

LONG -WAVE ECONOMICS and the CHANGING FORTUNES
of the POLITICAL and SOCIAL MOVEMENTS of the
LEFT and RIGHT

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Ph.D. Thesis

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ABSTRACT

A number of writers working in the fields of history and industrial relations have claimed a correlation between long-wave economics and the changing fortunes of political and social movements of the left and right. They have suggested both particular patterns of development and causations but often on the basis of piecemeal evidence, lacking a comprehensive theoretical and empirical basis.

This thesis tests the validity of such a correlation through a comparative historical analysis of the domestic political histories of Britain, France, Germany and the USA over the four long-waves that have occurred in modern times; those of 1803-1848, 1848-1896, 1896-1948 and 1948-1998. It finds, that since industrialization, there has been a distinct and repeating pattern of political and social development that can be correlated with long-wave economics. Common ground is found with existing theoretical patterns, though also notable areas of difference, and this thesis provides a more comprehensive pattern of development.

The thesis proceeds to explore possible causations for the pattern found. It does so by using existing political science theories explaining political change; those concerning voting behaviour, class struggle and party competition. It finds that aspects of these theories can be used to explain the pattern of development found. Above all, populations experiencing the different economic phases of the long-wave undergo significant motivational changes that are reflected in the shifting fortunes of the left and right.

The thesis concludes by analyzing these findings and highlighting advances made on existing accounts. It also discusses those events within modern history that could be regarded as anomalous, with the intention of further understanding this process. Finally, it discusses the implications of the findings of this thesis for long-wave and political science theory.

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GLOSSARY

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CHAPTER ONE

LONG-WAVE ECONOMICS AND THE LEFT AND RIGHT

1.1 The Last Fifty Years

Within liberal democracies, the political changes of the last fifty years appear to have turned full circle. The post-war era began with a period of political consensus, the proclamation of the 'end of ideology', and the construction and establishment of a 'middle way' between collectivist and class-struggle Socialism and Communism on the left, and laissez-faire Conservatism and Fascism on the right. The mid-1990s have now seen what appears to be the emergence of a new political consensus, that also seeks a 'third way', though this time between redistributive social democracy and the neo-liberalism of the New Right, and once again predictions that the old left-right dichotomy is no longer applicable to the politics of liberal democracies.

The period immediately after WW2 saw gradual, but progressive social change based upon the mixed economy and redistributive social democracy that came to represent the 'middle way'. Much of this was carried out by the parties of the centre-left, often in government in the late 1940s and establishing the basis of a society characterised by the welfare state, full employment and Keynesian demand management. By the 1950s though, it was mostly parties of the right that had occupied government, and this decade was renowned for its political conservatism, and little in the way of political change occurred. It was this phenomenon that gave rise to many political scientists proclaiming that a political consensus had arisen.

This consensus politics was perceived as variously occurring at intellectual, electoral, elite and party levels. Differences between left and right parties were believed to be minimal as both competed for the centre ground of the political spectrum. Ironically, such a tendency often resulted in the squeezing out of centre parties at a time when centre-politics, consensus and conformity were seen as being in the political ascendant. The differences between the major parties were considered so minimal, that Bell declared the

'End of Ideology', whilst Lipset maintained that the ideological differences of the early 20th Century had been replaced by 'conservative socialism'.¹ Others such as Schlesinger, Aron and Shils sought or described a 'third way' based upon pragmatism and moderation - a new radicalism of the centre.² The left-right dichotomy was, according to these theories, a feature of the past.

However, this belief was challenged when the consensus was attacked by the intellectuals of the New Left in the early 1960s. In fact the rise of the New Left presaged a general leftward drift in the political spectrum throughout the following decade. Through to the mid-1970s most liberal democracies saw a gradual increase in the percentage vote of the left, with these electoral gains often resulting in left-wing governments. The electoral success of the left markedly improved on their performance in the 1950s.³

The rise of the New Left, and the improved electoral position of the left in general, was accompanied by a period of political unrest. The late 1960s and early 1970s were characterized by militant student and youth revolts, civil rights movements and opposition to the Vietnam War. This period also saw the rise of 'post-materialist' left politics; the appearance of radical political movements devoted to the equality of women, gays and ethnic minorities, and protection of the environment. It also saw increased support for left-wing nationalist movements in the developing world as part of a wider support for internationalism.⁴

Finally this period was accompanied by a concerted period of trade-union militancy and a proliferation of radical left movements advocating socialism and revolution. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a wave of strike activity, almost entirely organized by rank-and-file movements and which included factory occupations. This movement also raised the notion of industrial democracy and an increased level of worker participation in the running of the workplace.

However, this challenge to the social democratic consensus from the left began to falter during the 1970s. The percentage of the vote gained by the left stopped increasing and either remained stable or began to decline.⁵ The level of industrial militancy also declined, albeit erratically, throughout the course of the decade. The movement for

industrial democracy reached its peak in the mid-1970s and thereafter went on the defensive.⁶

The stalling of the left challenge coincided with the rise of the New Right and its intellectual associates - monetarism, neo-liberalism and social conservatism. In addition the 1970s and 1980s saw the re-emergence of the far right and neo-Nazi groups, in addition to a rise in right-wing religious fundamentalism. The latter largely remained as fringe groups but the New Right proceeded to ideologically and electorally dominate the 1980s through to much of the 1990s. This domination was largely associated with economic factors, the fight against inflation, the reduction of the public sector and the need for balanced budgets. More generally it replaced the previous dominance of Keynesian social democracy and the mixed economy with neo-liberalism and the importance of market economics.

At the same time the left experienced electoral and ideological crisis. Levels of electoral support fell away whilst the labour movement experienced a decline in both numbers and militancy. By the end of the century the radical and revolutionary left had all but disappeared whilst the centre left had often found it necessary to accommodate itself to the new realities introduced by the right. Out of this development emerged the 'third way' an attempt by the parties of the centre left to establish a middle way between redistributive social democracy and neo-liberalism. The politics of the developed world appeared to have turned full circle. Once again political commentators were talking about the 'end of ideology' and the end of the left and right as useful political terms.⁷

In brief, the politics of Western liberal democracies appear to have turned full circle in the last fifty years, with a major swing to the left and then to the right during the course of this cycle. Why should this be so? Most of the accepted theories of political change tend to regard developments as following a more linear course. One set of developments simply follows another, the causation may be party competition, changing views within electorates, class structure, or of an economic, structural or technical nature, but all share a generally linear pattern. Whilst cyclical theories, such as those of Toynbee or Spengler, are relatively common in the field of International Relations, there are very few within Comparative Politics. The best known is probably that of Schlesinger.⁸ Schlesinger has

described American politics as going through a thirty-year cycle of alternating phases of 'public action' and 'private good'. These are driven by human desire and inter-generational conflict. However, the duration of Schlesinger's cycle is not contingent with the cycle described above, and his phases only partially coincide with the changes described above.⁹ Although his work may be of theoretical use, it is not based upon the changes noted over the fifty-year period.

Given the international nature of these changes and developments and the singular nature of the pattern it is possible that these political changes have a common cause, and that they are the expression of a shared and cyclical phenomena that pervades modern society. Their occurrence over a fifty year period offers the possibility that they are linked to a phenomena identified with the field of economics, that of long-wave economics. Long-waves are also seen as occurring on an approximately fifty year basis, and are seen as essentially wave-like or cyclical in nature. Most long-wave researchers identify a fourth long-wave as starting in 1940/48. The initial phase of this wave, the upswing, came to an end in 1973, whilst the downswing was expected to end at some point in the mid-late 1990s.¹⁰

As such this wave is coincidental with the cyclical pattern described above and thus offers one possible explanation for the pattern of political development. Indeed, a small number of researchers, notably in the field of labour history, but also elsewhere, have claimed that both social and political changes can be linked to fluctuations within the long-wave. It is the intention of this thesis to investigate such a connection, but on a more systematic and comprehensive level, than has previously been the case.

1.2 Introduction to Long-Wave Economics

The study of long-wave economics dates back to the period prior to World War One, though it was only with the work of the Russian economist, N.D. Kondratieff in the 1920s, that the study of long-waves became more widely known.¹¹ Initially most studies were largely concerned with long-term changes in price movements. However, in an attempt to explain these movements, economists who contributed to long-wave theory also found it necessary to incorporate a variety of other economic phenomena. Product

innovation, capital accumulation, economic growth rates and profit levels, amongst others, have all been incorporated into the various theories that attempt to describe and explain long-waves. As with other areas within the field of economics, attempts to explain the existence of long-waves in the world economy have given rise to a number of competing theories.

