was, nevertheless, inversely proportional to their political weight in the Spanish state. The centralizing government of Madrid had removed political privileges from the Catalans at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and from the Basques during the nineteenth century. From then on both regions showed a growing antagonism towards Madrid.

2.3 Religious cleavages

In spite of being a largely homogeneous Catholic country (with only negligible Protestant and Jewish communities), a strong Catholic-secular cleavage developed in Spain during the nineteenth century. The Church has been, in the last two centuries, one of the most controversial institutions in Spain, struggling to determine how it should relate to an emerging liberal society. There was the clear alienation of an increasing segment of the population from the Church and from religion itself. The emerging working class was largely alienated from formal religion, for many well before its members discovered labour politics. This growing

'de-christianization' was a product of the church's inability to formulate an effective response to the challenges of urbanization and industrialization.

At the beginning of the Second Republic (1931), Prime Minister Azaña stated that Spain had ceased to be Catholic; by this he meant that the culture was no longer exclusively Catholic. Callahan argues that a process of 'accelerated dechristianization' had begun about 1850, and this had rapidly produced a regional pattern of religious observance. By the last third of the nineteenth century, the geographical spread of Spanish Catholicism was apparent:

The Church was strongest in areas of large peasant populations who had reasonable security of land tenure and lived in numerous small villages with a strong sense of communal life. It was weakest in the great latifundia lands of Extremadura, La Mancha and Andalucía, where a rural proletariat lived in desperate economic circumstances. And already by 1869 the weakness of the Church in metropolitan areas was becoming evident (Callahan 1984: 244).

In the nineteenth century a violent popular anti-clericalism emerged too, especially in the cities. This development was particularly marked in Barcelona but despite repeated conflicts with the Church, Spanish liberals were rarely hostile to the institution itself and never to religion. They sought merely to find it a place within a liberal political and social order.

In its religious legislation the Second Republic was qualitatively different from all preceding constitutional regimes. The founders of the new regime saw the social influence of the Church, particularly in education, as an obstacle to social progress. Therefore in their religious policies they sought not merely to put limits on the social influence of the Church but to eliminate it altogether. Republican leaders wished to create a modern, secular society, in which religion was reduced to a strictly private matter, but the religious legislation and practice of the first Republican governments provided the issue around which the opposition coalesced (Sánchez 1964).

2.4 Interactions of cleavages

Characteristically in Spain the regional-linguistic cleavages were reinforced by economic and political discrepancies, and such regional-linguistic differences and disputes were also expressions of an economic centre-periphery conflict. As such they could only be attenuated by changes in the political system of the country – including reforms in the education system and access to political positions.

The interactions between the economic and the religious-secular cleavages led, in the Basque case, to a cross-cutting pattern; in the Catalan case, the vertical and horizontal cleavages coincided and so reinforced each other. A large proportion of anti-clerical, anarchist workers were concentrated in Barcelona, where a leftist middle-class segment also shared a suspicion of the Catholic Church.

3 Intermediary structures

3.1 Political parties

Political parties are not mentioned in any legal or constitutional Spanish text of the nineteenth century; and they remained extra-constitutional, their functions undefined. The revolution of 1868 introduced universal and equal male suffrage; during the Restoration Era, two parties dominated political life: the Fusionist Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Fusionista) and the Conservative Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Conservador). For some decades, the Liberals and Conservatives alternated in government, systematically manipulating the results of elections. This meant that the elections and governments between 1876 and 1923 did not really reflect the political will of the voting population (Varela Ortega 1977).

Around the turn of the century, this system of alternating parties moved into crisis. In Catalonia some separatist parties were founded, and the growth of regionalism, together with the development of new parties, led to an increasing fragmentation of the party system. This in turn produced a parliament which was almost atomized and nearly unable to support any government. The instability was reflected in a series of short-lived governments, until Primo de Rivera's *coup d'état* in 1923 finally brought an end to the constitutional system.

Once the dictatorship had been installed, a process of institutionalization set in. Primo de Rivera attempted to create a 'surrogate' parliament through a single party, the Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica) and a 'National Assembly'. However, after the failure of the dictatorship in 1930, the Patriotic Union also disintegrated (Ben-Ami 1984).

At the beginning of the Republic the left was able to continue its traditional forms of organization in the Socialist Party, the PSOE, or to renew them as in the Communist Party, the PCE; the right was so disoriented by the political changes that, for a short time, they were unable to present a single, overall organization.

One representative of 'bourgeois' politics was Lerroux's Radical Republican Party which, during the Republic, moved more and more towards the right. In 1934, the left wing of the party under Martínez Barrio split off and formed the Republican Union which, like Azaña's Republican Left, pressed for a comprehensive reform policy within the framework of the parliamentary Republic. In Catalonia, the leftist liberal Republican Left of Catalonia, led by Macià and Lluís Companys, represented the interests of the lower bourgeoisie (Avilés 1985; Ruiz Manjón 1976).

The two most important parties of the Second Republic were the PSOE and a confederation of various moderate and extreme right-wing and Catholic parties, the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right, or CEDA. The Socialists interpreted the regime transition as a 'bourgeois revolution' in which the liberal-republican parties would have to assume political leadership, and the PSOE would have to support them. Significant disputes inside the republican-socialist coalition government occurred soon after 1931. As a consequence, various

factions were formed within the PSOE, which continued to exist until 1939 and even beyond (Preston 1973).

The CEDA entered Spanish politics when the anti-clericalism of the Republican government had reduced the Church's traditional social and political position. The CEDA programme was primarily the program of Popular Action, one of the parties of the Confederation, based on the social doctrine of the Catholic Church and representing the social and economic interests of the (landed) oligarchy (Robinson 1970).

3.2 Interest groups

Among interest groups, the trade unions played a major role but the Spanish trade union movement had some ideological and organizational peculiarities. Due to the late and peripheralized character of industrialization in Spain, the labour movement could not develop until the last third of the nineteenth century; before, social unrest and social protest had been little organized and confined to only a few regions. The first and most important wing of the labour and trade union movement was (rural) anarchism. This began among the day labourers of Andalusia and the industrial workers of Catalonia in 1868. In the following decades, the development of Spanish anarchism was riven by internal disputes between anarcho-collectivists and anarcho-communists; at the beginning of the twentieth century, the different tendencies reached a compromise, whose organizational expression was the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the National Confederation of Labour, or CNT.

Contrary to the revolutionary orientation of the CNT, the Socialist trade union, the General Union of Workers (UGT), founded in 1888, was moderate and reformist until the mid-1930s. At this time the UGT had virtually monopolized the city's unions and drew support overwhelmingly from the skilled workers in the secondary sector, especially construction workers. The UGT grew slowly; it became a truly mass organization only in the 1930s when it broke out of its traditional strongholds (Madrid, Asturias, Vizcaya), and won support among the landless labourers of the south (Shubert 1990: 128–31). In the 1930s CNT and UGT each had more than a million members.

There were other unions, both Communist and Catholic, but compared to the CNT and the UGT, they were relatively insignificant before the Civil War. So in the interwar period, especially by the 1930s, the Spanish working class was mainly split between two unions and between a reformist Socialist Party and an anti-political anarcho-syndicalist movement which demanded social revolution and aspired to 'libertarian communism'.

The other side – the employers – were similarly divided. They saw their collective interests threatened, and tried to defend them. But the dispersion and fragmentation among agrarian and industrial employer organizations hindered this and the fight for hegemony amongst them could not be resolved. The heterogeneity of the different economic groups, their divergent interests, and their unequal capacity to exert pressure, prevented the employer organizations from having a common and coherent leadership. Nevertheless in 1923 Catalan

employers favoured Primo de Rivera's coup, and in 1936 the agrarian owners were also in favour of a coup. This was due partly to the fact that they did not have a political party that represented their interests in the parliamentary arena (Cabrera 1983).

3.3 Social movements

In addition to these groups, there were a number of other non-institutionalized social movements whose power and impact came from the growing radicalization of the political atmosphere during the Second Republic.

On the left, the radical wing of the anarchists organized several challenges to the constitutional order. The Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) fought against the 'reformism' of the workers; their aim was a stateless society organized on a communalistic basis. In contrast to the FAI, the larger part of the CNT and the socialist UGT were, at the beginning of the Republic, reformist. However, when the economic situation deteriorated, and the right came to power in 1933, the trade unions became more and more radical. In particular the left wing of the UGT claimed a 'social revolution' under the leadership of Largo Caballero (Bernecker 1982).

The radicalization on the right was even more rapid. In October 1933 José Antonio Primo de Rivera founded a genuine fascist party, the Spanish Falange. The youth organization of the right wing of the CEDA increasingly rejected the constitutional system; their social roots were those of right 'middle class radicalism'. Other organizations declared themselves against the government's 'reformism' too and this radicalization exposed the government to growing attacks from nearly every side.

4 The central political system

For decades, the political system of the Restoration had rested on two parties: the Liberal Conservatives and the Fusionist Liberals. What kept the parties and governments of the Restoration era stable was the deal concluded in 1885 between these two 'dynastic' parties. They agreed that in order to maintain the monarchy, the two parties would stop fighting each other and would regularly alternate in government. To achieve this, the governing party had to manipulate the elections, so that the 'parliamentarism' of the Restoration monarchy became a mere fiction and the oligarchic power structure was preserved (Nohlen 1969).

After the loss of most Spanish colonies in 1898, groups demanding a break with the corruption of the Restoration system became more numerous. However, this 'Regeneration Movement' met with little success. The 'Tragic Week' of 1909, a protest against the war in North Africa which had been triggered by Spanish imperialism there, did not bring any major changes, although it did some damage to the system (Ullmann 1968).

Compared to the Restoration system, the Second Republic was more democratic. Republican and socialist parties tried to modernize the old socioeconomic structures and replace them with new ones. One of the first tasks the government

set itself in 1931 was the elaboration of a new constitution, strongly influenced by the Weimar Constitution. The enumeration of some of the controversial issues shows the problems of the Second Republic: the relationship between the nation as a whole and the regions, the regulation of the relations between Church and State, and social policy such as divorce or education. Socialist ideas of public ownership clashed with the bourgeois-liberal desire for protection of private property and, in the end, the possibility of compulsory expropriation 'in the interest of social utility' was included. Basic and civil rights were laid down more comprehensively than in any previous constitution.

5 Dynamic factors of the period preceding the first crisis

5.1 The political setting

To understand Primo de Rivera's coup of 1923, one must consider the last period of the Restoration system and its gradual collapse from the second decade of the twentieth century onwards. The Restoration system has been seen as a conservative achievement which suppressed a revolutionary process and prevented the evolution of a more genuinely democratic system. But it also prevented a counter-revolution by the right and kept political life safe from *pronunciamientos*. However, the political stability of these years was bought at the price of a repressive and non-democratic system which made popular participation in all political decisions practically impossible. Any social progress was limited and the (mainly landed) oligarchy was able to exert its political and social dominance largely unchallenged.

This situation ended in the first decade of the twentieth century. There were increasing tensions resulting from the social problems of industrialization and from the regional question. In the second decade of the century, the Restoration party system fell apart, with personalistic intrigues becoming more and more frequent.

5.2 Electoral results and the formation of political coalitions

In the years prior to 1923 the number of parties grew and it became increasingly difficult to form a stable government. One sign of the disintegration of the Restoration system was the rapid turnover of governments. Cabinets of 'national unity' temporarily brought together all parties loyal to the system to confront the demands of the workers, the Republicans and the Regionalists. The electoral success of the socialists was still modest: in 1910 the first Socialist had won a seat, and in 1918 six members of parliament belonged to the Socialist Party. However, party membership increased from 76,304 members in 1916 to 89,601 in August 1918, and to 211,342 in May 1920. The system of electoral manipulation through *caciques* (political bosses) failed; parliament became more and more fragmented due to the creation of new parties and the reorganization of existing ones. The system of government appeared to be dissolving rapidly and the country seemed ungovernable. Increasingly, King Alfonso XIII assumed the role

Table 17.2 Spain: electoral results, 1918–36

	1918	1919	1920	1923
	Seats	Seats	Seats	Seats
Conservatives	151	192	218	121
Liberal parties	154	132	120	200
Reformists	9	6	9	20
Republicans	15	18	15	15
Socialists	6	6	4	7
Regionalists/Nationalists	31	18	19	26
Traditionalists	9	7	5	5
Catholics, Agrarians	9	11	14	11
Total	384	390	395	405
	28.06.1931	19.11.1933	16.02.1936	
	Seats	Seats	Seats	
Left extremists				
Communists, Left Socialists		1	68	
Left moderates				
Socialists, Republican Left	299	99	212	
Left centre				
Lerroux (1931)	70			
Centre				
M. Maura, Lerroux (1933)	39	129	40	
Right centre				
Radicals, Agrarian League		95		
Right moderates				
Agrarians, CEDA, Lliga, PNV	42	105	116	
Right extremists				
Monarchists, Extremist Catholics	17	40	22	
Others	3	5	5	
Total	470	474	463	

Source: Nohlen (1969).

of 'cabinet-maker' since parliament was no longer able to do so. Conservative circles called for a 'civil dictatorship' to take action against 'Bolshevist anarchy', 'separatism' and 'the weakness of Liberalism' (Bernecker 1990).

6 Actions and reactions during the first period of crisis

6.1 Principal arenas and actors

The decisive blow to the Restoration system occurred in the summer of 1917 when three crises outside the parliamentary arena erupted simultaneously. The first was over workers' grievances, the others resulted from dissatisfaction within the army and from Catalan demands.

6.1.1 *The economic arena*

In August 1917, the socialist trade union UGT called a 'revolutionary general strike'. The reason for the strike was the deterioration in the socioeconomic situation of the workers. The war had affected Spain and its economy; there were signs of prosperity with surpluses in the balance of trade and gains in the manufacturing sector. In the long run, however, the consequences of the abnormal foreign trade situation were disastrous. After 1918, the Spanish economy moved into a crisis. Its structure had been weakened by the decapitalization which had taken place during the war. The war had served as a system of protection for Spain's industry and the Spanish economy adapted to this anomalous situation on the assumption that it was 'normal'. The import substitution which became necessary clearly indicated that the economy was not able to provide the capital and technology necessary to increase production and exports. The result was a serious decapitalization which proved fatal in the years after 1918.

The figures show the economic prosperity, due to the war, that occurred after 1914 (see Fontana and Nadal 1980: 331–75). However, production figures represent only one side of the coin. The reverse, the result of very unbalanced development, was no less spectacular. Although exports increased markedly in value (not in volume), imports decreased so drastically that the total volume of trade went down by 68 per cent in volume and 35 per cent in value. Due to the high costs of transportation, mining production (iron and gravel) decreased from 12 million tons with a value of 146 million pesetas in 1913 to 4.7 million tons with a value of 65 million pesetas in 1919. This led to the dismissal of 16 per cent of the miners – and, as a consequence, unemployment and social unrest. The orange production of Valencia was also affected by the crisis, since a great number of ships were damaged or sunk with a consequent lack of transport facilities. The construction industry lacked raw material and the excessive freight costs were passed on to the consumer.

The social consequences of these developments were paid by the workers. Wages remained frozen for a long time in the textile industry. The increase in the rate of ordinary peoples' savings was markedly below the rate of price increase and the acceleration in the rate of the circulation of money. This suggests that the majority of the population became impoverished and only a minority grew wealthy. Since the accumulation of capital was effected at the cost of the workers, an urgently needed expansion of the national market could not take place. This created repercussions after the boom collapsed. The government was, for political reasons, unable to levy a 'war tax' on extraordinary gains; nor could it impose price controls (Jackson 1980: 43–5).

The forced export of goods of all kinds led to shortages on the domestic market, and increases in the price for even basic goods. This in turn caused resentment among industrial workers. In July 1916 the anarcho-syndicalist CNT and the socialist UGT concluded an agreement about cooperation over strikes and demands for political reforms. Most employers were ready to make concessions, since they did not want to damage production. However, trade union cooperation did not last long. Because of their basically reformist attitude, the

anarcho-sindicalists accused the socialists of representing the interests of the bourgeoisie; the socialists retaliated by accusing the CNT of being employed by the German Empire.

After March 1917 the situation worsened dramatically. In Valencia the railway employees went on strike; in Bilbao 27,000 steel workers walked out. The government responded by declaring a state of war. The workers widened their demands, which originally had been limited to wage increases. Now they also called for the installation of a provisional reformist government and for the election of a constituent national assembly. The call for a general strike, issued in common by CNT and UGT, stated as its goal the 'enforcement of a basic change in the system, which guarantees the people a minimum of dignified conditions of life and the further development of emancipatory measures'. The 'revolutionary general strike', which was finally called by the socialists in August 1917 – at the same time as the Catalan assembly of parliamentarians – was supported neither by the oppositional Catalans nor by the military officers who were also in revolt (see below). On the contrary, Cambó, the leader of the *Lliga*, and the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie quickly became conscious of their class interests and declared their support for the Restoration system. The military ruthlessly suppressed the workers' strike in the name of law and order.

6.1.2 *The extra-parliamentary arena*

The second crisis originated within the army. The soldiers stationed on the Iberian peninsula (*peninsulares*) felt that the government treated them less well than, and promoted them more slowly than the *africanistas* stationed in Morocco who were regularly granted higher positions for their 'war merits'. The *peninsulares* repeatedly voiced their discontent about professional discrimination and demanded strict adherence to promotion by seniority (Boyd 1979: 41; Seco Serrano 1984: 259). From 1916 onwards, the infantry officers organized defence juntas the aims of which were the improvement of the active officer corps, stronger group solidarity, maintenance of prestige and immediate professional and financial rewards. In early summer 1917 the juntas refused to follow the order issued by the liberal Prieto government for their dissolution. A trial of strength ensued which weakened the government, which was already threatened by industrial unrest. Prieto had to resign and a Conservative, Dato, who became the new prime minister in June 1917, recognized the juntas as the mouthpiece for military issues. The main reason for this civil capitulation was that the government needed the army as a bulwark against the forces that were demanding political and social reforms, and wanted to prevent an alliance between civil and military protest movements.

In the following months the officer juntas repeatedly presented demands to the king. This put them in competition with the constitutional executive, and eventually led to the establishment of an autonomous veto power. In fact, this meant the end of the Restoration system since the civil government was in practice subordinated to military claims to power. In the following years, the juntas, which continued to play an important role in politics, were able to

force the appointment and the dissolution of governmental bodies. Only at the end of 1919 did the Ministry of War manage to convert the juntas into consultative commissions, and place them under the direct control of the ministry.