Goldstein has identified three main schools of thought within long-wave research.¹² These he identifies as the 'capital investment' school, taking its lead from the work of Kondratieff, the 'innovation' school, derived from the work of Schumpeter, and the 'capitalist crisis' school based on the work of Trotsky. Despite differences of opinion in these three schools of thought, notably on the question of causation, there is, however, a certain level of agreement within these theories as to what constitutes a long-wave.

Long-waves are considered to last approximately fifty years and are a feature of the world economy. They consist of two main phases - an upswing of approximately 25 years duration, and a downswing also of a 25-year duration. Upswings are characterised by a generally favourable economic climate and prolonged periods of economic boom and prosperity. Downswings are usually characterised as periods of economic malaise, they witness a slowing of economic growth or economic contraction, and often experience protracted periods of depression. Goldstein's definition is typical:

"Long waves are defined by alternating economic phases – an *expansion phase (upswing)* and a *stagnation phase (downswing)*. These economic phase periods are not uniform in length or quality. The transition point from an expansion phase to a stagnation phase is called a *peak*, and that from stagnation to expansion is a *trough*. The long wave, which repeats roughly every fifty years, is synchronous across national borders, indicating that the alternating phases are a systemic-level phenomenon."¹³

Most researchers, following the lead of Kondratieff, maintain that long-waves are a feature of the industrial/post-industrial era, though some researchers have noted the existence of long-waves within agrarian societies.¹⁴ Given that long-waves are a feature of the international economy, it is also maintained that the dates for each long-wave are approximately the same across the various industrialised economies of the world. The dates provided by long-wave researchers for each long-wave are mostly similar though some differences are evident. After reviewing thirty-three long-wave researchers, and

using dates given by Kondratieff (1790-1917) and Mandel (1917 onwards) Goldstein arrived at the following average dates used by long-wave researchers for the industrial/post-industrial era:¹⁵

Figure 1. Averages of the dates used by long-wave researchers (Goldstein 1988).

Long-Wave	Upswing	Downswing
First	1790-1814	1814-1848
Second	1848-1872	1872-1893
Third	1893-1917	1917-1940
Fourth	1940-1968	

Much of the original research carried out on long-waves concerned the long-term movement of world commodity prices. Rising prices were associated with upswings and falling prices with downswings in the long-wave. However, much of the modern research on long-waves has been carried out since the beginning of the world economic crisis in 1973. Given that the post-1973 crisis was beset by periodically high levels of inflation, the association with prices has proved more complex than originally thought. As a result, recent researchers have formulated long-waves on the basis of empirical data other than price movements. Although price movements are still considered of importance within long-wave research, the original simplistic association between price movements and long-waves is now considered by some authorities to be only one amongst several aspects of long-waves.¹⁶

For instance, amongst recent developments are the neo-Schumpeterian explanations of Tylecote and Perez. Perez believes that certain types of economic change – ‘techno-economic paradigms’ – are accompanied by major structural crises of adjustment. As such, social and institutional changes are necessary to bring a better ‘match’ between the new technologies and systems of social management or ‘regime of regulation’. A good ‘match’ results in a stable pattern of long term investment behaviour over 2 or 3 decades. According to Tylecote, this process is also subject to monetary, population and inequality feedback processes.¹⁷

1.3 Long-Wave Research and the Left and Right

In addition to economists, long-wave cycles have increasingly attracted attention from those studying in the field of industrial relations, labour history, political history and sociology. Over the years, a number of articles and books have attributed changes in political developments to changes in the long-wave as well as changing social attitudes, and also the level of support and influence enjoyed by the political movements of the left and right. Closely associated with this have been attempts to link changes in trade-union membership, industrial relations developments and levels of worker mobilisation to long-wave fluctuations. The occurrence of left-wing uprisings and proletarian insurgencies have also been explained by changes in long-wave economics. In addition, the extension of long-waves into the field of industrial relations has also given rise to alternative causal explanations for long-waves; linking the activity of organized labour, and levels of worker mobilisation to changes in the long-wave in a similar manner to some theories of the short-term business cycle.¹⁸

The first debate concerning these matters came between Kondratieff and Trotsky over the occurrence of revolution. Whereas Kondratieff maintained that revolutions were more likely during long-wave upswings, Trotsky, following classic Marxist theory, insisted that revolutions came with economic crisis and the breakdown of capitalism and thus could only arise in downswings. However, the debate was cut short as both became victims of Stalin in the 1930s.¹⁹

In later years, the first author to note a specific link between long-waves and the changing fortunes of social and political movements was Hans Rosenberg (1943) who linked the profound changes of the 1870s and 1880s in Central Europe to the onset of the Great Depression of 1873-96, the second long-wave downswing.²⁰ Rosenberg believed that the prosperous period of 1848-1873 (the second long-wave upswing) had given rise to a period dominated by Liberalism, a belief in freedom, the emancipation of the Jews, and to a well-ordered political process. By contrast, in the Great Depression “Instead of controversies about political freedom, the fight for economic security became the focus of public discord. () In an era loaded with tension, violent competition and nationalistic emotionalism....”²¹

According to Rosenberg the political losers in this new climate were the centre-left, the Liberals and associated Jewish groups. In a search for scapegoats amidst economic insecurity and political tension, it was the far-right anti-Semitic and Social Christian parties, together with the Conservatives and right-wing Centre Party who were the main beneficiaries of the economic depression. Political parties and ideologies were transformed to take account of the new economic reality as policies changed, notably those in favour of protectionism, to attract fearful voters.

A second beneficiary of the Great Depression, according to Rosenberg, were the Socialists, although both the party and its labour wing were to be proscribed and driven underground for much of the period, whilst Bismarck attempted unsuccessfully to split the labour wing from the political party through the introduction of social welfare. He maintains, there was an increased level of support for the Socialists during the 1870s and in the 1890s, whilst their ideological outlook hardened with the Gotha Programme of 1875 and the Erfurt Programme of 1891. He believes it was higher levels of unemployment and sense of economic crisis that proved beneficial for the socialist left, and that also increased its militancy. By contrast, in the more prosperous period from 1896 onwards, he believes the Social Democrats adopted a more levelheaded revisionism.

In terms of causation, he gave two main reasons for the change in the fortunes of political and social movements: firstly, the new psychological political climate caused by economic difficulties and antagonisms created a changed situation. Voters demanded economic security and were ready to find scapegoats amidst a period characterised by despondency, gloom, and pessimism. Secondly, he also believes that economic depression led to structural changes, labour became more concentrated and industrialised, benefiting the Socialists, whilst a shift from 'small' to 'big' capitalism to counter the depression, created insecurity amongst peasants, farmers and artisans who looked to the state to protect their interests. It was the Great Depression that gave rise to nationalism, state intervention in the economy and protectionism.

Rosenberg said little about the fortunes of the labour movement other than in relation to its political associate, the Socialists. However, an attempt by Dunlop (1948) to explain short-run variations in trade union membership in the USA linked its fortunes specifically

to long-waves.²² According to Dunlop, the American labour movement between 1827 and 1945 had experienced seven major periods of rapid expansion in organization. He classified these into two types. Firstly, those occurring in 'wartime';

"the periods of Nationalism (1863-1872), Mass Advancement (1896-1904), the First World War (1917-1920) and the Second World War (1941-1945). The rapid expansion in membership is to be explained almost entirely by developments in the labor market: the rapid rise in the cost of living and the shortage of labor supply relative to demand"...." The tightness in the labor market and the general level of profits enabled the union to achieve results."²³

The second type he regarded as those of 'fundamental unrest'. These he linked to long-wave downswings, and arriving on the back of severe depressions. They were also specifically political in nature:

"It is suggested that after prolonged periods of high unemployment for a substantial number in the work force and after years of downward pressure on wages exerted by price declines, labor organizations emerge which are apt to be particularly critical of the fundamental tenets of the society and the economy."²⁴

These periods he identified as the Great Awakening (1827-1836) and associated with Jacksonian Democracy and free education, the Great Upheaval (1881-1886) associated with Populism and shorter hours, and finally the New Deal (1933-1937) associated with security.

However, when Hobsbawm (1964) looked at the long-run fortunes of labour movements and tentatively linked these to long-waves, he identified a different pattern to that of Dunlop.²⁵ Generally speaking, he believed that during the course of the Nineteenth Century there had been a fundamental alteration in the pattern of labour unrest. When the economy had been predominately agrarian, riots, strikes and rebellion had typically occurred during periods of economic crisis. As the economy had industrialized, however, a transition period gave way to one where labour unrest, strikes and socialist movements were more likely to occur at the top of the economic cycle, possibly linked to increasing prices. By contrast during periods of economic malaise, the picture was more mixed. Industrial action was often inadvisable, though some notable strike movements had

occurred, whilst it was during these periods, he maintained, that the struggle for the franchise was more likely to occur.