6.1.3 *The political crisis of 1917*

The third problem had its roots in Catalan nationalism, whose bourgeois representatives had been strengthened economically and politically during the First World War. At the start of the war, Spain had declared itself neutral and the Spanish economy managed to convert official neutrality into commercial profit. The Catalan economy experienced an important upswing as a result of its position as a supplier to the warring powers, mainly the Entente. Exports to Belgium, France and Italy rose. In 1916 Spain's balance of trade, which had had a deficit of 230 million pesetas in 1913 and 144 million in 1914, showed a trade surplus of 431, and in 1917 589 million pesetas. However this economic upturn primarily benefited the entrepreneurs, while the workers suffered from the inflationary price rises caused by the excessive boom. Strikes and industrial action ensued. For some time the beleaguered government preferred not to assemble the Cortes. In summer 1917 the Catalan *Lliga* bourgeoisie, in connection with the *juntero* rebellion, saw a chance to increase their influence with the government in Madrid, to extend Catalan autonomy and to achieve constitutional changes towards a federal restructuring of the state. These aims were pursued by the assembly of parliamentarians in Barcelona which took place in spite of a prohibition by the government. In the end, however, only Catalan parliamentarians participated. The original hope that the crisis of 1917 might be used to bring about an extension of Catalan autonomy remained unfulfilled since the 'bourgeois' Barcelona assembly wanted nothing to do with the simultaneously voiced demands of the workers. Moreover, the military, whose support had been expected, clearly distanced itself from the Catalan 'separatists'.

In any case, the ideological basis for cooperation between Catalanists and the military did not exist since the two groups mistrusted each other and belonged to different camps. The Catalanists resented the military for their role as representatives of the centralist oligarchic state and for the loss of the overseas colonies which were important to Catalonia. The officers' reaction was to defend centralism by emphasizing national unity and the maintenance of the integrity of the country against the decentralizing ambitions pursued by Catalan autonomists and nationalists whom they suspected of separatism. Finally, the police dissolved the parliament in Barcelona; and the demand for 'genuine' democracy remained unheard in Madrid.

In the summer of 1917 the protests of the military, the workers and the politically organized Catalans were articulated simultaneously. Although this provoked a crisis, no purposeful cooperation took place, since the ideologies and interests of the protestors differed too strongly. The army, as the representative of 'national unity', opposed the 'separatist' Catalans. The Catalans were split by class differences, and the workers were divided among themselves, and,

ultimately, isolated. This also meant that the crisis of 1917 had far-reaching consequences for the social groups involved. The Crown and the army moved closer together, but the links between the army and the dynastic parties weakened even further. Military intervention not only saved the authority and the position of the king, but also prevented discussion about the constitutional changes demanded. The workers' trust in the army, as well as that of the left in general, was undermined. Never again would they consider the army a reliable ally. In the following years of social unrest, the distrust between the workers and the army, which was used to suppress strikes, was heightened. The conservative Catalanists moved closer to the central government, to which they sent ministers in later years. Consequently the unity of the Catalanists crumbled, and a Catalanist left started to develop. The Socialists, as a result of the failure of the revolutionary general strike, saw their reformist course confirmed; by contrast, the Anarchists underwent a radicalization.

6.2 The development of the first interwar crisis

The crisis of 1917 was the beginning of the end of the Restoration Era, 'the first sign that the political structure of the Restoration [was] starting to break down' (Carr 1983: 122). Soon the first news about the Russian February Revolution had arrived in Spain. The end of the war, and of the economic boom, was imminent. The number of industrial conflicts rose markedly and as a consequence the trade unions registered a massive increase in membership, especially in the period immediately following the war (Tuñón de Lara 1976; Elorza 1981; *Historia* 16, August 1977).

In the immediate postwar period economic depression and social clashes ensued. 140 textile mills had to close in Catalonia alone. In the Basque Country the shipyards remained empty and the mines as well as the iron and steel industry introduced short-time working and dismissed large numbers of workers. The tense social situation led to some concessions by the government: in 1919 the Liberal Romanones government introduced the eight-hour day in industry and in 1920 the Ministry of Labour was created. On the whole, however, the workers' movement saw itself pushed into a defensive position. The most bitter disputes were in Catalonia, where the employers, using anachronistic methods to manage the economic crisis, were not only able to push through a tariff protection policy that again reserved the domestic market for themselves, but were also supported by the government in their systematic repression of the workers. In 1919, they started a major offensive against worker organizations which lasted until the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera; it was this part of the country that saw what were perhaps the most violent social conflicts then occurring in Europe.

Colonial policy in Morocco provoked the final breakdown of the system. In July 1921 a series of humiliating defeats in the war against the Rif Kabyles reached its peak: General Silvestre suffered a devastating defeat at Annual during a badly coordinated advance on Alhucemas. More than 12,000 Spanish

soldiers died in *el desastre de Annual*. Since 1909, more than 20,000 Spaniards had died in this war, and after Annual, public pressure grew for those responsible to be called to account.

7 The outcome of the first crisis

7.1 The crisis of 1923

On 13 September 1923 the *pronunciamento* by the captain general of Catalonia, Primo de Rivera, took place. In his manifesto, the rebel general declared that his aim was 'to liberate Spain from professional politicians' who had dishonoured the country. The coup, welcomed by the Catalan bourgeoisie, would have failed if the king had refused his support. Fully aware of the consequences of his action, however, Alfonso XIII appointed Primo de Rivera as president of a Directory of generals, thereby ending the constitutional system of 1876.

The political dominance of the Crown with respect to the parliament, as defined by the constitutional system, and the autonomy of the military – which had its roots in the close ties between army and Crown – were the structural causes of the 1923 *pronunciamento*. The elitist structure of the dynastic parties, rigid centralism, and a lack of sociopolitical integration prevented the Restoration system becoming more legitimate and politically secure. The dynastic parties, with their inflexibility and instability, were politically isolated when the military intervention took place, and the rest of the opposition was too weak and fragmented to offer a practical alternative.

The attitude of the Catalan bourgeoisie was of central importance. In 1917, through the pressure of the rebellious officer movement, the conservative Catalanists had managed to make the dynastic parties concede to them a direct influence on government policy. But they were already back in opposition in 1922, protesting against the elimination of the protectionist tariffs introduced by Cambó when he was minister of Finance. The opposition of the Catalan bourgeoisie to Madrid's liberal economic and administrative policies contributed to the toleration of the coup in 1923.

Many were relieved when the coup occurred. Prime Minister Prieto is reported to have said that he was grateful to the general for having 'relieved him of the impossible task of governing Spain'. There was approval among the intellectuals; the entrepreneurs showed their satisfaction openly; the socialists remained indifferent. Protests against the coup came mainly from the anarcho-syndicalists and the communists. On the face of it, the aim of the *pronunciamento* was to provide an authoritarian solution to the crisis of the State, the symptoms of which were obvious. There had been 15 governments in the period between 1917 and 1923, the Cortes had repeatedly been suspended, the press had been continually censored, half of the electorate abstained from voting at the elections in 1923, and sociopolitical disputes had reached a peak. In reality, however, much more was at stake.

Dominant sections of Restoration society, including the Crown, tried to perpetuate the system of 1876 through Primo de Rivera's coup. The workers'

organizations, which had become uncontrollable, were to be suppressed (anarcho-syndicalists) or fully integrated into the system (socialists); the interests of the landed and financial oligarchy were to be saved through the power of the military. This blow to the constitutional system of the Restoration was dealt at a moment when a shift of power from the oligarchy to new social classes appeared to be a political possibility. This genuine threat to the Restoration system had to be prevented.

In the end, the dictatorship meant an *aggiornamento* of the relationships between the different groups of the dominant faction: the great landowners, high finance and heavy industry on the one side, the Catalan industrialists and wholesale merchants on the other side. After 1917, the traditional bond between the dominant faction of the Restoration Era and political power had dissolved; *caciquismo* and manipulation to maintain power no longer worked. The dictatorship was an emergency measure by the oligarchic groups who, feeling their power threatened, agreed to offer the army and the king a new form of rule, since the traditional constitutional monarchy had failed. The dictatorship, therefore, should be viewed as a 'technical' solution to maintain the threatened social balance of power. The establishment of a dictatorship was the last attempt by the conservative oligarchy of the nineteenth century to retain their privileges within the framework of a state and a society which had not been able to carry out a successful 'bourgeois revolution'.

7.2 The Primo de Rivera dictatorship

At the time of the coup, Primo de Rivera received support from many sides – especially from economic circles. The bourgeoisie had created an environment favourable to the coup through stating repeatedly that they could not stop social radicalism if they continued to trust the parliamentary politicians. The socialists supported the dictatorship too, and Primo de Rivera himself propagated a synthesis of nationalism and socialism based on Catholic social doctrine which was well in advance of the Falange movement of the 1930s. For its part, the UGT (although not so much the PSOE) was convinced that the recent achievements of the workers' movement could only be preserved by working with the authorities. The socialists came to the conclusion that the dictatorship was the only way to end the social tensions of the previous era, and to further consolidate a strong bourgeoisie. This in turn would overcome the underdevelopment and anarchism of the social and political structures and improve the situation of the workers.

The paradoxical support given the dictatorship by both Liberals and the socialist unions had its roots not only in the structural crisis of the state, but also in the lack of economic and social solutions in the previous period. Once the dictatorship was installed, a process of institutionalization set in which has been interpreted as an attempt to change the temporary 'dictatorship of notables' into a fully institutionalized dictatorial regime (Morodo 1973; Malerbe 1977; Ben-Ami 1977, 1980; Cuenca 1970).

In view of the economically and socially precarious situation, the only chance of success for the dictatorship lay in the creation of a modern, capitalist structure, which would replace the traditional landed oligarchy in positions of power, and modernize industrial and agrarian structures. The dictatorship did introduce some reforms by expanding the infrastructure and simplifying the concentration of capital. The reforms were determined by a model of a state-controlled economy and this has led some to describe the economic model of the dictatorship as early Keynesianism.

Towards the end of the dictatorship, Primo de Rivera strengthened the traditional agrarians who supported him and who had profited from the regime. He also achieved an industrial upswing. However, the commercial sector and its liberal supporters reacted negatively. The privileges of the Church, especially in educational matters, provoked the opposition of intellectuals, students and the enlightened bourgeoisie. The populism of the dictator led him to neutralize the political actions of the trade unions and to attempt to convert them into mere institutions for wage negotiation. But the dictatorship also had to make concessions to the worker organizations, thereby alienating the industrialists. The initially unambiguous constellation of support became increasingly confused. Primo de Rivera, who had assumed power as a protector of the traditionally dominant classes, no longer clearly acted as such. He had originally installed the dictatorship to save the monarchy and to maintain the balance between the leading sectors of society. In 1930, however, it was precisely the monarchy and the leading sectors who, in order to save themselves again, found it necessary to oust the dictator.

The establishment of the dictatorship had not been prompted by military circles, but by the Catalan higher bourgeoisie who thought that military leadership of the country was the only efficient way to control increasing social unrest. The army was used as an instrument by a politically weak bourgeoisie, who had not been able themselves to create a suitable political instrument to articulate their interests but always had recourse to military solutions in a crisis. However, the fact that the 1923 *pronunciamiento* ended in a military dictatorship is the feature which most obviously distinguishes it from the military interventions of the nineteenth century. Primo de Rivera's coup, therefore, constituted a new form of military intervention in politics; one that has become characteristic of the twentieth century: the army intervened in politics to present itself as the interpreter of national interests in their most extensive form (Ben-Ami 1984; Seco Serrano 1984; González Calbet 1987).

Outwardly the coup was an attempt to solve the pressing questions of social and colonial policy in an authoritarian way. Primo de Rivera's dictatorship was the failed 'authoritarian model' of modernization with traditional elites trying to maintain their privileges. This failure explains the transition to democracy in 1931. Those sectors of the country who were willing to modernize had conditionally supported an authoritarian type of state in the expectation that it would promote real modernization and that they would attain a share in power. Since both these hopes failed, they opted for a democratic Republic.

8 Dynamic factors of the second pre-crisis period

8.1 The political setting

By establishing a new form of state, the bourgeois-Republican parties assumed power democratically. In their aim of breaking up the antiquated socioeconomic and political structures, and of replacing them with more adequate ones, they were supported by those workers who were equally willing to modernize, in particular by the socialists. First, a laicistic and liberal state was to be created, to correspond to the bourgeois-Republican ideas of reform. The aims were a democratic constitution, a reform of the army, a limitation of the Church's power, educational reform, adjustment of the relationship between the centre and peripheral nationalisms, and a reform of the agrarian sector.

The implementation of these reform measures was to isolate the government while everyday life was barely affected; what people did feel was a kind of 'subversion' of the traditional order. However limited the measures taken by the Republic, they were celebrated by the workers as a 'revolution'. The Republican government clearly claimed to be representing the interests of the poor and the traditionally oppressed.

But the reforms went too far for the bourgeoisie. It was inevitable that the government policies would provoke a reaction on the part of the great landowners and the weakened oligarchy. Some have stressed that the Republic failed because of its vacillating hesitation. It was waging war on two fronts: it provoked the opposition of the property owners, and at the same time it lacked the full support of the proletariat.

8.2 Economic developments: the world economic crisis and its socioeconomic effects

The Second Republic started weighted down with decades-old problems, but it also had to deal with the repercussions of the worldwide economic crisis, which were delayed in Spain. The consequences of the Great Depression for Spain are much debated. Some do not think that Spain was significantly affected by the international situation of the 1930s, others suggest that the repercussions of the world economic crisis were a major reason for the failure of the Second Republic and the outbreak of the Civil War.

A study by the Banco de España claims that the Spanish economy was barely affected by the depression, thanks to its large degree of autarky in relation to the world economy. This suggests that the reasons for the Civil War lay more in the sociopolitical than in the economic arena, or that the crisis of the Spanish economy had internal causes. Others have mentioned the significant social upheavals which followed from the rise in unemployment in the Catalan industrial centres. Abreu, however, stresses the severe crisis of the capital goods industry in the 1930s. Recently, attempts have been made to mediate between the two positions. On the whole the Spanish economy was less affected by international depression than other European economies, but the country did

nevertheless suffer from serious problems. There was an endogenous-autochthonous crisis which was heightened by the exogenous crisis, although the relations between the two are not totally clear (see Tortella 1976; Abreu and Palafox in Jackson 1980: 359–86).

Statistics show that, in spite of the depression, Spanish production did not significantly fall below the level of the 1920s. Even national income and per capita income do not seem to have decreased. This, however, would mean that the considerable increase in social unrest, and the sharp decline of foreign trade, which after 1931 fell to less than one-third of the level of 1928, did not have any negative effects – a conclusion which makes one rather sceptical about the reliability of the figures.

Palafox (1991) has assumed that the worldwide depression did not seriously affect the Spanish economy; rather it showed symptoms of massive underdevelopment and severe distortions in the allocation of resources even without external influence. So the responsibility for underdevelopment and the distortions lies with the politicians – both of the dictatorship as well as those of the Republic – since they failed to apply the necessary anti-cyclical measures after the outbreak of the crisis.

An important consequence of the world economic crisis was an increase in unemployment, which by the first half of 1936 had risen to almost 800,000, with nearly two-thirds of the jobless in the agrarian sector. The rise of unemployment figures in the spring of 1936 indicates the distrust and insecurity of the employers after the Popular Front elections. They show extensive social destitution, even allowing for statistical inaccuracy, since there was no national social insurance and the workers did not have a significant level of savings.

In these years, social conflicts again reached a peak. There is no doubt that unemployment in the agricultural sector contributed to the heightening of social tensions which had been caused by the extremely slow progress of agrarian reform. Forty per cent of all strikes took place in the agricultural sector, a further 20 per cent in the construction industry and mining. The number of working days lost rose from 3.8 million in 1931 to 14.4 million in 1933, and the number of strikes from 734 to 1127, with a peak in 1933 (see Table 17.3). The influence of the most radical wings of the socialists and anarchists increased, since, in spite of some reforms, there was no significant improvement in the situation of the workers.

The relationship between capital and labour during the Republic was marked by two distinctive features: the mostly rural-agrarian character of the economy, and the radical nature of labour disputes (cf. Colomer 1991: 4). The legal framework regulating the conflicts was not widely accepted, and violence dominated. The most violent clashes took place in rural areas, in the small villages of Andalusia and Castile. The mining sector saw the longest-lasting conflicts – for example, the anarchist rising of the Alt Llobregat in 1932, and the socialist rising in Asturias in 1934. In all cases, the ways the conflicts were fought were extremely radical, as were the methods of repression; as a rule, there were numerous casualties and deaths on both sides.

Table 17.3 Spain: economic and social indicators, 1913-39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
NNP (m. Ps)	10600	24797	29038	22975	20982	21892	23009	25013	23136	23804	21891	25213	24003	24204	25566	22011	25465	24759				27100
in 1939 prices		18843	20216	16165	15332	16356	16539	17599	16452	16748	16541	18423	17071	16507	18183	16083	18307	18294				27100
NNP/cap. (Ps)	522	1200	1399	1091	980	1015	1059	1143	1049	1068	972	1112	1036	1022	1070	919	1054	1017				1078
NNP (m. US-\$)	2045	4783	5601	4432	4047	4223	4438	4825	4463	4592	4223	4864	4630	4669	4932	4246	4912	4776				5228
NNP/cap. (US-\$)	101	232	270	210	189	196	204	220	202	206	187	214	200	197	206	177	203	196				208
Population	20299	20660	20752	21061	21421	21571	21722	21886	22048	22286	22523	22681	23161	23675	23899	23950	24150	24350	24550	24750	24950	25150
(thousands)																						
IND PROD	100	87	94	97	90	104	120	123	137	137	140	146	145	136	128	123	126	127				239
(1913 = 100)																						
COST (1914 = 100)	175	191	189	182	178	185	189	187	189	187	189	176	182	187	195	187	182	185	180			133
B. o. Trade (m. Ps)	-248																					
Lost working days	4001	7262	2802	2673	3027	605	840	247	1312	771	314	3745	3843	3590	14441	1110						
(millions)																						
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.		100	93	107	124	127	141	141	141	141	144	151	149	140	132	127	130	131				246
Cost of Living		100	96	94	98	100	99	100	99	100	93	96	99	103	99	96	98	95				70
NNP		100	91	95	100	109	101	104	95	110	104	105	111	104	105	111	96	111	108			118
Strikes		100	95	108	22	30	9	47	28	11	134	137	128	515	40							

Sources: Mitchell (ed.), (1981: 23, 357, 744ff., 789); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936: 282-3).