Following the downturn in the international economy after 1973, interest in long-waves revived. Although initially concerned with the economics of the long-wave, towards the end of the 1970s renewed interest in the links between long-waves and the fortunes of social and political movements occurred. The first to renew this link was Gordon (1978) who followed a fairly standard Marxist approach, believing that in the prosperous times of long-wave upswings labour movements tended to become co-opted into the capitalist process, whilst the economic crisis of downswings led to greater levels of working-class action, and increased support for leftist ideas and movements.²⁶ In general this was similar to the ideas of both Rosenberg and Dunlop.

However, this position was somewhat contradicted, in that, listing factors that led to the economic crisis from 1973 onwards, he believed that high levels of strike activity, protest and rebellion in the immediately preceding period were contributory factors. In fact a number of authors also looked at this period in conjunction with long-waves as well as previous episodes of rebellion and insurgency in the past. On the whole, in terms of a pattern of political change a consensus emerged that left wing and working class militancy increased, sometimes unevenly, through the course of long-wave upswings and reached a peak towards the end of the upswing. This was the position taken by Cronin (1979, 1980), Screpanti (1984, 1987) and Kelly (1998). For Screpanti, this was based on empirical research charting the number of strikes, strikers involved and days lost through strike action whilst Kelly looked at levels and density of union membership. In each case this work covered a wide number of industrialised countries over the last three long-waves.²⁷

However, each had differing explanations as to why this occurred. Cronin saw the increase in left wing and labour militancy as resulting from structural reasons. He believed that the working-class was re-made during the innovatory period of downswings and that it was during the beneficial labour market conditions of the following upswing that this 'new working-class' was able to organize and make its own demands heard and felt.²⁸ Screpanti, by contrast, believed that revolutionary, anti-capitalist and socialist

movements exerted themselves more strongly during the latter part of upswings for largely psychological reasons – in a tight labour market aspirations rose but could not be met and resulted in frustration leading to industrial and political unrest.²⁹ Kelly, meanwhile, suggested a greater awareness of injustice, coupled with increased levels of trade-union mobilization and strike effectiveness in a tight labour market, led to increased levels of labour radicalism in long-wave upswings.³⁰

By contrast, there was less agreement on the fortunes of the left and the labour movement during the course of long-wave downswings. Screpanti, maintained that both levels of frustration and aspiration declined as a result of slower economic growth, and though there were some occurrences of increased left-wing militancy towards the end of the downswing, in general downswings were a time of working-class passivity.³¹ Kelly believed that state repression and employer counter-mobilization led to declining levels of radicalism, though following Cronin, he also saw structural transformation of the working-class during downswings as leading to new ‘minor upsurges’ of left-wing and labour militancy towards the end of downswings.³²

In a further attempt to explain this pattern Salvati (1983) used the work of Kalecki and Phelps Brown. Kalecki (1943), using business cycle and labour market economics, had maintained that full employment would boost the political position of workers, whilst high levels of unemployment would advantage the position of the state and employers. Phelps Brown (1975) had maintained that the presence and absence of periods of social unrest could be explained by the different generational experiences of different historical eras. Defeat, job insecurity and high unemployment led to a generation of workers that was cautious and conservative, whilst full employment and strong growth led to rising aspirations and a generation marked by confidence and radicalism. Salvati suggested that both these explanations could also be used to explain what factors were causing long-wave economics in the first place.³³

As such these approaches contrasted with those of Dunlop, Rosenberg and to some extent Gordon. Long-wave upswings were regarded as periods of increasing labour militancy and left-wing radicalism rather than periods of quiescence and complacency. Mostly, this militancy was associated with the tight labour market and full employment that is seen as typical of upswings in general, and not just resulting from period's of war

as Dunlop had thought. Downswings were seen as periods when the labour movement and the left were on the defensive with declining levels of mobilisation, except possibly at the end of the downswing. This contrasted with the almost opposite position taken by Dunlop and Rosenberg.

A slightly different approach was taken by Mandel (1980) who also recognized increased levels of working-class radicalism towards the end of the upswing, though this, he claimed, resulted from pressure from employers who were experiencing declining profitability.³⁴ In the early downswing this militancy increased, though if the state and employers were able to break labour movements, as fascism did in the 1930s, this was one factor that was able to help pave the way for a following long-wave upswing. He believed that only by breaking labour militancy in the 1980s could a further upswing occur, though at the time of writing he believed this to be an unlikely outcome. In addition, Mandel saw upswings and downswings giving rise to different ideological hegemonies, for instance the Keynesian social democracy of the fourth upswing giving way to the neo-liberalism of the downswing as employers' needs altered according to the economic circumstances.

However, the most comprehensive attempt by an author to link changes in the fortunes of political and social movements, indeed the whole of modern history, has been that of Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm, in his four-volume history of the last two centuries, has combined the concept of the long Nineteenth Century (1789-1914) and the short Twentieth Century (1914-1991), with distinct historical periods that fit closely with changes in the long-wave (See Figure 2).

In *Age of Revolution (1789-1848)*, though the period is bounded by the French Revolution and the European revolutions of 1848, it also corresponds approximately to the dates usually used for the First Long-Wave – 1790s-1848.³⁵ Similarly the *Age of Capital (1848-1875)*, corresponds closely with the Second Long-Wave Upswing of 1848-1873, whilst the *Age of Empire (1875-1914)*, corresponds closely to the dates often used for the Second Long-Wave Downswing (1873-1896) and Third Long-Wave Upswing (1896-1914), though 1914 also corresponds with the end of the Long Nineteenth Century.³⁶ Equally, in *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1989*,

Hobsbawm classes the First World War and the Third Long-Wave Downswing as the ‘Age of Catastrophe’ (1914-45), whilst the Fourth Long-Wave Upswing of 1945-1973 is ‘The Golden Age’ and the following Long-Wave Downswing of 1973-1997/8 has been coined ‘The Landslide’.³⁷

Figure 2: Hobsbawm’s historical periods and the most commonly used long-wave periodicity’s.

		Long-Wave Periodicity’s ³⁸	
<u>Long Nineteenth Century</u>		<u>Upswing</u>	<u>Downswing</u>
Age of Revolution	1789-1848	First 1790s - 1814/25	1814/25 - 1848
Age of Capital	1848-1875	Second 1848 - 1873	
Age of Empire	1875-1914		1873 - 1896
		Third 1896 - 1914/20	
<u>Short Twentieth Century</u>		<u>Upswing</u>	<u>Downswing</u>
Age of Catastrophe	1914-1945		1914/20 – 1940/48
The Golden Age	1945-1973	Fourth 1940/48 - 1973	
The Landslide	1973-1997/8		1973 – 1997/8

Hobsbawm, of course, is not the only historian to have identified distinct eras within the modern age that correspond closely to the periods of the long-wave. The Great Depression of 1873-1896 followed the mid-Victorian Boom of 1848-73 and was described by contemporary observers in both Europe and North America.³⁹ Both the Progressive Era in the USA and La Belle Époque/Edwardian Boom in Europe correspond closely to the Third Long-Wave Upswing, whilst the Inter-War Depression performs the same function for the following downswing. The post-war boom, Golden Age of Capitalism, or Trentes Glorieuses are well-established concepts that describe the long-lasting prosperity of the Fourth Long-Wave Upswing.

Hobsbawm, however, has linked these historical eras closely to the rise and fall of the long-wave. He believes long-waves form distinct periods of historical change - economic periods within which a distinctive set of political, historical and social events and trends

occurred. However, he is less certain as to why long-waves occur. In *Age of Empire* he maintains that:

“Kondratiev periodicities merely enable us to observe that the period with which this volume deals covers the fall and the rise of a ‘Kondratiev wave’; but that is in itself not surprising as the entire modern history of the global economy readily falls into this pattern.”⁴⁰

Whilst in the *Age of Extremes* he claims:

“That good predictions have proved possible on the basis of Kondratiev Long Waves - this is not very common in economics - has convinced many historians and even some economists that there is something in them, even if we don’t know what.”⁴¹

In *The New Century* he states:

“ There is only one clear indicator for the end of the Short Century: we know that since 1973 the world economy has entered a new phase. And if you believe, as I still do, in Kondratiev’s theory of long waves, that period was destined to end some time in the nineties, but exactly when is not clear.”. He then goes on to suggest that the relatively mild economic crisis of 1997-8 probably marks the end of *The Landslide*. As such, he believes, this period should mark the transition to a new historical era.⁴²

Hobsbawm’s books chart the major changes of the last two centuries. They encompass economic, social, cultural and political change in addition to changes in the arts, sciences, religion and ideology. In the course of writing this history of the modern era Hobsbawm has charted the fortunes of the social and political movements and ideas of the left and right in conjunction with long-waves. However, the account of these changes is somewhat brief and is predominantly descriptive, though some level of analysis is also present. His description of these changes is somewhat similar to the authors discussed above though there are also temporal gaps and a degree of uncertainty about particular periods, notably during long-wave downswings.

In *Age of Revolution* he appears not to identify the upswing and downswing with separate political and social developments. The whole period is one of intermittent rebellion and revolution. However, he describes the Restoration period (1815-30) as one of ‘blanket reaction’, repressing all forms of dissent, be they moderate or radical. The

period from 1830 onwards, he believes, however, was one of increasing dissent as the labour movement mobilized and support for socialism and republicanism increased together with demands for greater democracy.⁴³

For the following three upswings, as with other authors, he sees these as generally benefiting the political and social forces of the left. In the *Age of Capital* it was Liberalism that dominated the political scene with their parties 'generally in power and/or office with only occasional interruptions'. By contrast, the right was largely on the defensive – 'All they aimed for was to hold up, or even merely to slow down, the menacing progress of the present'. After a 'breathing space' in the 1850s, popular pressure from below increased in the 1860s and the most pressing opposition to the dominance of Liberalism came from the radical left. This period saw an upsurge in support for democracy, republicanism, socialism and anarchism, the emergence of the First International, the uprising of the Paris Commune and a sustained period of strike activity.⁴⁴

In the third long-wave upswing, described in *The Age of Empire*, the period saw a massive increase in support for socialist parties, with Socialist-Liberal alliances often dominating the political scene. This was accompanied by a notable expansion of union movements, often linked politically to revolutionary syndicalism. By contrast Conservatism saw an absolute decline in levels of political support.⁴⁵ In the fourth long-wave upswing, *The Golden Age*, after the left-wing reformist pulse of the middle-late 1940s, 'The great boom of the 1950s was presided over, almost everywhere, by governments of moderate conservatives'. However, 'In the 1960s the centre of gravity of the consensus shifted towards the Left' and the long-wave upswing ended with a period of social unrest, labour militancy and left-wing radicalism.⁴⁶

With regards to downswings, he believes the picture is more mixed with neither the left nor the right necessarily being outright beneficiaries of a more depressed economy. In the Great Depression of 1873-1896 after an initial period of hysteria and repression following the defeat of the Paris Commune, 'the mid-century political predominance of the liberal bourgeoisie broke down in the course of the 1870s, if not for other reasons, then as a by-product of the Great Depression'. However, he believes that no 'clear political pattern' emerged to replace the dominance of Liberalism, but the end of the

downswing did see a major advance for socialism and the labour movement at the top of the business cycle in the late 1880s/early 1890s.⁴⁷

Hobsbawm places the period 1914-20 in *The Age of Catastrophe*, though many long-wave researchers place it within the previous upswing. It was, of course, dominated by the First World War and the Russian Revolution. The immediately following period then saw a wave of revolutionary activity, labour unrest, left-wing militancy and the emergence of Communism.⁴⁸ However, this shift to the left was overshadowed in the 1920s and 1930s, decades which experienced 'the Fall of Liberalism' as the forces of progress and democracy were routed by fascism and other movements of the far right. However, for Hobsbawm, although this period was dominated politically by the right, the left was not entirely vanquished and the 1930s saw improved prospects for The Communist International. After many setbacks, they were able to translate this into a degree of electoral success in the mid-1940s along with other left-wing parties.⁴⁹

In the fourth long-wave downswing, *The Landslide*, 'in most advanced capitalist countries social-democratic governments were in office in much of the 1970s' but this situation was not to last long. 'After 1974 the free marketeers were on the offensive, although they did not come to dominate government policies until the 1980s'. In the worsening economic climate of the 1970s and 1980s it was the social-democratic and labour parties that were eventually the major losers, 'even administrations nominally headed by socialists abandoned their traditional policies, willingly or not.'⁵⁰

For Hobsbawm, however, no political tendency came to dominate this period; 'The new political forces which stepped into this void were a mixed assortment, ranging from the xenophobic and racist on the right, via secessionist parties (mainly, but not only ethnic/nationalist) to the various 'Green' parties and other 'new social movements' which claimed a place on the Left.'⁵¹

Overall, Hobsbawm gives no schematic analysis or model of how political fortunes alter for the left and right over the course of a long-wave, his work is largely a history of the modern era and an attempt to describe the historical trends that made each period distinct from those that came before and after. As such, for political and social movements, he gives a broad description of changing fortunes, often with the most typical example used to illustrate the trend. However, from this description a brief outline

of events, as regards the fortunes of the left and right could be sketched. Upswings are usually dominated by the left with gradually increasing levels of support and mobilization. This results in a peak of left-wing radicalism either at the end of the upswing or in the early downswing. The dominance of the left is then broken in the downswing, though no clear pattern occurs to replace it. The end of the downswing usually sees a moderate advance for the forces of the left.

In addition, no single factor of causation is identified for this pattern, other than that it is linked to the economics of the long-wave. In explaining the political and social changes in each upswing and downswing he adopts a particularistic approach rather than a universal one. The dominance of Liberalism in the second upswing is explained by the structural rise of the industrial bourgeoisie and its' increasing wealth and power. It had 'the only economic policy which was believed to make sense for development and the forces almost universally believed to represent science, reason, history and progress'.⁵² In a similar vein, the structural and numerical increase of the industrial working class explains the arrival of mass socialist parties and Communism, ideologies associated with reason, revolution and progress, from the late 1880s onwards into the third upswing.⁵³ In the fourth upswing, conservative dominance in the 1950s is explained by satisfaction with a booming economy. However, a generational approach is used to explain the left-wing radicalism at the end of the upswing, the unrest resulting from a generation that 'had adjusted their expectations to the only experience of their age group, that of full employment and continuous inflation'.⁵⁴

For the political changes in the Great Depression he simply refers to the economic problems of the period as breaking the legitimacy and thus dominance of the liberal bourgeoisie.⁵⁵ In the third downswing, the fall of liberalism and rise of fascism and the far right are attributed to three causes; a decline in the belief of progress, an extreme response to the threat of socialism and revolution, and a belief that 'representative democracy, was rarely a convincing way of running states, and the Age of Catastrophe rarely guaranteed the conditions that made it viable'.⁵⁶ In the fourth downswing a more psychological approach is preferred with the traditional political pattern of social democratic dominance breaking down as a result of 'a mood of insecurity and

resentment', the depression and restructuring of the economy creating disorientation and 'a sullen tension that penetrated the politics of the Crisis Decades'.⁵⁷

Thus for Hobsbawm, long-waves are shaping the course of modern history and are accompanied by a repeating pattern with regards to the fortunes of the left and right. However, it appears that this repeating pattern could be accidental, since often different causative factors are involved in producing this regular pattern. Mostly, though not always, he uses structural factors to explain the rise of the left during upswings, sometimes associated with a growing belief in progress. However, for downswings it is usually psychological factors and a declining belief in progress that halt the advance of the left, though again this is not always the case. This then leaves the question open as to whether long-waves are the causative factor for the pattern of change, or merely incidental.

To some extent Beckman (1983) arrives at a similar pattern of development to that of Hobsbawm.⁵⁸ As with Hobsbawm, his priorities lie elsewhere, namely with economics, finance and the stock markets. Unlike Hobsbawm, he does attempt to provide a typical pattern of development for the forces of the left and right and links this closely to changes in the long-wave. However, he only provides a brief outline of this pattern and with little evidence to substantiate it, usually referring to the more notable events in the political history of Britain and the USA during the last three long-waves in order to formulate the pattern.

He believes that the initial period of the upswing is marked 'by a period of relative stability' and government continuity. As with most authors he believes there is 'a tendency towards left-wing politics as the upwave matures' but the increased aspirations of the electorate cannot be met by politicians and the left is soon ousted. In the downswing the initial period is marked by 'political turbulence for about a decade' and 'several changes in government, or political philosophy'. Many new parties emerge and those that exist are often riven by faction fighting. "Downwave politics move to the right' but with the onset of the second and worst business cycle downturn (usually about a decade into the downswing), the party in office is removed and the 'incoming party

usually has left wing leanings but, sometimes, the result has been a dictator.’ After a long period of austerity the left comes to power at the beginning of the following upswing.⁵⁹

Beckman’s explanation for these changes is almost entirely psychological - the result of mood swings within the electorate. The left increases support during the upswing because this is a time of optimism and risk-taking, with people more ‘outgoing and gregarious’, ‘people will favour a government whose policies allow maximum permissiveness, self-indulgence with minimum restrictions’. ‘There is greater interest in politics’ and people ‘once again feel they control their own destiny’. All this reaches a hedonistic peak towards the end of the upswing and in general it is the left that benefits. By contrast, downswings are characterized by economic hardship and pessimism, ‘people become cautious, introspective, and unwilling to accept risk’. They search for strong leaders and this tends to benefit the right or can lead to the breakdown of democracy.⁶⁰

As with other authors he sees the left as benefiting most from the prosperity of the upswing. Like Hobsbawm he sees the early part of upswings as being uneventful. In addition he is also uncertain about the changes in the downswing, but allows for a greater shift to the right than most other authors concede. However, unlike other writers his explanation is purely psychological with no mention of structural changes or market forces.