Note: Ps (Peseta) is US\$0.1929; NNP is at current market prices; interpolated estimates for the number of population.

The prevailing radical atmosphere of the 1930s, which prevented the various social forces working together, was not primarily caused by the economic situation. The effects of the economic downturn and unemployment on the workers' conduct can be interpreted in different ways. One must give more weight to the absolute 'standard of living', which in the 1930s was minimal for the greater part of the (rural) population, whereas shaky privileges were concentrated in the hands of an extremely limited upper class. Both sides had the impression that any form of concession would lead to their ruin; so everything was at stake. This conviction, together with traditional antagonisms and ideological prejudice, promoted maximalist attitudes. The radicalized sectors on both sides influenced the conduct of the other social and political protagonists, and played a decisive role in the shaping of the general socio-political climate of the Republic.

8.3 Electoral results

The socialists and the Republicans achieved an overwhelming victory in the elections to the constituent assembly in June 1931 (see Table 17.2). The parties of the left and the centre together received almost 400 seats in parliament; the parties of the right around 80. This meant that the reform forces enjoyed a clear majority in the *Cortes*. However, the victory was in part due to the Republican electoral system, which favoured coalitions over parties which stood on their own.

According to Linz (1978), the party system, as well as the majority vote system, were heavy burdens for the Second Republic. The party system, which was polarized and pluralistic, expressed the tensions within the society. But the majority vote system led to the formation of coalitions through which small extremist parties gained in importance, and parties which pursued rather different programmes were forced to amalgamate.

In the second parliamentary election of the Republic in 1933 national coalitions again became necessary because of the increasing fragmentation of the party landscape (Becarud 1967; Tusell 1970, 1971, 1982). The Republicans, who were divided up into many groups, favoured common lists, since without a coalition they were doomed to parliamentary failure. The electoral system had benefited the left in 1931. Now, the right profited, since in the interim it had organized itself and formed an electoral coalition, the CEDA. Under its president Gil Robles, the CEDA was committed to a conservative agrarian policy, based on private property. Although the party declared its support for the Republic, this was considered to be merely a tactical necessity to achieve a 'New State' with a corporative organization; above all, the party opposed socialist and secular legislation.

The peculiar consequences of the electoral system divide the history of the Second Republic into three distinct phases. The first phase (1931–3) covers the reform years during which the alliance of Republicans and Socialists tackled the main problems. The second phase, from 1933 to 1936, the so-called 'two black years' (*bienio negro*) was characterized by the paralysis of many of these reforms, especially those relating to the agricultural sectors. The months between

the popular front elections in February 1936 and the beginning of the Civil War in July of the same year constitute a third phase during which development in the agrarian sector could no longer be controlled by the government and took on revolutionary traits.

9 Actions and reactions during the second period of crisis

9.1 Principal arenas and actors

9.1.1 *The economic arena*

As outlined above, economic and social data in the Second Republic show the importance of the agrarian sector. So, the first Republican governments saw that they needed to try and solve its problems, particularly the gap in farm size between minifundia and latifundia and the social consequences of the unbalanced property structure. The landless day labourers in the south not only constituted the largest social class, but also had the most revolutionary potential in Spanish agrarian society. The insecurity of the rural proletariat explains their hunger for land, which, in the years of the Republic, caused widespread social unrest.

The first Republican governments approached the problems in the agrarian sector energetically, but soon met with the resistance from the great landowners who tried to prevent reform. The unsuccessful coup of General Sanjurjo, in summer 1932, hastened the passing of the agrarian reform law on 15 September 1932 which laid down conditions for land expropriation, compensation, and the distribution of land to the rural population.

9.1.2 *The extra-parliamentary arena*

After the conservative electoral victory in 1933, the Lerrox government immediately began to stop a number of the reform laws. The landed oligarchy managed to recover some of its influence in the south, which meant that the situation of the rural workers rapidly deteriorated. Wages were lowered, confiscated land was given back to the former owners, and agrarian reform came to an end. The policies pursued during the years 1934 and 1935 contributed to the radicalization of the agrarian workers. The formerly moderate socialist agrarian trade union now demanded a social revolution, and the UGT as a whole, led by Largo Caballero, adopted revolutionary slogans. The anarchists, on the other hand, confronted the Republic openly by staging a revolt in December 1933 (Malefakis 1970; Maurice 1975; Bernal 1974; Tuñón de Lara 1978, 1985; Sevilla Guzmán 1979; Pérez Yruela 1979; Balcells 1980).

The second of the Republic's principal problems, the relationship between the State and the Church, was no less difficult. In the discussion of the constitution, significant differences had emerged, between the laicistic parliamentarians and the representatives of church interests, over freedom of religion and worship, as well as over education. The constitution of 1931 guaranteed freedom of conscience and worship. All religious beliefs were granted equal treatment, and the churches were

now considered to be associations, no longer receiving benefits or assistance. Religious orders were not allowed to acquire property, to carry on trade and industry or to teach. They were also subject to ordinary tax laws. The order of the Jesuits was prohibited. This newly instituted secular orientation in education was vehemently contested by the Church, and the withdrawal of the Church's authority to teach was to have important consequences.

However, it was not only the curtailment of the position of the Church in the educational sector which led to strong reactions from the frightened Church hierarchy. The separation of state and Church stipulated in the constitution, the secular character of the new regime, and the anti-clericalism of leading politicians caused the official Church to become an opponent of the Republic and a home for reactionaries – even though the lower clergy were sympathetic to the establishment of the Republic. In the years after 1931, the (supposed) defence of the rights of the Church became one of the most important focal points in the anti-Republican campaign of conservative forces; and further discussion of the religious question eventually led to the formation of the CEDA, whose right wing was strongly anti-Republican (Raguer 1977; Arbeloa 1976; Benavides 1973; Meer Lecha-Martó 1975).

Many now agree that the majority of the measures taken by the Republic in religious policy could have been carried out without the enormous costs which were one of the factors leading to civil war. The Republic lost the support of many Catholics. On the other side, the Church itself bore at least a part of the responsibility for the central problems of those years: the socioeconomic, the political, the religious and the autonomist-regionalist conflicts. The fact that solving these problems was begun so late in Spain was also due partly to the attitude of the Church. For this, it had to pay a heavy price in 1931.

In opposing the Republic, the Church was joined by part of the army, which felt humiliated by the government. The transition from the monarchy under King Alfonso XIII to the Republic had been watched passively by the military; and the vague loyalty towards the monarchy felt by the majority of the officers had been shaken by the king's support for Primo de Rivera's coup and his sectarian military policy. This was why, in the end, the military did not resist the change in regime. But the final factor deciding the attitude of the army towards the Second Republic were the military reforms introduced by the minister of War, Azaña. His aims were the 'republicanization' of the army, and this demanded cuts in the military budget and a reduction in numbers of the officer corps. In a purely 'technical' sense, the reforms were positive. Military service was shortened, the number of army divisions cut by half and the number of officers considerably reduced; further reforms were meant to ensure the army's subordination to civil institutions. These measures, however, served to increase military distrust of the Republic. From quite early on, plots against the Republic were planned in the officers' messes. The possibility of early retirement was taken by officers who were friendly towards the Republic rather than by those who were anti-Republican (Payne 1967; Ramírez Jiménez 1977; Cardona 1981, 1983, 1988; Alpert 1983).

During the *bienio negro*, a large part of the Azaña reforms were reversed. However, in 1934 the workers' revolution in Asturias – basically it was a political revolution – and the proclamation of the 'Catalan state' in a hypothetical 'Spanish federal republic', made the army feel threatened from two sides: on the one hand by the social question and the revolution, and on the other hand by regional nationalism which manifested itself in the form of separatism. At the same time, these events increased the division which existed within the officer corps over attitudes towards the Republican institutions.

One problem which was partially solved was Catalan nationalism. In September 1932, the Catalanists were able to achieve a statute of autonomy for their region, so that Catalonia received its own government, the *Generalitat*, plus a parliament and extensive administrative powers on the lower and intermediate levels of administration. The Basque Country, on the other hand, was not able to achieve a statute of autonomy during this period due to the internal disputes between the partially Basque Navarra and the other provinces of Euskadi, and to the Basque disagreement with the anti-clericalism displayed by the government in Madrid. From November 1933 onwards, the question of regionalism became especially problematic, when the 'Radical' Lerro, supported in parliament by CEDA, formed the central government. Because the Basques felt that their traditional tax prerogatives were being infringed, they moved closer to the socialists, even though they themselves were Catholic and conservative. The Catalans, on the other hand, continued to be governed by a moderate leftist cabinet which had clear political differences with the conservative government in Madrid, and soon entered into conflict with it (González Casanova 1979; Pitarch 1977; Raguer 1976; Fusi 1979; Elorza 1978; La Granja 1986).

9.2 The development of the second crisis

The precariousness of the Second Republic reforms is shown by the events of October 1934. After the right won the elections in 1933, the CEDA formed a government coalition with the Radical Party. The left interpreted the CEDA participation in government as a fascist take-over which had to be prevented. A general strike was called and the government responded by declaring a state of war. In Catalonia and Asturias, the strike movement did not collapse, but widened into a social uprising. In Barcelona, President Companys proclaimed a 'Catalan state within the Spanish Federal Republic'; however, the Catalan revolt was soon suppressed, and the *Generalitat* was suspended.

In Asturias, the workers' revolt had far-reaching consequences. Socialists, anarcho-syndicalists, and communists joined forces for common action. About 30,000 miners resisted the African army and the Foreign Legion, commanded by General Franco for two weeks. After the suppression of the revolt, some 10,000 trade union members and 'suspects' were arrested (Shubert 1984; Octubre 1934).

The consequence of the 'Spanish October' of 1934 was a clear radicalization of the right as well as of the left, and a polarization of the whole society. The right saw all its fears confirmed, and saw itself as the only bulwark against separatism, atheist liberalism, and an imminent social revolution; scruples of legality, which

up to that moment might still have existed, were put aside. The left strongly feared that fascism would assume power in Spain. So the need to join forces was recognized more clearly than before and this helped the formation of the Popular Front coalition.

Disputes between the parties over the liquidation of the 1934 revolt paralysed the cabinet, which was then reshuffled several times. Its most important 'achievement' was the systematic elimination of all amendments which had been carried through during the first years of the Republic. Corruption scandals in the Radical Party finally led to a total crisis of government. In January 1936, President Alcalá Zamora dissolved the Cortes and called an election. At this point, after the policies of the previous two years, the country was more divided than ever. The situation in the countryside was insupportable for many day labourers, whereas most large landowners thought the danger of expropriation was over. The army had not given up planning conspiracy and the greater part of the Church hierarchy was clearly opposed to the Republic. In this atmosphere of extreme social and political tension, the third (and last) election to republican parliament was held.

This time the right, unlike the left, was unable to set up common coalition lists. The result was clear. The left, again helped by the electoral law, obtained an overwhelming parliamentary majority. The newly elected Cortes had 277 members from the Popular Front, 132 from the right and 32 from the centre. Although the socialists, with 90 seats, were the strongest parliamentary group, they refused to participate in the government. In Catalonia, Companys again set up a government. In Madrid, Azaña again formed a cabinet with his left Republicans; however, he soon found that the workers' organizations were not prepared to commit themselves to the realization of 'bourgeois' aims of reform.

Following the Popular Front elections, it became clear that the reform policies of the Republic could not solve the urgent structural problems of the Spanish economy and society. The workers' organizations too were unable or unwilling to stop their members from tackling the long-promised but never realized changes in a revolutionary way. After February 1936 events followed each other in rapid succession: rural labourers' strikes, illegal occupations of land, and belated legalizations of expropriatory measures were the order of the day. The Popular Front government so accelerated the rate of expropriations that in its first half-year in power between March and July 1936 more estates were expropriated than in all the previous five years. With feverish activity, the Cortes in 1936 debated a revision of the agrarian laws until the Republic's attempt to change the centuries-old, rigid agrarian structures was ended through a military coup.

10 The outcome of the second crisis

The failure of the monarchy to achieve a gradual transition from oligarchic liberalism to democracy in 1923, and again in 1930–1, had made the Republic possible; however, it had also presented it with numerous problems. With the

Republic came the beginning of 'mass politics', and pressure to bring about rapid institutional and social reforms, while powerful conservative interests continued to exist. Far from being a 'bourgeois revolution', the proclamation of the Republic mainly meant the assumption of political office by members of the self-employed and intellectual middle classes. Smaller entrepreneurs had been 'embraced' by a financial, industrial, and agrarian oligarchy for decades. For fear of a outright revolution, it abandoned the monarchy in 1931 but in the long run was only prepared to accept the Republic under the condition that fundamental reforms would not take place. A further problem was the deteriorating economic conditions, which clearly differed from the prosperous 1920s and made the implementation of reforms more difficult, increasing social tensions even further.

Analysts have considered the Second Republic as an example of a historical situation in which none of the forces involved was able to solve the increasingly aggravated crisis by peaceful means. After the elections of February 1936, the 'sociological Right' – the traditional ruling groups – believed that their position of 1934–5 was lost and that there was:

no possibility of recovering the central positions of power. The only remaining way to deal with the continuing crisis was to terminate the consensus by force and to break the established lawful order. In a situation where ideological reaction, spread by fascism throughout all of Europe, was merged with the traditional ideology of the old power group and the retrograde hopes of those who believed that due to the advancement of the workers they had lost an old world, the traumatic reaction of those classes of society who had become rigid in their inflexibility was the triggering factor to plunge the country into disaster (Tuñón de Lara *et al.* 1987: 61).

11 Conclusions

The breakdown of the Spanish democracy was the result of a long and complex process. For the historian, the crucial question is why the Second Republic failed. Any process of decline in a democratic system can be arrested; a re-establishment of a political balance ('re-equilibration') may take place, permitting a continuation of the democratic system. The failure of the democratic experiment is in no way pre-determined. This is especially true for Spain in the interwar period, as many of the factors which explain the instability and the contemporary failure of other democracies are missing. Most importantly, extreme anti-system parties on the right (fascists) as well as on the left (communists) were insignificant before the Civil War. Whereas the failure of the communists can be explained essentially by the fact that the Socialist Party had a strong Marxist wing which absorbed the left part of the political spectrum, the failure of fascism can be blamed on the absence of those conditions which made such a mass movement possible in other European

countries. Spain did not suffer a national crisis of identity, since it had not participated in the First World War and had no *irridenta* problems. In addition Spain had a powerful right which offered a political alternative to the fascist parties with respect to authoritarianism, nationalism, and opposition to liberalism and communism, and a social alternative to right-wing middle-class radicalism. Spain also lacked a strong organized left against which fascism could have arisen as a counterbalance. The anarchists' mass movement did not fit the picture of a domestic enemy who must be fought, and the socialists were too divided among themselves to constitute any real threat to the government or to bourgeois society. Finally, the traditional oligarchy remained politically powerful in Spain's relatively undeveloped economy during the 1930s, and the changes influencing the (weak) middle class in favour of fascism were less extensive than in other European countries (Bernecker 1986: 183–211). So any investigation of the failure of democracy cannot be limited to a search for structural reasons which made democratic co-existence impossible but must consider the omissions and faults of the political and social actors. In the end they were responsible for the fact that, rather than being solved, the structural problems became the cause of the final breakdown.

One of the factors which may lead to democratic breakdown is its method of institutionalization. In the case of the Republic, it is likely that at its inception, a majority of the population was favourably disposed towards the new system. In this first phase, the main preoccupation of the politicians should be to avoid marginalizing any important group in the population; their political and legislative activities should not cause the initial allegiance to the new regime to be forfeited, leading to a loss of legitimacy. In addition, there must always be alternatives in the exercise of power.

The Spanish Republic of 1931 was greeted enthusiastically. There was confidence that a democratically elected government would be able to deal with the inherited difficulties. However, appearances were deceptive. The programme of the Republican government soon caused the alienation of important strata of society from the Republic and its institutions. This was especially true for the problem areas of agrarian reform, religion, and military affairs. The new regime raised enormous hopes, but its capacity to solve the problems was low. So the democratic system alienated a large part of the population, without being able to entirely win the support of those favoured by reform. One reason for this was surely the lack of experience of the new Republican élite during a phase of extensive and intensive political mobilization, the sudden transition from oligarchic liberalism to mass democracy. The political discontinuity in the area of government leadership aggravated the situation.

One crucial moment in the decline of a democratic system occurs when the centripetal forces, originally at the basis of the new system, are replaced by newly dominant centrifugal forces. In the case of Spain, this did not necessarily mean a growth of anti-system forces or a parliamentary majority of the anti-democratic parties, but rather a predominance of 'semi-loyal' elements in both of the most important parties in the Republic, the CEDA and the PSOE.

The Socialists were the first to turn away from the possibilities of parliamentarism, first calling for violence. In doing so, they hastened the process of opinion polarization, which finally ended in civil war. So perhaps a greater share of the responsibility for the breakdown of the Republic lies with the Socialists, since the CEDA had tried to uphold the constitution longer.

Others qualify this interpretation and stress the responsibility of the right (Montero 1977; Preston 1973, 1986). Montero points out that CEDA was, in its programme, electorate and political attitude, comparable to the Austrian Christian-Social Party. CEDA accepted parliamentary legalism primarily as a means of attaining power; its aim, however, was to overcome Republican parliamentarism and to replace the democratic system by a corporate one. Preston stresses the fact that the style and the aims of the right were incompatible with the existence of the Republic, maintaining that the central conflict during the years between 1931 and 1936 was the dispute between CEDA and PSOE over the imposition of their respective views of social organization. That neither CEDA nor PSOE were organized in such a way as to be able to 'conquer' the State and change it in accordance with a political programme has also been pointed out in several studies of the left during the peaceful years of the Second Republic (Juliá 1977, 1979, 1984). Both Preston and Juliá outline the difficulties experienced by the Socialists after the party split in the years following the Russian revolution. In the period after 1931, when the PSOE was in office, tensions inside the party, which were of the greatest importance for the weakness and final failure of the Republic, became increasingly obvious. But it is very likely that the socialists' personal and ideological divisions were a major reason behind their inability to become a strong integrative factor among the Republican parties. It was mainly CEDA which, in parliament, played an important role in preventing the socialist reform plans. Becoming more and more reactionary, CEDA, with the help of the Cortes, prevented reforms where it could, and also revoked them when it had assumed power. CEDA's 'legal' method of installing a corporate state failed, certainly by the time of the Popular Front elections. Shaken by the victory of the left, those forces which, until then, had seen their socioeconomic interests best represented in the use of these 'legal' methods, now lost confidence in their ability to further use the democratic parliamentary system. Consequently, the army, encouraged by the traditional elites, took the initiative in solving an increasingly polarized conflict situation through military intervention.