As such, there is an established body of literature, albeit a small and eclectic one, that has linked the changing fortunes of the political and social movements of the left and right to changes within the long-wave. In addition there appears to have emerged something of a consensus over the years as to the nature of these changes. Almost invariably they are seen as being international in their range, whilst most accounts describe these changes as occurring in those countries that have industrialized and are either in the process of introducing democracy or have already done so. Little is said of agrarian and undeveloped economies or of authoritarian regimes. In addition, the pattern is considered to be cyclical in that it repeats across each long-wave.

There is some agreement on the pattern of change. This usually sees the left as emerging strongly in the upswing with a peak of radicalism towards its end. However, the left fares more poorly in the downswing, although there may be something of a revival

towards the end. The fortunes of the left and right are more uncertain in the downswing with no clear pattern emerging.

However, these accounts also suffer a number of problems. In particular most authors have concentrated on the fortunes of the left, usually concentrating on its more successful periods and with little being said of periods of defeat. By contrast, either little or nothing is said of the right by most authors. In particular, the electoral and ideological success of the right during the 1980s is hardly even mentioned, even by Hobsbawm. Was the right equally successful in previous downswings? In addition, little is said of the periods at the beginning of both the upswing and the downswing, both areas suffer from neglect in the literature. The period at the end of the downswing is also contentious with some authors, such as Screpanti, denying any generalized left revival.

Further, there is no real agreement on the causes of these trends. All authors agree that long-wave economics are at the base of these changes, and that long-term changes in the state of the economy are the root cause. For the labour historians, the changing state of the labour market is nearly always mentioned. But the mechanism which transmits the changes in the state of the economy to changes in the fortunes of political and social movements differs from author to author. A wide variety of explanations are offered that range across the structural, generational, psychological and organizational.

A possible reason for this wide variety of explanations is that few of the accounts have been based on a systematic comparative analysis of the countries involved. Often, 'political highlights' in certain countries are used and taken to be typical of the particular period, without examination of whether similar trends were occurring elsewhere. It is possible that these events could be simply national peculiarities rather than universal trends. In addition 'quiet periods' are either ignored or lack explanation.

In addition, these accounts rarely refer to existing theoretical explanations offered by political science in an attempt to explain this pattern of change. Accounts within political science to explain the dynamic nature of the modern political process have mostly focussed on voting behaviour, party competition and class struggle. Of these only the latter has been extensively used within the literature linking the changes experienced by the left and right to long-waves. Theories of party competition and voting behaviour have

been almost entirely neglected, but these ought, at the very least, to offer some insight to why these changes are occurring.

1.4 Research Design

The aim of the thesis is to test the hypothesis that there is a correlation between long-wave economics and the fortunes of the political and social movements of the left and right. As such it will attempt to define more exactly any pattern of correlation that is found. In addition it will explore the possible causes for this correlation, and attempt to provide a more concise explanation for why this correlation occurs.

The use of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are discussed in Appendix A and definitions provided that centre around the concept of distributive power. For the purposes of this thesis it is these definitions of left and right that are used throughout.

Chapter 2 will follow a comparative historical approach in an attempt to establish if any correlation exists between the fortunes of the left and right and long-wave economics, and if so what the pattern of that correlation is.

In investigating long-wave phenomena, researchers have had to face a number of problems. Firstly, the fact that there have only been four long-waves to date. This gives researchers only a small number of cases to investigate and the concomitant problems that are associated with this. A second problem is that over a period of fifty years there is a multitude of occurrences within that time span, making it difficult to identify the essential from the incidental. A third problem is that the quality and quantity of information available to social scientists covering the last two hundred years has varied dramatically. Whilst it is impossible to compensate entirely for these problems, researchers have attempted to overcome them in several ways.

One way of expanding the number of cases to be researched is to study long-wave developments in several countries. For this reason this thesis will be studying the political changes that have occurred in four countries. The countries chosen are Britain, France, Germany and the USA. These four countries were chosen, firstly, because they were amongst the first to industrialise. For most researchers, long-waves are usually seen as arising around the time of the Industrial Revolution and are closely linked to the post-

agrarian era that followed. Any pattern of political change associated with long-waves is thus most likely to occur within industrial/post-industrial economies. By choosing early industrializers, this maximises the number of case studies that are likely to be encountered. Secondly, these are amongst the four most studied countries within the social sciences thus offering a higher quantity, and hopefully quality, of information, a particular problem in the early decades of the 19th Century.

In addition I have chosen to study four countries to eliminate political changes that may be country-specific. By following a comparative approach it is possible to eliminate trends, events or occurrences that are not found in all four countries – the incidental – and to identify features that are common to all four countries – the essential. Given that long-waves have always been identified as a feature of the international economy, occurring simultaneously across the developed world this leaves the possibility that such essential features may have their causation in long-wave economics. It removes the possibility that any particular feature of political change is a result of the particular development of that country rather than an expression of long-wave economics.

However, a further possible explanation of any such changes, may be that these four economies are experiencing a typical linear, or modernizational, pattern of development undergone by any economy that embarks on the process of industrialisation, for instance that associated with Rostow.⁶¹ A common set of experiences may simply result from the common experience of a specific form of economic development. In order to control for this it is necessary to study developments in political change over all four long-waves, in addition to the reason of maximising the number of case studies. If a similar pattern of political change is found to be repeating within each long-wave, i.e. on a cyclical basis, it is unlikely to be resulting from a linear form of development.

Chapter 2 will establish a largely descriptive account of the political changes experienced by the left and right within the four countries over the period of four long-waves. From this description, any pattern or correlation between the fortunes of the movements of the left and right and long-waves will be established. Long-wave researchers are divided on the exact dates that constitute long-waves. Appendix B will use a largely empirical approach in an attempt to establish a particular set of dates that

periodises long-waves such that they can be used as the basis for Chapter 2's investigation into their relationship with political change.

The existence of a correlation is not of course proof of causation. In addition, there may be any number of theories providing possible causation. As such, Chapters 3, 4 & 5 will each deal with the possible causations for the pattern of correlation found in Chapter 3. In turn, the chapters will deal with *ideas and voting behaviour*, *class struggle* and *party competition* approaches to political change. These have been the three main approaches within the field of political science to explain the dynamic nature of the political process in modern societies. As such, the three approaches should be able to help offer explanations as to why the movements of the left and right might enjoy varying levels of support over the course of a long-wave.

Chapter 6 will summarize the pattern of change that the left and right have experienced in connection with long-wave economics. It will attempt to account for differences observed within the existing literature (reviewed in Chapter 1). In a similar vein it will also analyze the question of causation. Chapter 7 will discuss historical anomalies, occurrences where particular movements of the left and right have managed to diverge from the typical pattern with the aim of understanding more closely the link between long-wave economics and the fortunes of the left and right. Finally, the chapter will discuss the implications of the research findings for long-wave and political science theory.

¹ **D. Bell**, *The End of Ideology*, The Free Press, 1960; **S. M. Lipset**, *Political Man*, Heinemann, 1963.

² **A. Schlesinger**, *The Vital Center*, Houghton Mifflin, 1949; **R. Aron**, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Greenwood Press, 1977; **E. Shils**, 'The End of Ideology?' *Encounter* 5, Nov. 1955; 'Ideology and Civility: On the Politics of the Intellectuals' *Sewanee Review* 66, Jul-Sept 1958, pp.450-80; see also **S. M. Lipset**, *Political Man Updated*, Chapter 15, John Hopkins University Press, 1981; **F. Furedi**, *Mythical Past, Elusive Future*, Pluto Press, 1992; **K. Mannheim**, *Diagnosis of our Time*, Kegan Paul, 1943; *Ideology and Utopia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

³ See for instance, **C. Lemke & G. Marks** (eds), *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe*, Duke University Press, 1992.

⁴ See for instance, **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution, : Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

⁵ **C. Lemke & G. Marks** (eds), *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe*, Duke University Press, 1992.

⁶ **O. Clarke**, *Conclusions: Towards a synthesis of international and comparative experience of nine countries*. In **G.J Bamber & R.D. Lansbury**, *International and Comparative Relations*, Routledge, 1993.

⁷ See for instance, **A. Giddens**, *Beyond Left and Right*, Polity Press, 1994; *The Third Way: the renewal of social democracy*, Polity Press, 1998.

⁸ **A. M. Schlesinger**, *The Cycles of American History*, Andre Deutsch, 1987.

⁹ Schlesinger's recent phases were:

1932-52 public action

1952-60 private interest

1960-76 public action

1976-80s private interest

A. M. Schlesinger, *The Cycles of American History*, Andre Deutsch, 1987, p.32

¹⁰ See for instance, **E. Hobsbawm**, *The New Century*, Little, Brown & Co. 2000.

¹¹ For a detailed account of the history of long-wave research, see **J. Goldstein**, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, Yale University Press 1988, pp.21-174; **N.H. Mager**, *The Kondratieff Waves*, Praeger, 1987, pp.21-66; **E. Mandel** *Long-waves*

of Capitalist Development (The Marxist Interpretation), Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp.122-146; **J. Tinberg**, 'Kondratiev Cycles and So-Called Long-Waves: The Early Research', in **C. Freeman** (Ed) Long-Waves in the World Economy, Butterworth, 1983; **J.J. van Duijn**, The Long-wave in Economic Life, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

¹² **J. Goldstein**, Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age, Yale University Press 1988, pp.21-60. See also, **J. Delbeke**, 'Recent Long-Wave Theories: A critical survey', in **C. Freeman** (Ed) Long-Waves in the World Economy, Butterworth, 1983.

¹³ **J. Goldstein**, Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age, Yale University Press 1988, p.7.

¹⁴ A variety of such theories exist. See for instance, **T. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (eds.) World Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology, Sage Publications, 1982; **G. Imbert**, Des Mouvements de longue durée Kondratieff, Office universitaire de polycopie, 1956; **J. Goldstein**, Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age, Yale University Press, 1988, pp.72-75 for the dating systems given by different authorities -Braudel, Imbert, Baehrel, Wagemann, and Mauro. Long-waves in the pre-industrial era appear to be highly irregular in length, varying between 20 and 65 years in duration, suggesting that their causation is different from those of the industrial era.

¹⁵ **J. Goldstein** in Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age, Yale University Press, 1988, p.67.

¹⁶ See for instance: **E. Mandel**, Late Capitalism, NLB, 1975; Long-waves of Capitalist Development (The Marxist Interpretation), Cambridge University Press, 1980; 'The International Debate on Long-Waves of Capitalist Development: An Intermediary Balance Sheet', in **A. Kleinknecht, E. Mandel, I. Wallerstein** (Eds.) New Findings in Long-wave Research, St. Martins Press, 1992; **J. Goldstein**, Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age, Yale University Press 1988; **E. Mandel**, Late Capitalism, NLB, 1975; **S. Solomou**, Economic Cycles; Long cycles and business cycles since 1870, Manchester University Press, 1998; **J.A. Schumpeter**, Business Cycles, McGraw-Hill, 1939; **C. Freeman**, Long Waves in the World Economy, Butterworths, 1983; **J.W. Forrester**, Business Structure, Economic Cycles, and National Policy, MIT Systems Dynamics Group D-2245-2, 1975; **G. Mensch**, Stalemate in Technology: Innovations

Overcome the Depression, Ballinger, 1979; **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

¹⁷ **C. Perez**, 'Structural Change and Assimilation of New Technology in the Economic and Social System' in **C. Freeman**, *Design, Innovation and Long Cycles*, Francis Pinter, 1984; **C. Freeman & C. Perez**, 'Structural crises of adjustment: business cycle and investment behaviour', in **G. Dosi et al**, *Technical Change and Economic Theory*, Francis Pinter, 1988; **C. Perez**, "Structural Change and Assimilation of New Technologies in the Economic and Social System", *Futures*, vol. 15 no. 4 October 1983 357-375; **A. Tylecote**, *The Long-Wave in the World Economy: the present crisis in historical perspective*, Routledge, 1992.

¹⁸ See for instance, **M. Salvati**, *Political Business Cycles and Long-waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown*, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long-waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983; **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548. Both authors suggest that the high level of industrial action at the end of each upswing is in some way responsible for the sluggish performance of economies during the following downswing, indeed is instrumental in bringing the downswing about. Possibly this results from a rise in real wages whilst productivity lags behind, resulting in falling profit levels.

¹⁹ For a more detailed account of the theoretical and political differences that existed between Kondratieff and Trotsky see **J. Goldstein**, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, Yale University Press 1988, pp.29-31; **E. Mandel**, *Late Capitalism*, NLB, 1975, pp.122-137; **R.Day**, 'The theory of the long cycle: Kondratieff, Trotsky, Mandel', *New Left Review*, 99, 1976, 67-82.

²⁰ **H. Rosenberg**, 'Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe' *Economic History Review*, 1943 Vol.13 No.1&2 pp.58-73.

²¹ **H. Rosenberg**, 'Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe' *Economic History Review*, 1943 Vol.13 No.1&2 p. 64.

²² **J.T. Dunlop**, 'The Development of Labor Organization: A Theoretical Framework' in **R.A. Lester & J. Shister**, 'Insights into Labor Issues', Macmillan, 1948.

²³ **J.T. Dunlop**, 'The Development of Labor Organization: A Theoretical Framework' pp.190-191, in **R.A. Lester & J. Shister**, 'Insights into Labor Issues', Macmillan, 1948.

²⁴ **J.T. Dunlop**, 'The Development of Labor Organization: A Theoretical Framework' p.192, in **R.A. Lester & J. Shister**, 'Insights into Labor Issues', Macmillan, 1948.

²⁵ **E.J. Hobsbawm**, *Labouring Men*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968.

²⁶ **D.M. Gordon**, 'Up and Down the Long Roller Coaster' in *U.S. Capitalism in Crisis*, Union for Radical Political Economics, 1978.

²⁷ **J. Cronin**, 'Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest' in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (eds.) *Processes of the World-System*, pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, pp.83-108.

²⁸ To some extent, Cronin's theory thus follows the school of thought associated with Schumpeter, in maintaining that capitalism goes through a period of major industrial innovation through the introduction of new technologies at some point in the late downswing. For Cronin, each new wave of industrial innovation also brings with it a re-invented working class.

²⁹ **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548.

³⁰ **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, pp.83-108.

³¹ **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548.

³² **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, pp.83-108. **J.E. Cronin** *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979.

³³ **M. Salvati**, Political Business Cycles and Long-waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long-waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983. See also **M. Kalecki**, 'Political Aspects of Full Employment'

Political Quarterly Part 4, 1943, pp.322-331; **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No. 105 pp.3-24.

³⁴ **E. Mandel**, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development (The Marxist Interpretation)*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

³⁵ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1962.

³⁶ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975; *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994.

³⁷ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes 1914-1991: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London, Michael Joseph, 1994.

³⁸ The dates for long-wave periodicities are taken partly from **J. Goldstein**, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988; but also from **E. Mandel**, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development: The Marxist Interpretation*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), and **J. A. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1939). For more modern dates I have followed **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long Wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983, and **E. Hobsbawm**, *The New Century*, Little Brown & Co. 2000. The dates shown are those typically used by long-wave researchers, not the averages given by Goldstein.

³⁹ The concepts of the mid-Victorian Boom and the Great Depression have both been challenged, see for instance, **S.B. Saul**, *The Myth of the Great Depression, 1873-1896*, Macmillan, 1969; **R. A. Church**, *The Great Victorian Boom, 1850-73*, Macmillan, 1975.

⁴⁰ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994, p.48.

⁴¹ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, p.87.

⁴² **E. Hobsbawm**, *The New Century*, Little Brown & Co. 2000.

⁴³ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1962, pp.138-163, 254-262.

⁴⁴ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975, pp.122-142.

⁴⁵ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994, pp.84-141.

⁴⁶ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, pp.282-286.

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- ⁴⁷ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994, pp.101-141.
- ⁴⁸ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, pp.54-84.
- ⁴⁹ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, pp.109-141, 166-170.
- ⁵⁰ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, pp.408-413, 416-417.
- ⁵¹ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, pp.416-417.
- ⁵² **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975, pp.128-129.
- ⁵³ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994, pp.112-121.
- ⁵⁴ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, p.285.
- ⁵⁵ **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994, p.98, pp.101-104.
- ⁵⁶ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, pp.109-141.
- ⁵⁷ **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994, p.408, pp.416-418.
- ⁵⁸ **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983.
- ⁵⁹ **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983, pp.34-39.
- ⁶⁰ **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983, pp.39-42. The theoretical origins of Beckman's explanation are not clear, but appear to be derived from Peter L. Cogan's 'The Rhythmic Cycles of Optimism and Pessimism', The William-Frederick Press, New York, 1969.
- ⁶¹ **W.W. Rostow**, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-Communist Manifesto* (3rd Edition), Cambridge University Press, 1990.
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CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL HISTORY and LONG-WAVE ECONOMICS

Introduction

The presence of long-waves in the world economy since the beginning of the 19th century gives rise to the question of whether they can be linked to political and social developments during the last two centuries. This chapter will chronicle the major political changes and developments of Britain, USA, France and Germany, all early industrializers, throughout the period within which long-waves are considered to have occurred, with the intention of discerning any pattern of political change that might correlate with long-wave economics, thus confirming or disproving the patterns considered in the previous chapter.