In the end, the Republic proved to be too weak to defend itself against both the revolutionary attacks of the workers and the increasingly aggressive right. The governments led by Azaña and Quiroga were middle class, liberal and democratic; the workers' parties of the Popular Front coalition, however, were proletarian, socialist, communist, and (at least partly) revolutionary. In addition, the Republican system suffered from opposition by the anarchists (Brademas 1974; Kern 1978; Mintz 1982; Collier 1987). Since the middle class which supported the Republic was numerically insignificant, the social base of government was too weak to be able to implement its reform policies. So one study of the period concludes that

if the purpose of the Republic was merely to survive, then it can scarcely be denied that both republicans and socialists contributed to its failure to do so through making impossible a "moderate", that is to say conservative, republic which would have aroused fewer antagonisms among those with something to lose. If, however, the purpose of the Republic was to bring political and social democracy to Spain, then it must be acknowledged that the most consistent and resolute enemies of democratization lay on the right (Blinkhorn 1986: 11).

What has been said should have made clear that the most important structural and political reasons for the breakdown of democracy lay within Spain itself. However, the fact that the *pronunciamiento* of 1936, in contrast to that of 1923, widened into a civil war was also a consequence of the international circumstances. First, the Spanish workers had learnt a lesson from the conduct of the Italian, German and Austrian proletariat over the failure of their respective democracies, and so were not prepared to accept the breakdown of the only system in which they could hope for an improvement of their situation without fighting. Second, the support the rebels received from the Third Reich and Italy was crucial for the widening of the *pronunciamiento* (which had actually failed already) into civil war. Third, the existence of numerous regimes which were not democratic during the interwar period surely contributed to the creation of a mental and political climate favourable to rebellion against the democratic order. This does not lessen the overall responsibility of the political and social protagonists suggested above; it only complements the endogenous aspects, which were crucial, with exogenous factors which help to explain why the second crisis of the Spanish interwar period ended so differently from the first.

18

Sweden: The Durable Compromise

Ulf Lindström

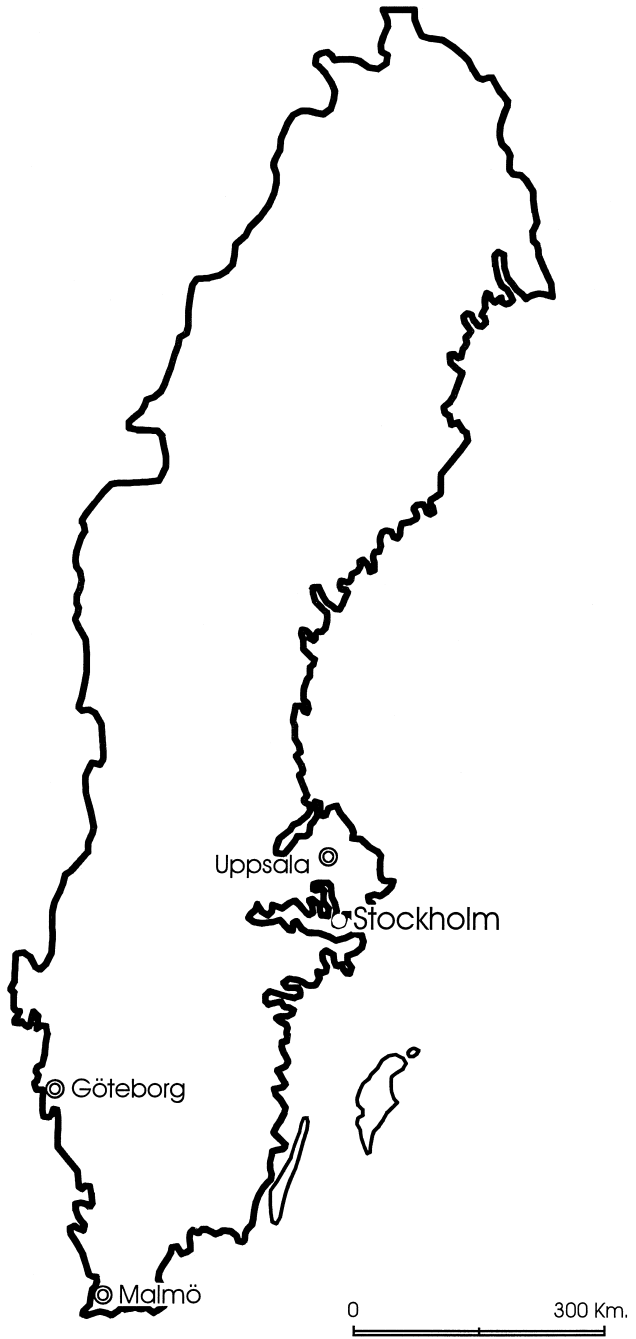
1 Introduction

In his May Day speech of 1933, Swedish Social Democratic Party leader and prime minister Per Albin Hansson attacked the two parties representing Nazism and Bolshevism, not least because: 'Both also have *un-Swedishness* in common, they ape foreign perceptions and tune in slogans from abroad.' (quoted in Pålbrant 1977: 57, emphasis in original). One week later, the Social Democratic and Agrarian parties concluded the Red-Green Crisis Agreement. This coalition was extraordinary. It was Sweden's (or Scandinavia's) response to the Great Depression, ushering in the era of the social democratic *Folkhemmet* ('People's Home') (Lindström, 1985; Madsen 1984).

This coalition of national consensus has led many academics into making careless retrospective conclusions about the inherent character of the Swedish body politic, not to mention the nature of her social democratic movement. With the 'intellectualization' of the consequences of the crisis agreement – did Keynesian ideas work or not? – the origins of the crisis agreement have also been 'intellectualized' by the social science community: Sweden being a rational society, the crisis agreement was conceived in a rational context, in which only rational arguments were allowed; the agreement was subsequently put to work in a rational manner, supervised by rational people, and, indeed, the country responded rationally to the policies, confirming the insight of the nation's academic expertise and (social democratic) politicians.

This chapter questions this scholarly *Versachlichung* of Swedish political culture. It is argued that the Swedish crisis agreement was conceived as well as received in an international context. This context served to encourage a response of nationalism-isolationism. The political outcome of the anti-depression policies, aimed at fighting unemployment and agrarian indebtedness, was as much influenced by concurrent international economic recovery and political factors as determined by domestic public policy. Ultimately, the Social Democratic cabinet succeeded in making people *believe* they were better off than before, to no small extent by using comparative references to the Nazi and Bolshevik tragedies that had befallen other nations in Europe.

Sweden



2 The general background

Imagine a 'most-likely-to-succeed' poll taken in 1918 among Western political analysts about the prospects of democracy in European countries (similar to the present concern for Eastern Europe). It would have left Sweden in a twilight zone. Cultural homogeneity and a long record of legitimate representative institutions would have given Sweden favourable scores; relative economic backwardness, bitter class confrontations and limited experience of mass mobilization would have made respondents wary about her prospects as a pluralist democracy. Such an analysis would serve to illustrate the well-known and insoluble hazards of political story-telling. Facing the facts, one is likely to pay attention only to favourable factors, while playing down whatever could run counter- productive, to the desired result.

Another source of misconceptions about Swedish democracy ever being seriously endangered in the wake of the Great Depression is the 'Germanization' of the extremist threat. Swedish historiography of the immediate postwar years, written under the influence of newsreels showing Third Reich atrocities, came to the unsurprising conclusion that fascism simply could not have happened in Sweden; we knew from the early 1930s what fascism was, what it meant, and where it would end. It is worth repeating, however, that it was not the NSDAP of 1945 that was representing the radical right in Swedish politics of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Whatever success was in store for extreme right-wing forces in Sweden, they had to be more Swedish than German in character and origin. Our initial task is, therefore, to unravel patterns of endogenous democratic as well as undemocratic traditions in Swedish politics and society.

One determinant moulded well before the First World War and its aftermath was the nation-building process. First, the Swedish clergy had been subordinated to the state as well as effectively depoliticized for centuries. The Evangelical Lutheran state-church had long since ceased to claim legitimacy as a governing institution in matters of statewide and national concern. Consequently, worldly vs. sacral centres competing for popular loyalty were not going to undermine Swedish democracy.

Second, Sweden had experienced only minor territorial changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. True, the years 1809 and 1905, when Sweden lost Finland to Russia and later Norway gained full independence from the Court in Stockholm, left lingering residues of nationalist activism cultivated by the right. But these dreams of resuscitating a glorious past never had any appeal to the masses, largely because the losses of 1809 and 1905 did not affect the cultural homogeneity of the new and reduced country. No diasporas of Swedes were left longing for reunion with the fatherland; no minorities strong enough to provoke feelings of political unreason among the majority were incorporated in the wake of the border adjustments.

Third, Sweden stayed neutral in the First World War. No defeated officers corps or veterans' organizations existed to infect the masses with talk of treacherous politicians stabbing the nation in the back.

In case these factors must be regarded as decisive for the prospects of an eventual overthrow of democratic regimes (again the German bias is apparent), then Sweden was already safely on the road to success. However, *knowing* that a crisis was in the offing and that it was going to be met with the Social Democratic–Agrarian crisis agreement, what features of Swedish governmental tradition are the most relevant to explaining this outcome?

What is specific to Swedish government is that, ever since the end of Gustavian absolutism in 1809 (Sweden's most recent experience of a *Stunde Null*), it has drawn on three sources of legitimacy: a civil-servant heritage gradually being replaced by – or, rather, amended with – corporate and, finally, territorial representation. The unique Swedish blend of this threefold format of government *reinforces* rather than checks its individual parts.

So, as territorial representation or 'numeric democracy', not fully extended until 1921, was sliding in popular respect because Parliament was crippled by a lack of majority options, the *Riksdag* was helped out of the slump by forming coalitions based on corporate alignments requiring the expertise of civil servants for the drafting, implementation as well as administration of the policy that broke the deadlock. In a constitutionalist perspective, such methods of curing executive paralysis run counter to the original idea behind parliamentarism. However, this is an academic remark of little or no importance to Parliament's credibility among the public at large. Ordinary citizens do not keep records on instances when the *Riksdag* has produced legislation positively free from corporate and administrative influences. All three formats of government, especially when concrete measures mix the best out of each, are widely accepted as democratic in Swedish political culture.

This undercurrent surfaced in the last principal debate about government and democracy, i.e., as the issues were fought among Swedish parties in connection with the extension of the vote, the breakthrough of parliamentarism, and the recurrent cabinet crises of the 1920s. Arguments advanced during those years offered many different interpretations as to what was 'proper' or 'Swedish' as opposed to 'alien' democracy.

A mixture of normative and empirical considerations served to persuade the Conservatives in their doubts about the democratic regime. A series of editorials published in 1912 in the leading Conservative papers attacked the fundamentals of democracy. They claimed that because of its erroneous acclaim of social equality, democracy would result in a disdain for expert knowledge. Furthermore, it was stressed that democracy puts incompetence or, at best, mediocrity in the seat of honour. The ideological journal of Swedish conservatism, *Svensk Tidskrift*, was worried about the fact that democracy did not recruit the nation's best, but rather favoured those men who master the game of intrigues and mass suggestion. Such tricks were bound to pay off since the masses did not have satisfactory political education, nor the intellectual abilities to judge in political matters. Among the Conservative elite there were those swayed by the French Reaction and well-known scholars such as Pareto, Mosca and Michels. Political parties were inept at ruling a nation since their own internal democratic

processes tended to decay into oligarchy, which furthered corruption, nepotism, and patronage.

With the inauguration of the Eden Liberal–Social Democratic Cabinet in 1917 parliamentarism made its definite breakthrough in Sweden. How was this landmark, and the subsequent extension of the franchise enacted by the Eden Cabinet, received among the Conservatives? Content analyses of Conservative press editorials from 1918 through 1922 led Söderlind (1961) to these conclusions:

Criticism of parliamentarism occurs in all the Conservative newspapers investigated during almost the entire period...These papers consider the parliamentary theory or 'doctrine' as a foreign imported article, entirely unsuited to Swedish conditions...Parliamentary government is unpractical, divorced from reality and sterile; talk of its 'bankruptcy' both in Sweden and abroad is a recurring theme in the Conservative press of these years ... Criticism of Riksdag despotism is reinforced by frequently repeated charges against the Riksdag for insufficient competence and lack of responsibility.

As to the democratic regime in general, the Conservative press accepts

democracy in so far as they do not advocate a new constitutional struggle nor urge the Conservative party to devote their energy to a revision of the constitution in an anti-democratic direction. Their acceptance is obviously tinged with resignation and constraint (Lindström, 1985: 41).

When did Swedish Conservatives ultimately concede the fight against mass democracy and begin to protect it? According to the historian Torstendahl (1969), the Conservative Party was never to align itself with the active democratic forces in interwar Sweden. In Conservative periodicals of this time only one article explicitly came out in defence of democratic principles. What appreciative references to democracy did surface among the abundance of criticism were only lukewarm; it was a form of government that had to be accepted for want of a better system.

Old nineteenth-century Conservative views of democracy, blended with a modernist critical analysis drawing on social science, were still alive in the interwar period. Against the naïve beliefs that men possessed equal abilities, the Conservatives referred to scholarly proof, not metaphysical bigotry, showing that badly needed talents were wasted within politics and other areas. Second, the functioning of democracy had left much to desire in view of all the cabinet crises of the 1920s. All essays in the Conservative journals unanimously agreed on a strengthening of the executive at the expense of the legislature. Their concrete proposals ranged from ministerial government to royal absolutism to outright dictatorship. There were Conservative ideologues who did not shun even the idea of a 'state-of-emergency dictatorship' in Sweden, but, as pointed out by party leader Lindman, who was not entirely appalled by the thought, such moves were dubious

since it would be difficult to reinstate traditional democracy once the crisis no longer called for extraordinary measures.

Within the Agrarian Party, which during the 1910s had been formed out of secessions from the Conservative Party, democracy was viewed with considerable suspicion during the twenties, too. Their attitude was a misanthropic scepticism more than a criticism; democracy was desirable but not altogether feasible. The Agrarian Party advocated an executive power standing above party interests. Parliamentarism was widely discredited at the beginning of the decade when many Agrarian ideologues identified the king as the true national leader. This archaic royalism was to give way to the idea of cabinets composed of non-political experts, whose executive duty did not have to abide by party doctrines. A few years later the non-political format was dropped in favour of a 'grand coalition' expert cabinet.

This readiness among the urban and rural right wing to consider unorthodox solutions to cure the inherent malfunctions of parliamentary democracy did not mark any principal constitutional rift in Swedish politics. Among leading Social Democrats there were also those who were ready to suggest extraordinary means to end the mess caused by cabinet instability. One idea was to have the Upper House of the *Riksdag* turned into a diet appointed by corporate interests in society.

In retrospect it may seem curious and embarrassing that Swedish politics was presented with suggestions that later were to become associated with right-wing extremism. But, until this time, such amendments like 'state-of-emergency dictatorships' and social democratic corporatism are considered harmless in Swedish historiography precisely because they were *Swedish* solutions. Thus, what set Sweden apart, even in the Scandinavian context, was its self-righteous and instrumentalist relationship to democracy, which indeed left the stage open for rational social and political engineering.

Parliament, dating back to the sixteenth century as a representative body, was so taken for granted that few paid any respect to it, or to the Constitution. The king, whose prerogative was removed by referring to changing practise rather than through constitutional amendments, felt no restraints about tampering with parliamentarism in 1914. During these years, outside expertise representing corporate interests was often allowed to draft proposals for new laws on behalf of committees appointed by the government. Besides, the Constitution did not allow for governing by ministerial decree only by law alone, leaving the interpretation as well as implementation of public policy in the hands of the civil service. Finally, the most important level of government was still the local council, in which business was largely run on a patriarchal basis, gradually admitting and socializing the representatives of organized labour.

The Swedish democratic regime was multifaceted in its institutional framework. Sweden was less vulnerable than most comparable countries to an attack on the pivotal institution of democracy – the numeric channel or parliament. The Swedish parliament could fend off almost all kinds of right-wing discontent about democracy. Even the MPs themselves, irrespective of party, whether

representing the incumbent cabinet or the opposition, were free to lament over the government process for being unresponsive, slow, inept and inefficient. With the civil service and local councils actually running the country, MPs never felt the pressure to assume sole responsibility for the state of the nation. There were no specific party nor any particular generation of MPs who were honoured with the role – and later blamed – as the founders and caretakers of the State. The dilemma of the state-carrying representatives of many succession states, most evidently that experienced by the Social Democrats and Liberals in opposition to the anti-system Conservatives and Communists in Weimar Germany, did not occur in Sweden. But before elaborating on the anatomy of the interwar crises and the nature of the threat to Swedish democracy, it is necessary to consider the principal conflicts and actors in Swedish politics.

3 Social cleavages and intermediary structures

Sweden is one of the most homogeneous countries in the Occidental world. While the national revolutions of the nineteenth century by-passed Sweden, thus eliminating the likelihood of parties being created from religious, cultural, and ethnic cleavages, the industrial revolution rearranged the conditions for mass politics. The left–right, socialist–bourgeois conflict dimension soon came to dominate the political scene, with the urban–rural cross-cutting dimension producing a supplementary source of conflict.