The chapter will follow the changing fortunes of political, social and economic ideas and the ideologies, parties and movements of the left and right. In doing so it will also follow the changing nature of party competition in each period, the changing fortunes of the different social classes and the labour movement and level of worker mobilisation. The periods and dates given for the four long waves in Appendix B will be used to structure the political and social history of these four countries.

2.1 First Long-Wave 1803-1848

The **First Long-Wave Upswing** of 1803-1825 is closely associated with *The Industrial Revolution*, a period of rapid economic expansion in the British economy that marked the beginning of the modern industrial era. Elsewhere, the economies of France, USA and Germany remained overwhelmingly agrarian in nature, with only tentative beginnings of industrialisation.

At the beginning of the period all four countries were still dominated politically and economically by landed and/or financial oligarchies. In terms of the political climate, the period was marked by adjustment to the French and American revolutions and the political and military repercussions of these events. In general, this early period witnessed

a period of political consolidation following the revolutions, and the establishment of new political orthodoxies, except in Britain where the old regime continued.

In Britain,¹ the period began with the continuation of a Loyalist consensus supporting state, crown and church, established in response to a short-lived outbreak of Radicalism following the French Revolution of 1789. The Radical movement was quickly suppressed, in part by Loyalist mobs and in part by the state. The Loyalist consensus continued to hold, and was maintained by support for the Napoleonic Wars, until around 1810/12. At this point the first signs of the re-emergence of Radical thought occurred, though the movement did not gain significant influence until after 1815.

In the USA,² following the revolution and the institution of a republic, political tendencies divided between a more elitist and centralising Federalism, and a more democratic-leaning and decentralising Republican movement that was considered closer to the ideals of the French Revolution. Initially, the political scene was dominated by the Federalist agenda of centralisation, restricted democracy and support for financial elites. In general the status quo was preserved, though a more reactionary period at the beginning of the 19th century saw the implementation of restrictive laws on the freedom of speech by the Federalists.

In France,³ the conservative Directorate had become established in government and attempted to steer a middle course between the monarchist right and Jacobin left. However, it continued to face political opposition from both sides including both Jacobin and Royalist offensives until, facing economic crisis, it finally collapsed in 1799. It was replaced by the Consulate of Napoleon until 1804, which was then replaced by the Napoleonic Empire until 1815.

To some extent Napoleon continued the middle course, shifting power towards the executive, restoring power to the Church and nobility, but also introducing the Napoleonic Code that guaranteed certain legal equalities to the wider population and continued the right of ordinary people to hunt – one of the most important gains of the French Revolution. During the course of Napoleon's rule both taxation and conscription were extended whilst the regime became increasingly bureaucratic and despotic. Opposition to the regime was limited in scope and it was military defeat that finally brought an end to the dictatorship.

In Germany,⁴ the years from 1792 onwards were dominated by the occupation of Napoleon's troops. At the beginning of the period, the territory was made up of several hundred states of vastly differing sizes. Napoleon's occupation had the effect of reducing this number to 38, notably during the years 1792-1806. Reform was instituted from above, political, social, economic, legal and administrative changes were made as the old feudal order was dismantled and change instituted which reflected the influence of the French state and Napoleonic Code. After the unrest of the late 1790s, the 1800s were more politically stable. The new states set about consolidating their position through constitutionalism and representation, though the latter was based on highly restrictive franchises. However, despite reform, the nobility were able to continue their political, military and economic dominance, and, notably in Prussia, reorganise so that the years 1813-15 were spent at war with France, with Prussian troops eventually defeating Napoleon in 1815.

At some point during the first twenty years of the century these established regimes and their political consensus all faced a political challenge from the left. In general, this was often centred upon demands for greater democracy and a wider electoral franchise and political participation.

In the USA, the Jeffersonian Republicans scored a famous electoral victory in 1800. They sought a more democratic and egalitarian society and numerous extensions of the franchise at state level were carried out between 1800 and 1810, and later during 1818-21, in the face of opposition from the Federalists. In addition, they repealed the previous repressive legislation of the Federalists. However, although successful in the political sphere, the Republicans faced a more concerted attempt by the Federalists to preserve a system based on economic inequality. Federalist supporters within the judiciary and legislature were able, by 1816, to adopt the 'American system' of tariffs, internal improvements and support for the 'financial oligarchy' with the result of stemming the tide of Republican reform in the economic sphere. Although the Federalist Party collapsed in the process, and Republican presidents were elected largely unopposed through to 1824, it was the Federalist economic agenda that prevailed.

The 1820s saw the tentative beginnings of a trade-union movement and of industry in New England and the years 1824-5 also saw a period of union building and a spate of strikes, though predominantly amongst artisans.

In Britain, in the late-1810s, the Loyalist consensus gradually gave way to more progressive political movements that challenged, not only the status quo, but also the aristocratic hegemony. From 1816 onwards, middle and working class Reformist movements spread rapidly across the country, especially through the network of Stockport and Hampden Clubs. Closely associated with the Reform movement of the 1810s was the emergence of Liberal Radicalism. First and foremost Radicals were opposed to the Corn Laws instituted after the end of the Napoleonic Wars to support agricultural prices, but as attempts to repeal them failed, Radicals sought to extend the popular suffrage in order to extend the political influence of the industrial bourgeoisie and repeal the restrictive trade legislation. The movement for reform led to a series of mass demonstrations that culminated in the massacre of demonstrators at Peterloo in 1819. Although the movements continued into the early 1820s they failed to attract their previous level of support or militancy.

From 1820 onwards, the political mood generated by Radical Liberalism appears to have been strong enough to have influenced the ruling Tories. The period of Tory rule between 1822 and 1827 is marked by the emergence of Liberal Toryism, and saw a less autocratic approach to both domestic and foreign policy, and a number of reforms to the economy and to the running of government. The period between 1820 and 1825 also saw the spread of Owenite socialism and co-operativism as well as trade unionism amongst the working class. Pressure for trade-union legalisation built up during this period and eventually proved successful with the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824, resulting in a further upsurge of union building and industrial action.

In France, the Restoration established a constitutional monarchy in 1815. Initially the government was conservative in nature, but between 1817-19, liberal reformers became increasingly important and influential and the franchise extended slightly. However, in 1820 following the assassination of a royalist, the electoral law was altered to allow the vote to only the extremely wealthy and a reactionary government ruled from 1821

onwards. Its rule was marked by efforts to increase the influence of the church and nobility. In Germany, following the Restoration of 1815, constitution building continued until 1819. In that year the monarch Frederick William III was persuaded that reform had lasted long enough and had gone too far, and a period of reaction and repression followed throughout the 1820s, any opposition political movements were driven underground.

The First Long-Wave Downswing of 1825-1848 initially saw a more politically tumultuous period with a more determined attempt by left reformers to challenge the status quo.

In Britain,⁵ the political climate initially continued as the upswing had finished. However, by the end of the 1820s Liberal Toryism was beginning to unravel. The passing of Catholic Emancipation by Liberal Tories provoked a right-wing backlash within the Tories, from which the Whigs benefited, coming to power in 1830. Their arrival in government was accompanied by the re-emergence of the Reformist movement of the previous decade, with both the middle and working-classes demanding extensive political reform.

The granting of the Great Reform Bill of 1832 and the Abolition of Slavery (1833), amid the resurgence of both middle and working class Reform movements, widespread demonstrations and political unrest, marked an early highpoint for Liberal Radicalism. For the working class, however, the period was one of major setbacks. Following a largely successful employer's offensive of 1825/6, many unions collapsed. Organised labour responded with a movement of general unionism from 1829-34. Closely associated with Owenism, but also early syndicalist thinking, the unions of the Grand National and Consolidated Trade Union (GNCTU), initially sought to promote the common ownership of industry. However, a renewed employer's offensive and high unemployment had destroyed the movement by 1833/4. The working class thus suffered the double blow of failing to gain the vote and of seeing its union and co-operative movement shattered. To make matters worse the Poor Law of 1834 and the hated workhouse were introduced.