Table 18.1 Sweden: class structure, 1927^a

Population (millions)	5.9 ^b
Employment rate	44.1 ^b
Rate of agrarian employment	40.7 ^b
Agrarian:	
Landlords (>50ha)	2
Family farms	27
Agrarian proletariat	5
Non-agrarian:	
Capitalists	1
Old middle class	11
New middle class	14
Proletariat	37
Sub-proletariat	3
Total	100

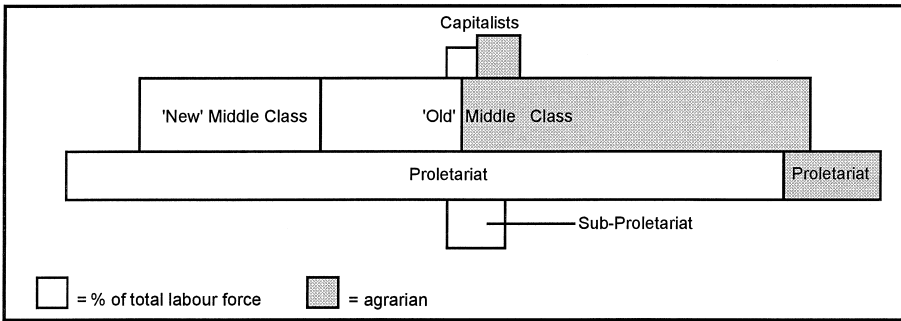
Source: Statistisches Reichsamts (1936: 258).

Notes:

a Own estimates. The official data for capitalists is 5%, but this also includes small businesses; therefore we estimated the data for capitalists as about 1%, and merged the rest with the old middle class.

b Data for 1920.

Figure 18.1 Sweden: class structure, 1927



Note: For sources and definitions, see Table 18.1.

When the labour movements in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Russia and Finland threw themselves into revolution in the wake of the First World War, Swedish social democracy, in contrast, assumed cabinet portfolios in the government. However, Sweden also felt the impact of the *Zeitgeist* – industrial conflicts brought the country to an almost world leading position in numbers of days lost in strikes and lockouts. In electoral terms, labour radicalism was mainly mobilized by the Communist parties, which polled about 6 per cent of the vote during the 1920s. The climax of left–right confrontations was reached in the election campaign of 1928. The Social Democratic Party had proposed a death duty to stimulate productive re-investment of family-based property, to which the Conservatives responded by accusing social democracy of wanting to turn the country into a Soviet Sweden.

The urban–rural cleavage rested on two components. First, the straightforward conflict of interest between the producers and consumers of foodstuffs. The Agrarian Party, formed in 1920 following continuous secessions from the Conservatives, became the champions of the family peasants, while leaving the landowners with the Conservatives and the smallholders with the Liberals. But the Liberals were left in a precarious position as the defenders also of the hinterland culture, including that of the non-orthodox congregations and the temperance movement, the chief popular source of opposition against the Conservatives prior to the full democratization of the country. At the same time, the Liberal Party was the rallying-point of the urban rationalist strata (Lindström and Wörlund 1988).

Much of the anti-parliamentary sentiments among the constituents that grew in course of the 1920s have their roots in the attitudes and actions of the Liberal Party. In strictly numerical terms, the *Riksdag* was readily capable of producing a bourgeois majority cabinet. However, the Liberals – especially those MPs who represented the hinterland faction – were less than willing to enter into formalized cooperation with the Conservatives. Thus, tiny one-party minority

cabinets replaced one another at short intervals, ruining executive predictability in the government process. In order to stay in government, a minority cabinet had to practise what became notorious as the ‘alternating–majority-formula’ – extensive and time-consuming log-rolling among all kinds of temporary coalitions to have parliament pass legislation.

The right was especially affronted by this mode of operations, as occasional Liberal–Social Democratic (unholy) alliances caused recurrent defeats of matters held dear to the Conservatives, such as defence appropriations.

3.1 Political parties

Each of the five parties that came to be part of the interwar political scene holds a piece of information relevant to the background of the crisis agreement in 1933 and its subsequent impact on Swedish democracy. Recovering these pieces is a matter of asking the right questions. And since any theoretical approach to the ultimate issue – consensus or collapse – by necessity is a comparative one, the pertinent questions should be counterfactually phrased: why not?

First, why did the Communist Party fail to polarize Swedish society between left and right to an extent that precluded the Social Democratic Party, unless it was perfectly willing to risk a split-off of its left wing, from seeking accord with a bourgeois party, and an agrarian one at that? Structural explanations will not do. Sweden may not have been the most ‘ripe’ of countries for a revolutionary labour movement, but Sweden was certainly more industrialized and ridden by class antagonisms than most of the countries that saw a strong revolutionary labour party. Political dispositions must be accounted for. Swedish communism took off in a series of events rather than as one definite break with the mother party. The leadership of the Social Democratic Party has been credited with tactical insight in minimizing the damage caused by left-wing frustration in the years 1914–23. The policy of the leadership was never to say never; there was always space for the radicals (Therborn 1989).

As they none the less gathered for the founding congress in 1919, four factions were already visible, differentiated according to their views on the means to achieve a communist society. Reconciling three formats of government – parliamentary democracy, dictatorship of the proletariat, and the autonomy of the soviets – proved an impossible task. However, the ultimate source of conflict within the Swedish Communist Party was the Comintern connection, as evidenced by the many splits that afflicted the party. As the Comintern in the end requested obedience to its policy of making the member parties attack the Social Democrats as ‘social fascists’ many were appalled, and the Social Democratic Party lost its patience. Indeed, the most prominent of the original secessionist leaders were citing Moscow as a reason upon returning to the Social Democratic fold in the course of the 1920s.

The electoral decline of the Communist Party was accompanied by its concomitant loss of a fairly strong revolutionary voice on the boards of the trade unions. The final clash between the radicals and those loyal to the Social

Democratic Party came after 1928 when the revolutionary Strasbourg trade-union international adopted theses that were flatly rejected by the loyalists. This is one of the reasons why surprisingly few industrial disputes accompanied the general economic decline in the early 1930s and also why the trade unions were passionately restraining themselves in their demands for wage increases in the late 1930s when the economy picked up again. This 'responsible' policy of modesty among the unions reduced the strain on the Social Democratic-Agrarian coalition cabinet that took office after 1936.

An intriguing feature of Swedish social democracy was its ability to avoid getting trapped inside the red ghetto, cultivating an anti-parliamentary 'wait-and-see' (Austrian) posture in face of crisis in the capitalist system. The pragmatism of Swedish social democracy is well documented (cf. Isaksson 1990). Its exclusivism tends to be forgotten, however. The party did control a substantial movement, including trade unions, newspapers, cooperative stores and apartment housing, and leisure activities, a *Lager* for short.

The reason why the party did not fall into the habit of scoffing at parliamentary politics was, first, the socializing (corrupting) effect of the local government system. Local councils were run according to a permanent proportional system sharing the executive positions. And since most of the Social Democratic MPs had extensive experience of local politics before getting nominated for the *Riksdag*, this mode of operation influenced the party's parliamentary caucus. Moreover, this caucus was not responsible to the party's executive board, let alone its national congress. In one sense, then, the Social Democratic Party enjoyed the best of *two* worlds, one in the comfort of the ghetto where the ideologues ruled, the other in the elected assemblies where the politician ruled (Ryssevik 1991).

Less than six months before the crisis agreement of May 1933, the most likely candidate for a parliamentary deal with social democracy was the Liberal Party. Common to the two parties was their ideological and emotional aversion against battling agrarian indebtedness by making ordinary peoples' bread more expensive. Protectionism was taboo. Also, the Liberals were less prejudiced than the Agrarians about government spending in general to fight the depression (Rothstein 1991), in particular when it came to paying decent wages to those employed in public works programs.

As for the Social Democratic Party, their MPs were preparing themselves for some kind of an agreement with the Liberals after the fall elections of 1932 had brought the Social Democrats very close to a majority in parliament. Finally, there was the historical record, the long-standing and close contacts among leading Liberals and Social Democrats epitomized by the Liberal-Social Democratic Cabinet of 1917, and the Danish example of more or less permanent cooperation between these two parties.

In the end, however, the Liberals had second thoughts. One of them concerned the principal issue of government interference in the market. The Liberals found the Social Democratic proposals too far reaching, if not money-wise at least in their wish to make the economy into one employing central

planning. The other argument was simply tactical. A deal with social democracy might alienate the right-wing rural constituents of the Liberal Party, who would then become prey to the Agrarian Party's accusation about the Liberals selling out to organized labour.

Let there be no doubt about it: the Agrarian Party was in many senses the sworn enemy of social democracy. Free trade or protective barriers was an issue far beyond academic textbooks. It translated directly into the daily life of the two parties' constituents: the price of bread. In between the plenary hall of the *Riksdag* and the kitchen table of working-class homes was the local political context in which the issue was fought eye-ball to eye-ball between seemingly irreconcilable interests; and such contexts were plentiful in interwar Sweden. The country was still semi-rural and Social Democracy polled half of its vote in the countryside, in particular among smallholders cum seasonal wage-earners.

Not only was the country semi-rural, the rural community was divided, too. There was not much in common between the grain-producing kulaks of the southern half and the dairy-producing peasants and smallholders of the north, whose livelihood was equally dependent on external sources of income such as fishery, seasonal labour within forestry, at road construction sites, etc. This dualist composition of the Agrarian constituency meant that the party's leadership was vulnerable to a dialogue with its adversary. Indeed, from the outset of the talks between the Social Democrats and the Agrarians, the Agrarian party leader was left out in the cold and later deposed. In general, the Agrarian party leadership went through a transition process during these years as many of the old peasants cum ideologues were replaced by pragmatic agrotechnocrats.

The Conservative Party had indeed put up a front of opposition against the extension of democratic rights during the first two decades of the century. But it was an opposition of stalling rather than one of all or nothing with the subsequent risk of losing face completely, and so the party never became a hotbed of anti-system revanchism. Its social composition did have a touch of aristocracy, rallying what was left of the nobility, the military, and the clergy. But there were also the modern factions, in particular the business community and a civil-servant estate observing a rational mode of conduct.

It is of principal interest to recall the way the business community reacted on the two occasions when the Conservative party could have headed for political adventures. As Norway single-handedly declared the union with Sweden dissolved in the summer of 1905, the Swedish business community, who controlled substantial assets in Norway, was not the least interested in supporting any Conservative response of retaliation. Big business was not willing to equate the State with the Market, and realized that Sweden only stood to lose business opportunities by holding on to an obsolete dual monarchy. In a similar vein, it is a matter of public record that leading representatives of big business wired the Conservatives during the heated debate in 1918 about universal suffrage, asking the party to end its resistance to the bill on voting rights since this policy might

provoke organized labour to call for even more radical measures than just the vote (Söderpalm 1969).

A principal source of discord between the business community and the Conservatives was the party's position on trade and tariffs. The Employers' Federation held that the agrarian faction was still too strong within the party. Keeping the interests of the State and the Market apart left an imprint on the party, as did the intellectual rationales that informed the party's opposition to democracy. As already noted, this resistance had a metaphysical component, invoking themes about the 'true' character of Swedish government. However, this argument was untenable to the leading intellectuals in the party. They – the professors of economics, political science and law – may not have been the most prominent scholars of their time. However, with few exceptions they were modern and rational and willing to confront the issues of the day from an empirical perspective.

3.2 Interest groups

Of the two major types of voluntary associations in Sweden, the legendary popular movements, *folkrörelser*, covered the territorial dimension, mobilizing teetotallers, nonconformists, etc. They have been awarded a prominent role in the history of Swedish pluralism because they provided elected assemblies with manpower trained in basic democratic conduct such as a respect for minorities. This is certainly true in so far as, during the first decades of the century, many MPs had a background in the popular movements. In many respects, therefore, the popular movements may be regarded as an integral part of the numeric channel of democracy.

However, the organizations that define themselves out of corporate interests have been unduly overlooked in this perspective. In fact, to the extent that they have been discussed at all in relation to their impact on democracy, it has been with a pejorative bias. As the political science professor (and Conservative party leader-to-be) Gunnar Heckscher summed up the interwar experience in 1946: 'it would not be going too far to say that Sweden of today experiences more of real corporatism ... than what the old Swedish estate society as well as fascist Italy did' (quoted in Lindström 1985: 110).

Observers primarily concerned with the constitutionalist's view on politics may indeed have found their ideal type less and less accurate in the wake of the Great Depression. But, then, this framework never was suitable as a tool for understanding Swedish democracy. Corporate interests had been part of the governmental process since medieval times and were increasingly brought into the picture as society grew more complex and/or faced major crises. New technology (such as steam engines and railroad transportation) and the effects of the First World War were the chief factors in strengthening the role of corporate interests in government (Back 1967).

The interwar period, in particular the Great Depression, added a new and important feature to the corporate channel: legitimacy based on mass

representation. After the First World War and the postwar economic recession of 1921–2, organized interests lost a substantial portion of their membership. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, however, organized interests doubled, even quadrupled their membership (see Table 18.2). Establishing the causal links of membership losses in 1921–2 and growth ten years later is a difficult task. It may have been the hardships in and of themselves that made people flock to, instead of abandoning, their respective organizations; it may have been the interactions among the organizations and/or the government that boosted the membership. So, in this sense, the Great Depression, unlike the recession of 1921–2, was to become a constructive crisis.

In the early 1930s, just like during the First World War, the Swedish government entered into negotiations with various branches with the aim of pacifying the effects of the market mechanism by introducing politically defined regulations of prices, output, etc. Of course, the primary sector was the one that became thoroughly regulated. By way of example, the milk-producing farmers were given a fixed price for milk in exchange for mandatory membership in producer cooperatives and for giving up their right to sell milk directly to the grocery stores and consumers (a ban that was impossible to implement). Incidentally, the right bestowed upon the producer cooperatives to charge a fee was simply unconstitutional as it removed from parliament its exclusive right to

Table 18.2 Mobilization of organized interests in interwar Sweden

Year	Members of Empl. Fed. (000s)	Members of Merch. Fed. (000s)	Members of Farmers' Org. (000s)	Members of White-Collar Unions (000s)	Members of TUC. Fed. (000s)
1920	3.7	11			399
1921	3.5	11			396
1922	3.2	11			344
1923	2.5	11			365
1924	2.0	11			417
1925	2.0	11			444
1926	2.0	11			472
1927	2.1	11			494
1928	2.2	11			527
1929	2.5	11			568
1930	2.7	11			614
1931	3.1	11.3		20	648
1932	3.2	12.3	27.5	21	656
1933	3.4	12.2	37.0	23	648
1934	3.6	13.2	52.0	25	668
1935	3.9	14.2		28	713
1936	4.3	15		30	773
1937	4.9	15.5		32	857
1938	5.4	16.6		47	911
1939	5.7	18		50	972

Source: Lindström (1985).

level taxes on the citizens. Taken together all the single government interventions of the 1930s add up to the *Silent Crisis Agreement* as the combined impact of the many bills passed by the *Riksdag* was far greater than what the *Kohandel* meant to the economy. This was also the definite fusing of the numeric and corporate channel of government.

3.3 Right-wing movements and parties

The silent crisis agreements contributed toward placating the extreme right, both the minor crisis movements and the factions of discontent inside the established organized interests. The corporatist agreements also reduced the pressure on the political parties, especially the Agrarians and Conservatives, who were immediately vulnerable to the demands voiced by a community of peasants and businessmen in despair.

Outlining the extent and anatomy of Swedish right-wing extremism means emphasizing the extra-parliamentary movements, and in particular those tied to the rural economy. In contrast, the urban extreme right wing was weak, having largely disappeared in the 1920s, or simply being written down in history as pathetic projects. For instance, the anti-communist militia in Stockholm, the Voluntary Air Defence Force, was set up in 1927 with the purpose of assisting the chief of police in case of subversive riots. The militia allegedly included 2000 armed men, but was dissolved in 1931 following a charge against the leader for illegal possession of firearms. A potent right-wing project was the National Rescue, modelled upon the German *Technische Nothilfe*, an organization set up by employers to recruit scabs to curb the many strikes accompanying the recession and to counteract other expressions of worker radicalism. The National Rescue was founded in 1921, reached its peak of activity and strength in the mid-1920s but started to dwindle away after 1931. As for the pathetic case, this was the National Party, based on the Conservative Party's youth organization when it broke away in protest from the mother party in 1934. Judging by the family names of its hard-core activists, the National Party was the last attempt in Swedish politics to rally the nobility.

In retrospect, and in comparison with the experience of other European countries, any meaningful account of Swedish right-wing extremism has to emphasize the rural political economy with an eye to the prologue and history of the Swedish National Rural Union (*Riksförbundet Landsbygdens Folk*). Swedish peasants were late in organizing themselves in a single united interest. True, they could turn to the County Agricultural Societies or the Swedish Farming Society for advice on husbandry, fertilizers, and soil improvement, but these semi-public institutions – run jointly by civil servants, estate owners and other well-to-do farmers – never concerned themselves with marketing and prices. What the founding fathers of the SNRU had in mind when they came together in 1929 was the concept of a trade union for rural people.

The very character of the Agrarian Party goes to explain the late mass mobilization of the peasantry. Like the Communist Party, the Agrarian Party was

not founded in one definite split-off from another party. Rather, the Agrarians had been formed over a period of about ten years (1910–21) and its identity rested in between the numeric and corporate channel of representative democracy. In one sense, then, the Agrarian Party pre-empted the rationale of what eventually became the SNRU.

Immediately before and after the SNRU was formally launched, Sweden experienced a number of incidents of political militancy in which peasants were pitted against labour or government or simply themselves. In the grainfields of the south, big farmers at times used 'blackleg' labour during harvest seasons, recruiting them through an organization called Save the Crop. In the forest lands of the north, small peasants joined the Liberty of Labour, a 'yellow' rival to the regular lumber union. Around the country peasants resorted to delivery boycotts and similar actions, and accusations were often heard that these actions were instigated by right-wing extremists.

One such case is positively confirmed. In late 1930, with rural bankruptcies increasing, 600 peasants of the county of Värmland (midwestern Sweden) attended a crisis rally at which two of the most prominent organizers were Nazis who did not miss the opportunity to sneak in antisemitic remarks in their addresses to the gathered farmers. An estate-owner, later to run as candidate for the Nazi Party in the 1932 parliamentary election, became the leader of the militant farmers of this county. It was this movement that, *in cooperation* with the SNRU, staged the Farmers' National Convention of 1932. Although the national leadership of the SNRU was aware of the estate-owner's political sympathies, he was not ousted from the SNRU until the spring of 1933.

In view of the hectic activities among individual MPs, parliamentary committees, civil servants, and representatives of the SNRU to ease the hardships of the peasantry – and the innumerable bills and administrative decrees introduced between 1929 and 1933 – one is hard put to believe that politics did not matter to how the peasantry, the SNRU as well as the Agrarian Party, ultimately responded to the Great Depression.

The year 1933 was also one of climax for the Conservative Party. The youth organization had pressed hard for a distinct right-wing turn in the party's platform and the party leadership had met many of these demands. In April, one month before the Red–Green Crisis Agreement, the party announced the founding of the Right Front, an extra-parliamentary satellite designed to end the factionalization of the party. 'In short', it was said in the declaration accompanying the announcement, 'the Right Front is to be the first battle line of popular and national conservatism in its struggle against the red united front ... Sweden's liberation from Bolshevism and a *ban* against movements that violently aim to overthrow the old Swedish society founded upon law and justice' (emphasis in original). But the project was all in vain. The youth seceded from the Conservative Party and transformed their organization into the National Party in 1934, and it is likely that the activists of the Right Front eventually ended up in this party too.

Fascist and Nazi parties that openly appeared as such polled less than one per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections (see Table 18.3). They attracted some regional support, however, and most notably in the county of Värmland and city of Gothenburg in 1932 obtaining 3 and 6 per cent of the vote, respectively (Löw 1990; Wärenstam 1970). The most remarkable feature of Swedish fascism was its organizational chaos, counting as many as 100 extremist groups. With the immediate inspiration of the German NSDAP, the first Nazi Party had been formed in 1924. In the years to come, the international connections – with either Germany or Italy – fueled the many splits and mergers of these parties. Sweden being almost totally uniform in culture and religion, racism was never an issue with political implications. Appeal to the working class was desirable to those inspired by Italy, but not possible because of the firm control of organized labour over the working-class. (In a letter to the author, the principal Nazi Party leader admits that after the *Kohandeln* in 1933 the Nazi Party lost its rationale altogether.)

4 The great depression and the Red–Green crisis agreement

Sweden was no exception. It soon felt the impact of the crash on Wall Street, and in 1933 unemployment peaked at 23 per cent along with other signs of economic hardship. What was unusual about the Swedish economy was its quick recuperation from the slump. However, the scholarly view of the postwar economists was of no comfort to those who, during the darkest years, felt the imminent threat of being thrown off their farms or feared losing their jobs or a lifetime savings account.

It took the Swedish Parliament less than five months to follow the example set by the Danish parliament in January 1933 (on the same night as the *Machtübernahme* in Berlin). The Red–Green crisis agreement, the *Kohandeln*, was the work of the Social Democratic and Agrarian parties and was based on a straightforward deal: in return for Agrarian support of a public works programme based on decent wages, the social democrats accepted protective tariffs and government subsidies for agriculture.

Scholarly disagreement about what *caused* the two parties to enter the deal is, undoubtedly, due to how one prefers to interpret the *impact* of the crisis agreement (the functionalist fallacy *par excellence*). Those who argue for an economic-rationalist interpretation based on statistical indicators of Sweden's prewar economy like to think that the agreement was conceived out of intellectual rationales – a policy innovation that turned out successful. Those who argue for a contextual-symbolic interpretation of the outcome of the Depression, one that holds that the meagre real effect of economic improvement was psychologically compensated as Swedes compared their fate to that which had befallen other people in Europe, like to believe that the agreement was from the start just another expression of Machiavellian politics. However, it is also possible to combine these two perspectives. The most sensible combination is to allow for

Table 18.3 Sweden: electoral results, 1920–40

	17.09.1920		26.09.1921		21.09.1924		21.09.1928		18.09.1932		20.09.1936		15.09.1940	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Communist Party			4.6	7	3.6	4	6.4	8	3.0	2	3.3	5	3.5	3
Social Democrats	29.7	75	36.2	93	41.1	104	37.0	90	41.7	104	45.9	112	53.8	134
Agrarian Party	8.0	19	11.0	21	10.8	23	11.2	27	14.1	36	14.4	36	12.0	28
Conservatives	27.8	70	25.8	62	26.1	65	29.4	73	23.5	58	17.6	44	18.0	42
Farmers Union	6.2	10												
Left Socialists	6.4	7	3.2											
Socialist Left Party					1.5	1			5.3	6				
Kilbom Communists											12.9	27	12.0	23
People's Party											4.4	6	0.6	
Socialist Party														
<i>Liberal Parties</i>														
Liberals	21.8	47	18.7	41										
Prohibitionist Liberals					13.0	28	12.9	28	9.8	20				
Swedish Liberal Party					3.9	5	3.0	4	2.0	4				
<i>Fascist Parties</i>														
National Socialist Party									0.6				0.1	
National Socialist Workers' Party													0.6	
National League													0.9	
Others	0.2	2	0.4				0.1		0.1					
Seats total		230		224		230		230		230		230		230

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 400).

Table 18.4 Sweden: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	
GDP (m. KR)	4020	10892	12568	9639	7852	7889	8140	8756	8938	9194	9343	9937	10063	8817	8271	8244	9037	9719	10548	11547	12205	13301	
NDP (m. KR)	3930	10696	12318	9418	7624	7637	7886	8515	8686	8921	9062	9640	9770	8539	8009	7966	8715	9369	10176	11129	11759	12785	
In 1938 prices	5069	5206	5798	4938	4941	7086	7479	7959	8299	8587	8723	9420	9845	8882	8538	8563	9368	9987	10672	11304	11759	12400	
NDP/cap. (KR)	699	1835	2096	1588	1277	1273	1310	1409	1432	1467	1486	1577	1594	1388	1297	1285	1401	1501	1626	1773	1867	2021	
NDP (m. US-\$)	1053	2867	3301	2524	2043	2047	2113	2282	2328	2391	2429	2584	2618	2288	2146	2135	2336	2511	2727	2983	3151	3426	
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	187	492	562	426	342	341	351	378	384	393	398	423	427	372	348	344	375	402	436	475	500	542	
Population (thousands)	5621	5830	5876	5929	5971	5997	6021	6045	6064	6081	6097	6113	6131	6152	6176	6201	6222	6242	6259	6276	6297	6326	
IND PROD (1913 = 100)	100	85	96	74	87	96	96	109	111	122	126	137	130	148	139	128	130	158	176	193	217	220	239
COST (1913 = 100)	100	265	274	246	199	139	136	138	135	134	134	132	128	124	124	121	120	120	121	123	127	129	133
Unemployment (%)		5	27	23	13	10	11.0	12.2	12.0	10.6	11.2	12.2	17.2	22.8	23.7	18.9	16.1	13.6	10.8	10.9	9.2		
B. o. Trade (m. KR)	-29.2		-1035.8	-161.4	39.5	-152.4	-163.5	-86.6	-70.3	32.2	-133.3	-29.7	-111.8	-305.1	-207.5	-17.2	-17.2	-17.2	-17.2	-17.2	-17.2	-17.2	
B. o. P. (m. KR)	33	-605	-726	-54	118	5	2	77	120	242	80	277	98	-128	-89	212	202	61	121	185	73	-269	
Rural Bankruptcies (a)		93	171	117	102	96	100	97	92	90	90	90	89	100	122	116	87	77	70	63	63	56	
Urban Bankruptcies (a)		55	153	153	115	107	100	96	91	87	92	85	104	104	131	110	70	53	52	42	43	38	
Lost working days (millions)		2296	8943	2663	2675	6907	1205	1560	1711	400	4835	667	1021	2627	3095	3434	760	788	438	861	1284	159	
Crisis Indicators							100	99	108	127	142	147	147	101	77	85	109	109	116	116	118	86	
Stocks Index (1924 = 100)																							
Ind. Prod.		100	118	130	147	150	165	170	185	176	200	188	173	176	214	238	261	293	297	323			
Cost of Living		100	81	57	55	56	55	54	54	54	52	50	49	49	49	49	49	49	50	52	52	54	
Unemployment		100	81	81	81	84	90	92	95	96	102	111	156	207	215	172	146	124	98	99	84		
NDP		100	100	259	45	59	64	15	182	25	38	99	116	129	29	30	16	32	48				
Strikes																							

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 72–3, 361–2); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 168ff., 357, 744ff., 819ff); Statistisches Reichsamt (1936, 259); Lindström (1985).

KR (Krona) is US\$0.268; GDP is at current market prices; NDP is at current factor costs.

a 1925 = 100.

some influence of unorthodox economic thinking in the making of the agreements, but as for impact, emphasis must be placed on the contextual-symbolic factor.

The intellectualist account of the *Kohandel* ultimately amounts to a political fairy tale: Ernst Wigforss, the Nordic philologist moonshining in economics, discovered the magic of an unbalanced budget before Keynes and was able to convince his fellow social democrats that he possessed the key to solving the slump. The issue is not whether Wigforss was a pioneer. Over the years, the Social Democratic Party had been confronted with innumerable ideas, some emanating from abroad, some being cooked up at home, but most of them rejected in the end as 'interesting but not feasible for the time being', as is indeed the normal fate of ideas in politics. Unravelling the intellectual origins of a new policy is not about discovering windfalls.

The real issue is what kind of dispositions made the Social Democratic Party susceptible to assuming cabinet responsibility even at the price of a compromise with the Agrarians and later to implement novel economic thinking. For one thing, the Social Democratic Party had firmly put itself at the service of the state. The three minority cabinets that party leader Branting had formed in 1920, 1922 and 1924 were all toppled in due course, without causing any internal party strife over the illusion of 'ministerial socialism'. On the contrary, the party's appetite for power only grew stronger and the only remaining means for holding on to its position once installed was to carry the majority of the popular vote. Thus, already in 1928, the newly elected party leader Per Albin Hansson – until recently referred to as one of the party's rare radicals – introduced the 'People's Home' in a now legendary speech in the *Riksdag*:

The basis of the home is togetherness and common feeling. The good home does not consider anyone as privileged or unappreciated; it knows no special favourites and no step-children. There no one looks down upon any-one else, there no one tries to gain advantage at another's expense, and the stronger do not suppress and plunder the weaker. In the good home equality, consideration, co-operation, and help-fulness prevail. Applied to the great people's and citizens' home this would mean the breaking down of all the social and economic barriers that now divide citizens into the privileged and the unfortunate, into rulers and subjects, into rich and poor, the gluttoned and the destitute, the plunderers and the plundered (Tilton 1990: 127).

This vision of society called for a revision of social democratic theory as well as practice, most importantly the status of the classes and their relationship to one another. In his seminal article 'People and Class', published in 1929 – again before the onset of the Great Depression – Hansson anticipated the critique against doing away with the working class in favour of the nondescript people:

The expansion of the party to a people's party does not mean and must not mean a watering down of socialist demands. There is scarcely any risk

that that will happen. It is possible that the middle groups that are driven over to Social Democracy have on one issue or another a less radical conception than workers in general have. But on the decisive point, the socialist character of the party, the new arrivals hardly come with demands for moderation (ibid.: 135).

With this conviction about the destiny of the party, Social Democracy's road to power was not going to be blocked by doctrinaire obstacles, and certainly not if the nation was heading for a severe crisis offering the party the chance to prove its executive capability. This is not to say that any solution was acceptable at any price just as long as it put the party into power. The circumstances that finally thrust the party into power, paved the way for a deal with the Agrarians and enabled the Cabinet to apply deficit spending must be sought in the immediate context of the negotiations, a context moulded equally by the domestic and the international setting.

Germany and Denmark – the two countries that dominated the mental maps of Swedish politicians – provided the international backdrop for the negotiations during the spring of 1933. With the German *Machtübernahme* and the Danish *Kanslergadedeforliget* appearing side by side in the newspaper headlines, it did not take much elaboration to realize that the Red–Green coalition was the antonym of the fascist takeover. Indeed, the Social Democratic minister of Agriculture was rushed off to Copenhagen to be briefed on the Danish agreement and later to report back to the Cabinet.

The domestic backdrop featured a peasantry in political flux and a Conservative Party under such heavy pressure from its right-wing faction that, in April, it had to resort to the extraordinary measure of forming a mob organization, the Right Front. Meanwhile the inner circle of the Social Democrats and Agrarians were sounding out each other over a possible deal, and in a memo written by finance minister Wigforss after one of these meetings in April the last entry commented on the Agrarian position: 'No sympathies for Nazism discernible. Perhaps instead the idea of removing all soil of anti-democratic propaganda by way of concrete measures taken in cooperation with soc. dem.' (quoted in Lindström 1985: 168).

Indeed, the Agrarian Party was aware of the frustrations among its constituents and once the word was out to the media that the two parties were about to come up with a deal to end the despair popular expectations grew ever stronger. Westman, the principal Agrarian architect behind the *Kohandeln*, was yet another politician to discover that once you sit down to negotiate the table binds: 'The people were impatiently waiting for a vigorous effort by the *Riksdag*. Had it not materialized our government would have lost its hold of our people.' On the day of the agreement Westman told the press: 'It was impossible to return home [for summer recess] without having done anything for the farmers' (quoted in Lindström 1985: 168).

When addressing the response side of the Red–Green coalitions, it is important to recall the ultimate issues – that is, what did the coalition mean in terms of

maintaining the legitimacy of the democratic political regime? For one thing, the ordinary citizen did not react to the crisis policy according to his individual academic assessment of what deficit spending, let alone in combination with spill-over effects from international rearmaments, would do to his personal lot. In this respect, key emphasis must be placed on the contextual-symbolic rather than 'real' economic impact of the crisis agreements.

Only with difficulty is it possible to discover any substantial impact of the *Kohandeln* upon the national economy. Rather, the statistical indicators presented in Table 18.4 confirm the well-known international pattern, but also show that unemployment lingered on after 1933 at a substantial level. Crucial to the popular reception, and eventually also elite interpretation, of the crisis agreements was the *novelty* and *contrast* of the Red–Green coalitions, as well as the *rhetoric* and *symbolism* accompanying them.

The worker–peasant alliance qualified as a political novelty in that it signalled pragmatic as well as ideological innovations. First, the combined number of Social Democratic and Agrarian seats in parliament meant that the cabinet could operate from a majority platform. This put a much longed for end to the executive instability of the 1920s, when bourgeois minority cabinets survived only on the basis of the alternating-majority formula, i.e., constant log-rolling with opposition parties to have legislation passed.

Second, the coalition was surprising in view of the long-standing antagonism between Social Democracy and the Agrarians over issues such as free trade vs. protectionism, government spending, and the defence budgets. In addition to the domestic record of Scandinavian parliamentarism the international situation also helped rationalize the Red–Green agreements as a healthy contrast to the fate inflicted upon other people in Europe.

Comparative references were indeed stepped up in the post-agreement rhetoric and symbolism, hinting toward covert and overt threats from both bordering

Table 18.5 Sweden: government composition, 1922–36

Year	Prime minister	Parties in government
1922	Branting (SD)	Social Democrats
1923	Trygger (Cons.)	Conservatives
1924	Branting II (SD) ^a	Social Democrats
1926	Ekman (Lib.)	Liberals
1928	Lindman (Cons.)	Conservatives
1930	Ekman II (Lib.)	Liberals
1932	Hamrin (Lib.)	Liberals
1932	Hansson (SD)	Social Democrats
1936	Pehrsson (Agr.) ^b	Agrarians
1936	Hansson II (SD)	Soc. Democr. + Agr.

Source: Berglund and Lindström (1978: 148).

Notes:

a Upon Branting's death, Sandler became PM.

b In office only over the summer of 1936.

countries and domestic Nazis and Communists. Per Albin Hansson returned to this argument of lumping together Bolshevism and Nazism as something alien to Swedish society at the 1937 Nordic Social Democratic Summit meeting. Responding to the ongoing negotiations in the International League of Trade Unions (IGB) on admitting the USSR, Hansson said: 'It is a fact that communism paves the way for fascism.' Hansson recommended that the Soviets should not be granted membership of the IGB.

Social Democracy soon developed the worker-peasant rhetoric into a blend of rationalism and nationalism: 'We made it through the Crisis' was a prominent catch-phrase in the 1936 campaign, subtly giving credit to the party itself as well as the nation as a people of reasonable Swedes fortunate to be living in the *Folkhem*. And the people responded gratefully, boosting the party's vote by nine percentage points between 1928 and 1936 (see Table 18.3).

Sweden experienced no severe problems in the crisis coalitions before the outbreak of the Second World War. This stability of the executive also drew on references to the turbulence of the European scene. For the remaining prewar years domestic politics was characterized by moderation: Social Democracy pacified rather than challenged its opposition. The party even came forward to have the defence budget substantially boosted. Another indicator of the domesticization of the *staatstragende* Social Democracy was that it withdrew from taking active part in European socialist forums, especially those requiring commitments to causes of international solidarity (for instance, boycotting the Berlin Olympics or supporting the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War), in favour of focusing more and more on issues of Nordic relevance.

5 Conclusions

It is the way coalitions of national consensus are rationalized in both historical and contemporary context that bears on the final consequences for the legitimacy of the regime. In the context of Sweden in the interwar years, this process of rationalization was based on a massive nationalist-populist rhetoric, a rhetoric that contained nothing that referred to intellectual innovations behind the agreements, nothing that excused the coalitions as unavoidable outcomes of historical macro-sociology.

However, with time the initial reception and interpretation of the coalition faded. People tend to forget, and what was considered a useful repertoire of symbolic outputs the moment the agreement was to be presented to the public soon needed additional references. In the case of Sweden, the ultimate argument for the government came from abroad rather than from the statistical records, which still left much to be wished for in terms of economic recovery.

But who cared to listen to conservative or communist criticism of social democracy for not really coming to grips with lingering unemployment? With Europe in a state of despair, criticism that drew on 'foreign' doctrines did not stand much of a chance of appealing to ordinary people. After all, capitalism had caused the crisis and paved the way for fascist regimes, whereas communism had

scorned the only concrete crisis-policy so far as 'social fascism', and was further discredited by the Moscow purges. The Great Depression was an international phenomenon and the survival of the democratic regime in Sweden was influenced also by events in the international political arena. Thus democracy in Sweden survived, in spite of the severe economic crisis. The specific solution found lasted longer than most others.

19

United Kingdom: Stability and Compromise

Jeremy Mitchell

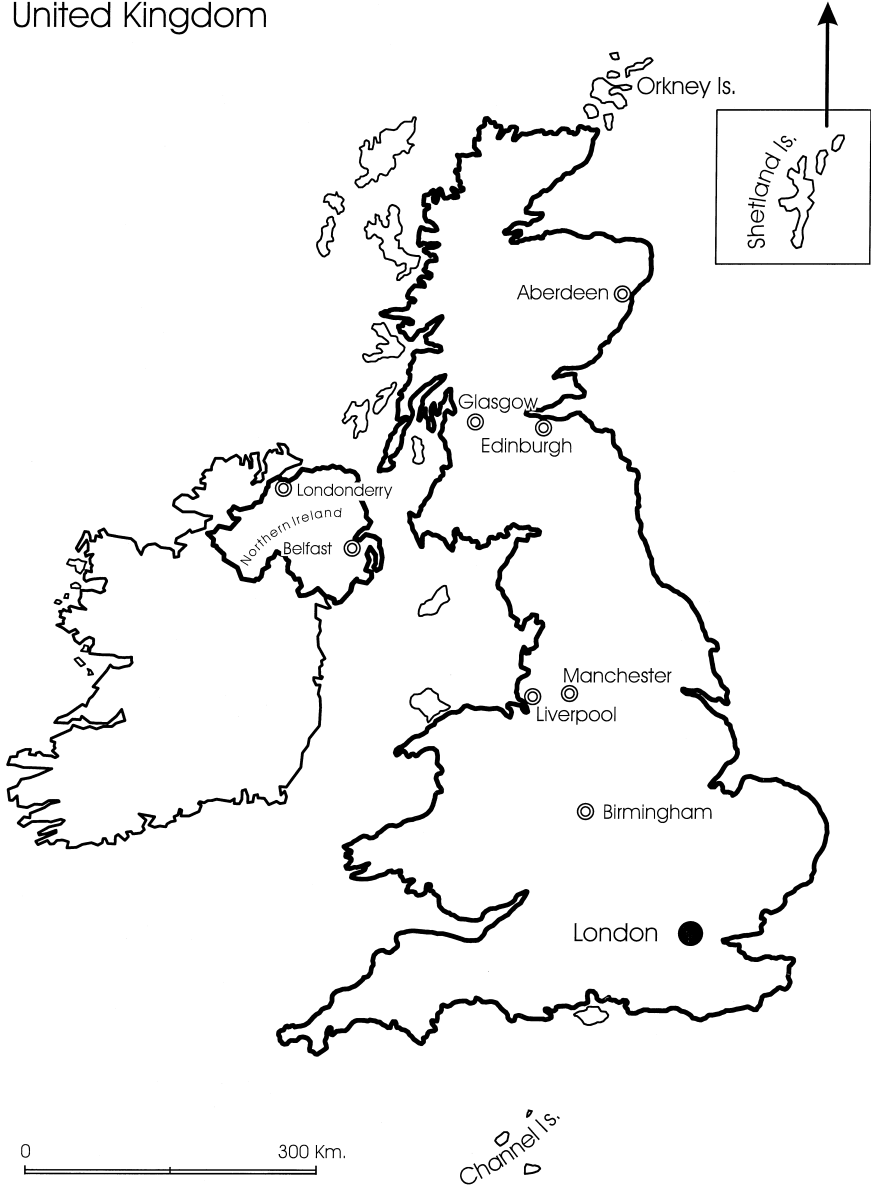
1 Introduction

Many European political systems faced similar problems in the interwar period – adaptation after the discontinuities caused by the conflict of 1914–18, accommodation to a newly structured international community, and the consequences of the disintegration of the European empires with the emergence of new polities such as Czechoslovakia and the Baltic states. There was also a need to revive world trade and adjust to the increasing dominance of the United States within the world economy. Apart from these general economic and political pressures, there were also social pressures and the emergence of new ideologies and new political movements.

All of these changes affected Britain, as did other domestic problems – the social changes brought by the war and the subsequent demobilization of the armed forces, the expansion of political participation, and mass unemployment and the impact of the economic crisis at the end of the 1920s. But for Britain the internal and the external problems were connected. The United Kingdom was still a key actor in the world economic order, and so national politics were linked to international changes, and, partly as a result, the UK was particularly affected by the depression that rippled outwards from the United States at the end of the 1920s bringing in its wake economic dislocation and mass unemployment. One consequence was the ‘political crisis’ of 1931 and the sudden change of government that followed. However, compared to other European systems, there was relatively little social unrest and political change occurred rapidly with minimal discontinuity. This stability, adaptation and crisis management reflected the institutional structure of politics in Britain, the perceptions of the actors involved and the influence of political culture; taken together these factors in part explain the different political response that took place in the UK compared to other stable democracies such as Sweden.

At the end of hostilities Britain emerged at the beginning of the 1920s seemingly in the same position as in 1914: a dominant world power, the centre of an extensive empire, a major industrial country occupying a key position within the world economy. Perhaps no longer *the* dominant world economic

United Kingdom



power but certainly one of the most important. The pound sterling was still the *de facto* world currency and London remained the major centre of financial and commodity exchange within the world system. The erosion of UK dominance and the consequences of economic decline began to be apparent in this period

and while it remained a major trading country the UK share of world exports fell between 1913 and 1937 from 30.2 per cent to 20.9 per cent (Mitchell 1962: 524). The consequences of these changes were not immediately apparent and so while the international role of sterling had internal consequences in the interwar period the impact of economic decline was more noticeable and politically important after 1945.

Domestically the political culture remained largely consensual although there were strains in this consensus. The 1920s saw the rise of the Labour Party, with its links to organized labour, and the decline of the Liberal Party. The Labour Party broadly accepted the rules of the political and parliamentary game as they found them. There was little extra-parliamentary mass political activity and political violence was still illegitimate. The traditional civility that was characterized by toleration, accommodation and compromise, seemed to survive the economic and social problems of the period.

However, there is another story that can be told. The end of the First World War in 1918 saw a major expansion of the suffrage and the incorporation of the majority of working-class men – and some women – into the political community. By 1928 women were enfranchised on the same terms as men, being incorporated into an existing structure of political relationships and institutions which remained, in the short term, unchanged in its fundamentals. At the same time the underlying social structure was itself changing. The war marked a major social divide in Britain. After men had been called up for military service women were recruited to take their place in factories. With demobilization at the end of the war many women lost their jobs as men returned to civilian employment. However, the prewar pattern of female employment was not re-established and the interwar period sees a major change in the structure of employment in the United Kingdom.

The major agencies of political mobilization were changing too. There was structural and organizational change within the Labour Party (McKibbin, 1975). It adopted a new party constitution, local party organizations were created and there was growth on the trade union side of the wider labour movement. All of this coincided with a realignment of political forces and the emergence of the Labour Party as the major political alternative to the Conservatives. Eventually it became a party of government, replacing the Liberal Party as one of the two major parties in an essentially two party system. So the interaction of long-term socioeconomic and political change influenced the subsequent emergence of a new party system – and a new political agenda shaped in part by the systemic response to the perceived social problems of the 1930s, in particular that of long-term mass unemployment.

There is a problem of effect here. Unemployment was high in Britain throughout much of this period (see Table 19.1). Indirectly it contributed to the problems of the Labour government of 1929–31, and the ‘crisis’ of 1931 which gave rise to the National coalition government of the early 1930s. But the economic crisis affected other European polities too. Some saw the rise of anti-system parties or social movements; in other cases, democracy was replaced by authoritarianism or fascism. In many polities there was violent social protest.

Why were the effects of the crisis different in the UK, and why was the British system able to 'manage' the crisis? – the change of government in 1931 was not accompanied by any of the social or political shocks found in several other European polities.

That the crisis was managed in the short run was due to the political institutions involved as well as the actors, their perceptions of the crisis, and its linkage to the wider political community. Political leaders in the UK were still relatively insulated from popular pressure. With majority support in the House of Commons they could, to some extent, distance government action from external criticism. Further, the structure of intermediate groups was relatively weak and this allowed political elites further autonomy. Institutional developments in the structure of government had increased the dominance of the executive over the legislature and given greater scope for crisis management in the short and medium term. All of which was further reinforced by the nature of social interactions within British society. Class was still the major basis of social differentiation in this period, and there was still considerable residual social deference that mediated inter-group hostility and helped to produce a relative tolerance of social and political leadership (see McKenzie and Silver 1968; Kavanagh 1973). All of which co-existed with latent regional differences and strong localized subcultures.

This does not mean that the problems affecting the political system had little impact on the wider political community; they did, but it does suggest that any crisis in the period could be accommodated largely within the political elite. In response to a perceived economic crisis the Labour prime minister, MacDonald, consulted with the leaders of the other major parties in the House of Commons and then formed a National government. This new administration was supported by the two parties which had formerly been in opposition – the Conservatives and the Liberals although it lacked the backing of most of MacDonald's own Labour Party, which had been a minority government since 1929. The National (coalition) government won a large majority at the subsequent election in October. This coalition was dominated by the Conservatives who effectively remained the sole party of government until the end of the decade and the formation of the emergency wartime coalition.

The point is not that the crisis was 'solved' by a change of government, rather it is that the change was rapid, caused not by internal pressures but by perceptions of external events held by the major actors, and that these political actors had relatively few direct links to the wider political community – there was almost no mass involvement with the unfolding processes of the crisis and crisis management. After MacDonald had reached an accommodation with the other party leaders in the coalition he was assured of majority support in the House of Commons. He was not vulnerable to a vote of no confidence and was in control of the electoral timetable. Mass involvement could be postponed until policy stability had been achieved.

Table 19.1 United Kingdom: economic and social indicators, 1913–39

	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
GDP (m. £)	2407	5348	5809	4980	4434	4247	4307	4542	4319	4553	4596	4690	4642	4302	4236	4262	4523	4719	4946	5259	5546	5865
NDP (m. £)	2291	5027	5374	4628	4120	3959	4024	4259	4036	4279	4312	4377	4351	4012	3953	3979	4241	4421	4629	4933	5176	5475
in 1938 prices	3436	3625	3345	3170	3472	3535	3571	3780	3647	3986	4042	4174	4322	4238	4297	4488	4712	4841	4960	5000	5176	5439
NDP/cap. (£)	50	113	116	108	93	89	90	95	89	94	95	96	95	87	85	86	91	94	98	104	109	115
NDP (m. US-\$)	11149	24463	26151	22521	20049	19266	19582	20726	19640	20823	20983	21397	21173	19524	19236	19363	20638	21514	22526	24005	25188	26643
NDP/cap. (US-\$)	244	549	563	526	452	432	436	460	434	459	460	468	462	424	415	416	442	459	478	508	530	558
Population (thousands)	45648	44599	46472	42814	44372	44596	44915	45059	45232	45389	45578	45672	45866	46074	46335	46520	46666	46869	47081	47289	47494	47762
England and Wales	36574	35427	37247	37932	38205	38449	38795	38935	39114	39286	39483	39600	39801	39988	40201	40350	40467	40645	40839	41031	41215	41460
Scotland	4728	4820	4864	4882	4898	4888	4862	4867	4864	4853	4848	4832	4828	4843	4883	4912	4934	4953	4966	4977	4993	5007
Ireland/Northern Ireland	4346	4352	4361	-1269	1269	1259	1258	1257	1254	1250	1247	1240	1237	1243	1251	1258	1265	1271	1276	1281	1286	1295
IND PROD (1913 = 100)	100	90	100	81	94	100	111	115	109	125	122	128	123	115	114	122	134	144	157	167	162	162
COST (1913 = 100)	100	208	241	219	178	168	169	169	166	161	160	158	151	142	138	133	135	137	140	148	150	151
Unemployment (%)	0.021	2.4	2.4	14.8	15.2	11.3	10.9	11.2	12.7	10.6	11.2	11.0	14.6	21.5	22.5	21.3	17.7	16.4	14.3	11.3	13.3	11.7
B. o. Trade (m. £)	134	134	376	276	179	211	336	394	463	386	351	382	386	406	286	258	258	258	258	258	258	258
B. o. P. (m. £)	235	-45	317	193	201	183	78	52	-18	98	124	96	36	-103	-51	-8	-22	23	-27	-47	-55	-250
Trade union members (m.)	3.4	6.5	7.9	8.3	6.6	5.6	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.2	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.9	5.3	5.8	6.1
Lost working days (millions)	34969	26568	85872	19850	10672	8424	7952	162266	1174	1388	8287	4399	6983	6488	1072	959	1955	1829	3413	1334	1334	1356
Crisis Indicators																						
Ind. Prod.	100	116	123	137	142	135	154	151	158	152	142	141	151	165	178	194	206	200				
Cost of Living	100	81	77	77	77	76	74	73	72	69	65	63	61	62	63	64	68	68	69			
Unemployment	100	103	76	74	76	86	72	76	74	99	145	152	144	120	111	97	76	90	79			
NDP	100	89	86	87	92	87	92	93	95	94	87	85	86	92	96	100	107	112	118			
Strikes	100	2.3	12	10	9	189	1	2	10	5	8	8	1	1	2	2	4	2	2			

Sources: Flora (ed.) (1983/1987: 79–88, 366–7); Mitchell (ed.) (1981: 168ff., 356, 744ff., 819ff); Statistisches Reichamt (1936: 120).

Note: £ (pound) is US\$4.8663; GDP and NDP are at current market prices.

Table 19.2 United Kingdom: electoral results, 1918–35

	14.12.1918		15.11.1922		6.12.1923		29.10.1924		30.05.1929		27.10.1931		14.11.1935	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Conservative Party	39.5	382	39.8	344	39.5	258	49.9	415	39.8	260	55.3	474	50.2	388
Liberal Party	13.3	36	19.3	62	30.8	158	19.1	44	24.4	59	6.3	32	6.9	21
Irish Nationalist Party	2.2	7												
Liberal Unionists														
Independent Labour Party														
Labour Party	22.5	61	30.7	142	31.8	191	34.5	151	38.5	287	1.5	5	0.7	4
United Ireland	4.7	73	0.7	3	0.7	3	0.3	1	0.1	3	29.1	47	39.6	154
Lloyd George Liberals	13.3	127	10.7	53							0.6	2	0.8	2
National Democratic and Labour Party	1.7	9									0.5	4		
Communist Party			0.2	1	0.3		0.3	1	0.2		0.3		0.1	1
Scottish National Party											0.1		0.1	
Plaid Cymru														
National Labour											1.6	13	1.6	8
National Liberal Party											3.7	35	4.1	33
Others	2.7	12	2.7	10	1.1	5	0.5	3	1.1	6	0.7	3	0.6	4
Seats total		707		615		615		615		615		615		615

Source: Mackie and Rose (1991: 438).

2 The social base of British politics

Recent analyses have interpreted Britain as a multinational state or discussed the emergence of 'late peripheral nationalisms against the state' (Linz 1979). But although these tendencies have deep historical roots and some contemporary relevance, they were not particularly salient in the interwar period and did not serve as the basis for mass anti-system protest. So what were the social bases of politics in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s? Some of the cleavages that were important for other European polities were absent – Britain was relatively linguistically homogeneous – nor, except in particular local circumstances, was religion a basis for political differentiation or mobilization. Britain had been the first modern industrialized nation and by the latter part of the nineteenth century was a predominantly urban society. Urban–rural differences certainly existed but were largely accommodated within the overarching structure of the existing party system. In the predominantly industrial society the agricultural sector was not important enough to serve as a focus for distinct political activity as it did in some other European polities. Regional differences did exist but with the 'settlement' of the Irish problem in 1922, they were not as visible as they had been over the previous half-century and the later pattern of relative economic decline had yet to feed the emergence of peripheral nationalism in Scotland and Wales.

The absence of other bases for political differentiation reinforces the earlier point – it was long-term social differences which were the primary basis for political mobilization. However, in terms of electoral behaviour the interwar period is confusing. Wald (1983) has argued that the late nineteenth-century party system was not a class-based one, but was primarily based on religion. However, the evidence for this is indirect and by the 1920s, and the final major expansion of the suffrage, religion no longer had the same importance for mass politics. Between 1945 and 1974 there was the stabilization of a mature class-based politics and an essentially two-party structure of political competition. So over the interwar period there was a transition from limited suffrage to mass suffrage with consequent changes in the party system, the rise of the Labour Party and the decline of the Liberals as an electoral and parliamentary party (see Table 19.2.). While the overall change was complex, the growth in trade union membership before 1920, and its developing linkage to the Labour Party, helped to bring about the electoral decline of the Liberals and their replacement as the alternative party of government by the Labour Party following the enfranchisement of the working-class electorate in 1918.

3 Intermediate structures

Britain may have been an urban society but it had a relatively low level of social pluralism and the intermediate organizations that did exist were, with a few exceptions, relatively weak. Where they existed the linkage to politics and political elites was often individual rather than organizational.

The class nature and divisions in society were mirrored by the basic business–labour dichotomy too. Reading ‘backwards’ from after 1945 one might expect to find a linkage between ‘business’ and the Conservative Party to parallel that between Labour and the trade unions. However, the post-1945 situation in part derived from the concentration and organization of industry, in such groups as the Federation of British Industry, as much as from ideological or political sympathy. In this period industry was both more fragmented and less organised. Political sympathy certainly existed but the linkage between the Conservative Party and business was less than it subsequently became.

The one major exception has already been mentioned – the trade unions. Membership of unions grew rapidly between 1914 and 1918. The growth continued after the war and peaked in 1920. Later membership declined but remained stable up to 1939 (see Table 19.1). And while not all unions had been affiliated to Labour before 1914, indeed some supported the Liberal Party, by the end of the 1920s this was no longer the case. Unemployment remained relatively stable at about 10 per cent of the registered workforce throughout much of the period and union activity fluctuated with some initial militancy in the face of deteriorating economic conditions. Such activity reached a peak with the General Strike of 1926 – ‘a class war in polite form’ (Taylor 1965: 312). The strike was short and without extensive mass violence, although reaction to it produced some anti-union legislation. The leadership of the trade union movement acted with caution during and after the strike, and during the economic problems later in the decade, and partly as a result the 1930s produced no significant repetition of mass action on the same scale.

It is this caution, the acceptance of legitimate authority, rejection of mass action and the high degree of apathy in the face of economic circumstances, as well as the late mobilization of the majority of the working class as members of the political community, that help to explain the non-emergence of broad anti-systemic social movements, such as a fascist party, in the 1930s.

3.1 Political parties

The Conservative and Liberal parties dominated the politics of the period between the Third and Fourth Reform Acts, (1885–1918), although there were other political actors such as the Liberal Unionists and the Irish Nationalists. The Labour Party emerged after 1900 and grew rapidly in both membership and representation in the 1920s. By 1923 Labour could form a minority government and although it was defeated within a year the party could again form an administration after the 1929 election.

The rise of the Labour Party was accompanied by the decline of the Liberals. The party had split during the war with a minority under Lloyd George forming a coalition with the Conservatives. However, the rise of the one party was not a mirror-image of the decline of the other. The use of single-member constituencies and plurality elections produced considerable change between successive elections, changes which exaggerated movement in party support. In the 1920s the Liberals suffered from conflict within their leadership, had

problems in party funding, in outlining a differentiated political programme, and suffered too from the decay of their organizational base (Cook 1975). In a party system that was primarily based on the dominant class cleavage they lacked a distinctive social or electoral base. As economic problems became all important for politics and government, it was difficult for many Liberal politicians to adjust the nature of their programme which was based on ideas of free trade and a relatively small and neutral state. There were attempts to include a more activist economic role for government in the party programme but such ideas never commanded majority support within the party.

Of the major parties the Conservatives were least affected by the changes in the party system. They ended the war in a coalition with the Lloyd George Liberals and, except for the brief interludes of Labour minority administrations, they had a role in government throughout the interwar period. The party had links to business and finance; it was closely identified with many of the other leading elites – the church, the universities, the House of Lords and the press. Its values were those of the middle classes, although it still gained a substantial segment of its support from the working class. Its policies were relatively unprogrammatically but, like the other parties, it was committed to orthodox limits to government action such as the need for a balanced budget.

4 Dynamic factors

Economic problems in the late summer of 1931 fed into a major crisis which was resolved by a change from the Labour government to a National government. The ‘crisis’ was resolved quickly and produced few parallels to the policy responses found in Sweden or the United States where in both there was an increase in the role of government. But although economic problems, high unemployment and the repercussions of the world depression underlay the crisis, in Britain its causes were primarily political.

The central problem was the position of Britain in the world economy. In the late nineteenth century the UK had been a hegemonic power within the world system. By the 1930s this was no longer the case. The pound sterling was still central to the world economy and aspects of the world economic system such as commodity and financial markets were still centred in London. However, UK economic dominance had been narrowly based and even at the height of British ‘supremacy’ its hegemony was based on manufacturing production only; other countries had greater gross national products or spent more on military expenditure (see Table 19.3).

More importantly, trade was central to British pre-eminence. In 1913 Britain accounted for 30 per cent of world trade, but by the end of the 1920s the UK share had fallen to around 22 per cent. This fragile economic position was directly linked to the international economic environment via mechanisms such as the gold standard which maintained a high value for sterling. This caused problems in Britain’s trading relations and contributed to the steady erosion of its competitiveness and market share, leading to a further deterioration in the overall economic

Table 19.3 Four leading powers indexed to hegemon, 1830–1950^a

Year	Largest	2nd largest	3rd largest	4th largest
<i>GNP</i>				
1830	Russia 132	France 105	<i>UK 100</i>	A-H 87
1870	USA 117	Russia 117	<i>UK 100</i>	France 86
1913	USA 306	Russia 123	Germany 113	<i>UK 100</i>
1938	USA 100	Germany 27	USSR 37	UK 27
1950	USA 100	USSR 29	UK 19	France 13
<i>Military Expenditure</i>				
1830	France 148	<i>UK 100</i>	Russia 92	A.H. 54
1872 ^b	Russia 127	France 119	<i>UK 100</i>	Germany 68
1913	Germany 129	Russia 125	<i>UK 100</i>	France 99
1938 ^c	Germany 657	USSR 481	UK 161	Japan 154
1950	USSR 106	USA 100	China 18	UK 16
<i>Manufacturing production</i>				
1830	China 319	India 185	<i>UK 100</i>	Russia 59
1870	<i>UK 100</i>	China 75	USA 51	France 37
1913	USA 235	Germany 109	<i>UK 100</i>	Russia 26
1938	USA 100	Germany 40	UK 34	USSR 29
1953	USA 100	USSR 24	UK 19	W.Germany 13

Source: Mitchell (1991).

Notes:

a 'Hegemon' at the time is in italics; there was no hegemon in 1938 but the USA values have been used as a base (100).

b USA ranked fifth.

c 1872 data used.

position. Britain had run a deficit on the balance of payments throughout much of the nineteenth century although public awareness of this only surfaced with the publication of the Macmillan committee report in 1931. The UK economy was probably more dependent on the world economy and world trade than were other leading nations, in 1870 Britain accounted for 24 per cent of world trade, by 1913 this had fallen to 14.1 per cent by 1938 (Keohane 1984). The role of sterling in the international economy, and the UK's increasing problem with servicing her overseas financial commitments also constrained the funding of government spending, and its overall policy options; it was to some extent dependent upon the actions of financial markets outside of the UK. This was particularly the case when the government decided to use foreign loans to solve the domestic problem of government finance (as in 1931).

The depression at the end of the 1920s had a relatively small effect on those who were in work. Real wages rose, as did the number of those out of work (see Table 19.1). This in turn influenced government finance – tax revenue fell and unemployment payments increased. The prevailing economic orthodoxy rested on the maintenance of the gold standard and the value of the pound together with a balanced budget. So a reduction in government spending was

needed to balance the Labour budget in 1931. One part of a solution was to raise loans from foreign bankers but the price of such loans was a reduction in government spending through reducing unemployment benefit. Thus there was a direct link between domestic policy and the international economic environment. But to many in the Labour Cabinet a reduction in the payment of unemployment benefit was unacceptable, and so this economic action initiated a political crisis.

5 The politics of the crisis

The election of 1929 had brought to power a minority Labour government and exposed the weakness of the Liberal position both in terms of its electoral support and its influence in the three-party system. In policy terms there was disagreement over how to meet the challenge of large-scale unemployment. Both major parties, Labour and Conservative, followed orthodox economic ideas and rejected proposals such as an expanded public works programme. As a consequence of the world depression there was an outflow of gold and foreign exchange from London, together with a deficit on the balance of payments, an increase in unemployment – and a deficit on the insurance fund. The suggested solution to this problem was to try and balance the budget through a cut in unemployment benefits. This produced a split in the Labour government. Some members of the Cabinet could not accept these policy proposals, which were backed by the financial community. To the trade unions and others the cuts were simply unacceptable.

The crisis period was short. The May Report, which recommended large cuts in government expenditure, was published on the 24 July 1931. Over the following few days the Cabinet considered various options. Eventually it was decided that cuts had to be made and about half of the cabinet resigned rather than accept such a course of action. Over the same period MacDonald, the Prime Minister, held discussions with the leaders of the other two main parties. After the resignation of his colleagues a new administration – a National Government – was formed, led by MacDonald and backed by the Liberals and the Conservatives plus a small fragment of the Labour Party. It was a majority coalition in the House of Commons and so was able to pass a revised budget, confirm the cuts in unemployment benefits and secure the loans from international bankers.

After this rapid resolution of the 'crisis' Britain left the gold standard and there was a fall in the value of sterling. There were few other direct effects. A general election was held in October at which the National government gained overwhelming support (see Thorpe 1991). The Labour representation in the House of Commons was much reduced and the election effectively brought an end to the three-party politics and political instability which had characterized much of the 1920s. The Conservative Party were confirmed as the dominant political force throughout the decade. Unemployment remained high and no major initiative was taken to combat it. The adjustments that did occur were cautious, incremental and low

key – consistent with the overall nature of British political culture. It was, as one commentator has noted, a ‘turning point where Britain failed to turn’.

6 Some conclusions

Britain was a stable democracy which, superficially, survived and adapted to the interwar crisis. The social and political problems which resulted from the linkage of the UK to the global economy did not produce widespread or permanent social instability, or repressive actions from the state. A range of responses which did take place in other European polities – the growth of a mass fascist movement, emergency political measures or a change in the constitution – did not occur in the United Kingdom.

Overall there was no reorientation of government policy towards a wider acceptance of social or political responsibilities and a more activist role for the state, at least not in the short term. There was no equivalent to the New Deal nor was there a programme of public works through which the government might have revived the economy by increased public spending. There was a continued adherence to orthodox economic policy with its emphasis on the importance of a balanced budget, sound money and a relatively limited role for the state. It is possible to argue that economic policy gradually changed with, for example, increased spending on defence and rearmament in the late 1930s. But even if this was significant it was the result of other policy imperatives and not a change that was introduced for its wider socioeconomic effects. There are several reasons for this. First, one can point to the influence of the business sector on financial policy, the close links between it and the Conservative Party. There was only a limited discussion of new ideas on economic management and the potential increased role of government, such as in the contribution that Keynes made to the Liberal Party programme for the 1929 election. This was before the theoretical expression of many of his key ideas and so in advance of any broad appreciation of their political consequences. The consensus amongst traditional elites did not at this stage favour a reorientation of the role of the state, the political culture was still resistant to sudden and dramatic shifts in policy.

There was also a general absence of what in the nineteenth century would have been called ‘pressure from without’. There was no broadly based anti-government or anti-system social movement. There was some protest, such as the hunger marches from areas which had been severely affected by the world economic crisis. But this did not evolve into a more widely based opposition to the system in general. As noted earlier, the structure of intermediate groups was relatively weak both in the sense that such groups were not particularly developed nor did they have the specific linkages to either political parties or to government that they would have later. The major exception was the trade union movement which continued to have both extensive membership and substantial resources. After the General Strike of 1926, and the subsequent legislative response by government, the movement was cautious in its approach to the mobilization of its members for wider political purposes.

The overall result of this can be seen in the systemic response to the development of a British fascist movement. Mosley, its leader, wished to change the scope of state activity and many of his policy ideas were outside the accepted political orthodoxy. In addition the party's mode of activity, as well as Mosley's style of leadership and political action, were perceived as 'foreign' and illegitimate, being modelled on that of other European fascist movements. The use of public violence for political purposes and his attempts to create a uniformed paramilitary organization directly influenced the passage of the Public Order Act of 1936 with its restrictions on public meetings and marches.

To this one could add the role of the mass media. After 1931 the press mainly supported the government of the day, or rather was broadly sympathetic to the Conservative Party. The potentially important medium of radio had been brought under non-commercial control in the early 1920s through the creation of the BBC via the idea of public service broadcasting. This involved an 'arm's length' relationship between the state and the broadcasters which in turn meant that the BBC was neutral on political and social issues – although apolitical is probably a more accurate description. So while the level of radio penetration may have been important in Britain in the 1930s, it could not be used as a mechanism for political mobilization. Perhaps the emphasis should be reversed: because the medium could not be used for explicit political purposes it was used implicitly to support the status quo.

There are other reasons for the weakness of anti-system forces in the United Kingdom. By the end of the 1920s the process of political mobilization was relatively advanced. The process had been slow and incremental, but by this period the pattern of the relationship between the party system and social structure was clear and well established. Because fascism was a latecomer, and because of the absence of major, potentially relevant, social differences – other than those within the class system – there was simply no available social base for fascism, no available significant electoral or other constituency. This was reinforced by the incompatibility between many of the key aspects of its more extreme appeal and the behavioral norms of the dominant political culture. Although fascism appealed to some of those within the traditional 'upper classes' it was rejected by a majority within the ruling elites. Because they did not see their own position as under threat there was no incentive for such elites to consider alternative modes of political action. In Linz's (1980) terms, there was no available political space, and this restricted the set of opportunities available for political entrepreneurs. Any change had to be sought within the existing structure of the party system rather than outside it. To say that Mosley failed because suitable conditions for his success just did not exist is both a truism and an explanation for the failure of fascism in Britain.

What was particularly influential and constraining in the British case was the linkage that existed to the international economic system and the influence that this gave to external actors during the expenditure crisis of 1931. It was assumed that foreign loans were essential to the overall finances of government. Such loans were dependent upon maintaining orthodox economic policy, in

particular reducing public expenditure. As a result economic policy was constrained in one particular direction – the one favoured by MacDonald and the chancellor of the Exchequer, Snowden. It was this external imperative that shaped both their perception of events and the actions that they recommended to their colleagues in the government.

This is not the complete story. The government that held office between 1929 and 1931 was a minority one. The prime minister saw the economic crisis as so severe that it needed a National government rather than a party-based administration. He tried to obtain widespread support and talked to leaders of the other two main parties in the House of Commons. Superficially this eventually produced the same solution that one finds in other European systems – a national coalition backed by the opposition parties. But in Britain the policies of the National government split the Labour Party – the previous government – and only a small fragment of the party supported the prime minister in the new political coalition. This transition was reinforced by three institutional aspects of British politics. First the majoritarian working of the parliamentary system – a government coalition with a majority in the House of Commons could survive and govern, and the National government was a majority coalition (see Kavanagh 1973). Second, the government was in control of the election agenda and could dissolve Parliament and call a new election late in 1931 secure in the knowledge that the opposition – now the Labour Party – would not have an alternative programme, and that the government itself had the advantage of being perceived as a national government rather than as a partisan, party-based one. The new government had ‘solved’ the crisis; Britain had left the gold standard with few direct immediate effects; the financial crisis had been resolved; and unemployment benefit had been reduced with no increase in civil unrest. Lastly, the government was helped too by the relationship between it and the political community, a relationship which gave leading political actors substantial autonomy.

In the UK there were other, longer-term consequences of the world economic crisis and the political reactions to it, but these lie outside the period of this chapter. The Labour Party remained in opposition throughout the 1930s and next participated in government as a member of the wartime coalition. The war brought several changes in the scope of government and turned the state into a mobilizing and active one. Afterwards administrations could incorporate the new ideas fostered by Keynes, Beveridge and others into governmental policy-making and as a result policy after 1945 was much more interventionist than before. War revived full employment and produced economic recovery, at least in the sense of a fuller utilization of the UK’s productive capacity.

The changes that came after the world economic crisis affected all political systems in Europe and other polities also arrived at a similar postwar role for government but by a different route. Where the United Kingdom may have had an advantage in containing the crisis is that it had a stable political order – one with established modes of accommodation and a deeply rooted political culture. Its institutional structure was seen as legitimate, it had a long tradition of politics

by incremental adaptation. To some extent the experiences of the 1920s confirm the capabilities of the existing political order and the managing abilities of existing political elites. But they also underscore long-term trends such as the shift in power from legislature to executive and the relative insulation of leading political actors from the wider political community – an insulation which allowed for great independent freedom of action.

Unlike some other European polities in this period, Britain is characterized by continuity and stability at one level. There is little in the way of a non-democratic challenge to the existing order. There is no mass extremist success either on the right or on the left. There is no large-scale social mobilization or civil unrest and because of this no widespread use of police powers or suspension of civil liberties; the form of the existing democratic order survived, the delayed changes to its substance occurred after 1945.

20

Conclusions and Perspectives

Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Jeremy Mitchell

The case-studies presented in this volume have provided a wealth of detailed information, but also a framework and point of reference for further systematic comparative analyses. The particular circumstances of each case have been presented and some of the hypotheses discussed in the beginning could be confirmed or rejected. It turned out, and this was really not surprising, that no single sweeping explanation could account for the multitude of cases analysed. In a number of instances – such as in the Netherlands or the United Kingdom – it could be shown that the survival of democratic institutions and procedures, in spite of a severe impact of the Great Depression, had always been a likely outcome. A broader social and political consensus, the relatively well-functioning democratic feedback mechanisms, responsible and capable actors and timely policies ensured a relatively smooth weathering of the crisis.

At the other extreme, it has been made clear that in cases like Hungary or Romania, for example, the newly established formal democratic institutions never represented much more than a mere ‘façade democracy’. Real political power in these cases remained in the hands of (or were again usurped by) non-democratically appointed personalities such as Admiral Horthy in Hungary or King Carol II in Romania and the groups and strata supporting them. For both extremes, the well-established and the merely superficial democracies, it can be argued that the underlying general socioeconomic, social structural and political cultural conditions accounted for the survivals on the one hand and the break-downs on the other. This is broadly in line with the reasoning of ‘modernization theorists’ like Lipset or Vanhanen or more orthodox Marxist authors.

In a number of instances, however, the outcome was much less pre-determined and clear-cut. In a largely rural, Catholic and relatively poor country like Ireland the democratic institutions survived whereas under similar circumstances, at least as these aspects are concerned, the postwar democracies in Poland and Portugal collapsed at a relatively early stage. Equally, for cases such as Finland and Estonia, which at the outset also apparently faced very similar conditions and circumstances, the final results were strikingly different. For cases such as these, therefore, more fine-tuned cross-cutting analyses of the major conditions and actors and their interactions at critical conjunctions in time are called for.

These cover, again, the broader social structural and political cultural conditions of each case, the particular role of important intermediary institutions such as interest groups and parties, the role of social movements and militias, the particular party systems and electoral laws, specific institutional set-ups concerning the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government, the role of the bureaucracy and the military, specific external factors and interventions, etc. All these aspects will be discussed and dealt with, step by step, in the cross-cutting analytical chapters of the second volume. In this way, a lot of the still existing (and often referred to) 'theoretical underbrush' of single-factor explanations can be systematically explored and cleared, at least for the cases and period covered.

In addition, then, some comprehensive analyses are called for which take into account the interactions of such factors and their possibly much more complex patterns. In this regard, structure- and actor-related aspects must be brought into line within a coherent overarching framework which allows one to assess their respective weight, but also possible changes over time and their relative impact and room for manoeuvre at critical conjunctures. These will be based on both some well-established and, in part, also newly developed systematic comparative procedures, such as 'most different' and 'most similar systems designs', which can be fully operationalized with our data sets, but also 'Qualitative Comparative Analysis' and some combinations of macroquantitative and macroqualitative techniques which represent recent advance in these fields and which enhance our general understanding of important historical and macropolitical phenomena (for a brief overview see also Ragin, Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 1996).

From these cross-cutting analyses and comprehensive systematic comparisons, a number of conclusions will be drawn which refer to the more general theories of authoritarianism, fascism and democracy discussed in the first chapter of this volume. Furthermore, the more specific implications for comparative historical analysis, comparative macropolitical methodology, crisis theory and some particular aspects like continuing forms of right-wing extremism will also be discussed. From all these findings and reflections, some tentative conclusions concerning the more general prospects of democracy in the modern world may then be drawn. These, of course, will be nothing but a small step in the vast research agenda presented to us by de Tocqueville and his successors.

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