In the USA,⁶ following the downturn of 1825, the union and strike movement collapsed, though by 1827 the Workingman's Party had been established and a more

general unionism created, both of which lasted through to the early 1830s. 1828 saw the election of the Jacksonian Democrats, a movement that sought to revive the spirit of Jefferson's Republicanism after the more conservative period of 1816-1828, though the challenge to the status quo was an economic rather than political one. Jackson was supported by elements from the South, West, organised labour and Eastern banks and entrepreneurs, all of whom had a common enemy in the national Bank and many of whom opposed the American System and the 'financial aristocracy'. Jackson's attempts at a more egalitarian order were largely concentrated on abolishing the Bank. It was effectively defeated by 1834 and separated from the state in 1836, but its replacement with a hard money programme alienated sections of his support.

In France,⁷ the liberals were able to respond to the reactionary rule of the ultras and from 1825 onwards opposition to the regime increased. Ultra rule came to an end in 1827 and the king sought to establish a compromise government. However, the forces of left and right began to mobilise against the government and the king called elections in 1830. The liberal opposition scored an overwhelming electoral victory and the king sought to dissolve the assembly, restrict the electorate and increase censorship. The response was the 1830 revolutionary uprising, which saw the establishment of the July monarchy, the extension of the franchise, and represented a political triumph over those who wanted to restore the pre-1789 order. Political unrest, however, continued notably amongst workers as they sought better working conditions, riots and strikes broke out intermittently and the protests were only finally dissipated in 1834 through military and legal repression.

Following the poor harvest of 1830 and the outbreak of revolution in France, similar events occurred in Germany in the years 1830-2.⁸ Although a number of states established new constitutions, the uprisings were crushed militarily and the previous period of repression and reaction was re-established throughout the rest of the decade.

From around the mid-1830s onwards, the challenge from the left subsided and the political events of the period were somewhat more subdued. In Britain, the extension of the vote to sections of the middle-class was followed by a decline in both the level and militancy of Radicalism throughout the rest of the 1830s and early 1840s. In contrast, this period saw a gradual shift towards the right. Initially the Tories sought to reverse the

reform bill with the support of the king, but this ended in failure. The rest of the decade was then spent by both Tories and Whigs attempting to define the terms of voter registration in their own favour. This was pursued with vigour by the Tories whilst support for the Whigs declined, but by the time the Tories came to power in 1841 the Whigs had survived the worst Tory offensive and established a level of registration acceptable to both parties. The battle over registration tended to dissipate the forces of Radicalism and this period represented an early nadir for the progressive movement.

In the USA, in the economic boom of 1830-37, the trade-union movement expanded steadily, however, support for Jackson amongst organised labour began to fall away as he failed to oppose the power of the local banks. Towards the end of the boom more strikes occurred, but after the economic collapse of 1837, both the union and strike movement collapsed. The radical Democrats and organised labour shifted leftwards but became increasingly isolated. By now the main opposition to the Democrats were the conservative Whigs, following in the Federalist tradition, but now no longer anti-democratic nor in favour of reviving the Bank. In the economic depression of the late 1830s the Whigs gained increasing support and were elected in 1840. Following their resounding defeat, conservatives captured control of the Democrats. Conservative Democrat administrations followed that of the Whigs, marking a more conservative shift in government after Jackson's economic reforms.

In France, after the unrest of 1830-4, the years until 1840 were politically quiet. The government was conservative in nature and there was little in the way of open opposition. This was also the case in Germany, though here the government was more reactionary in nature, continuing a higher level of repression and censorship.

However, from the beginning of the 1840s the challenge to the status quo and conservatism was once again renewed both on the political and the economic front.

In Britain, amongst the middle-classes, agricultural protectionism took the blame for the severe economic crisis of the early 1840s, and the mid-1840s saw the re-emergence of Radicalism as it sought to revive the campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Anti-Corn Law League, through a voter registration drive and the threat of political unrest eventually proved successful in influencing the Whig and Tory leaders to repeal the Corn

Laws. The Tories, however, split over the issue, allowing a new Whig government in 1846, thus marking a major revival and success for Liberal Radicalism. There followed a period of social reform and factory reform legislation, though the legislation tended to be the minimal acceptable to employers and often ineffective. In their weakened and divided state, the Tories had little choice but to accept the Liberal reforms leading to the establishment of the mid-Victorian consensus.

The depression of the early 1840s, saw the re-emergence of working-class political activity - the desperate but unsuccessful attempts of the Chartists to secure suffrage for the working class. Industrial activity remained limited, with the exception of an attempted general strike known as the 'Plug Riots' by Chartist supporters in August 1842. Initially the strike gained widespread support in the industrial heart-lands of Yorkshire and Lancashire, notably amongst mill workers, and was accompanied by demonstrations in London. However, the strike attracted only intermittent support elsewhere and a combination of troop deployment, government resistance and limited solidarity ensured the strike petered out despite support continuing into mid-September.

In the better economic climate of the mid-1840s, this period witnessed a revival in the fortunes of trade-unionism and saw the beginnings of New Model Unionism amongst organised labour, whilst movements agitating for factory reform and the improvement of working conditions met some success. A revival in Chartism in 1848 proved short-lived and unsuccessful.

In France, the 1840s witnessed a far greater level of opposition to the ruling government than was the case in the later 1830s. 1840 saw the short-lived centre-left government of the liberal Thiers. Most of its reforms were economic, but nationalist demonstrations and a strike wave led to conservative fears of revolution and the king brought the government to an abrupt end. A conservative government under Guizot followed for the next seven years, but opposition from the left remained a feature of the decade. In 1848, opposition spilled over into revolution. The revolution followed a period of social unrest caused by the poor harvests of 1846-7.⁹

Initially the forces of liberalism moved against the monarchy and successfully established a republic and universal male suffrage. However, working-class radicals pressed for more radical social and political reform and for socialism. Fearing renewed

revolution, most of the middle-classes, having achieved their aims, shifted to a more conservative position. Positions became polarised between the radicals and the conservatives as the centre became vacated. The conservatives proved to be far stronger and consolidated their hold on power, and a period of repression and reaction followed, resulting in the end of the Republic in 1851 and the implementation of a dictatorship by Louis Napoleon.

Events in Germany paralleled those in France. The 1840s saw a growing level of opposition to the monarchist regime, with both radical and liberal ideas and movements gaining in influence. A number of revolts broke out notably during the poor harvest years of 1845-7. However, conservatism remained in the ascendancy until revolution spread from France in 1848. The revolution was less profound than in France, both liberals and radicals were politically weaker. Most of the initial gains made by liberalism were eventually counteracted by a coalition of middle-class and aristocratic conservatives that, as in France, feared further revolution. The outcome was a more representative polity than pre-1848, but one biased towards the monarchy.

In the USA, from around 1840 onwards, slavery became the most significant political issue. The abolitionist movement had grown gradually during the 1830s despite the initial opposition of the Democrats and the Whigs, both of whom saw its potential to divide their fragile coalitions. For most of the period the Whigs were usually the opposition party and, as such, proved to be more ready to take up the abolitionist cause as they searched for a popular issue to propel them into power. The official position of the majority party, the Democrats, remained opposed to abolishing slavery.

During the 1840s, however, the two major parties faced third party challenges from the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party, both of which favoured abolition. Neither was able to sustain a continual challenge, but the parties were successful enough to hold the balance of power in a number of states, and thus became a force that the major parties had to deal with. The abolitionist cause was most popular in the North, and it was here that the Whigs and Democrats began to support an abolitionist position. This led to tensions over the issue of slavery within the two major parties. In general Whigs and Democrats in the North were more likely to support abolition, whilst those in the South

continued to support slavery. The issue thus became cross cutting for both parties, especially for the Whigs.

Tensions between the North and the South, and expressed within the Whigs and Democrats were so great, that the leaders of the two parties sought a compromise position in order to preserve national unity as well as that of their parties. In 1850, they achieved a historic compromise that allowed slavery to continue in the South, but made it illegal to adopt slavery in states where it was not already in existence, and initially the compromise proved electorally popular.

2.2 Second Long-Wave 1848-1896

The **Second Long-Wave Upswing**¹⁰ (1848-1873), corresponds with Hobsbawm's *Age of Capital*, a period that saw the spread of industrial capitalism across much of Western Europe in the 1850s, and its acceleration across parts of North America from the 1860s onwards. In political terms, it witnessed the rise of middle-class Liberalism vying for power with the landed oligarchies, and the political and social movements of the working class seeking to establish themselves amid rapid industrialisation.

In Britain,¹¹ in political terms, the period began with the prosperous years of the *mid-Victorian Consensus*, also known as the *Age of Equipoise*. The consensus was largely defined by a Liberal agenda of free trade and free enterprise, but saw little significant political change during the course of the 1850s. This was also the case on the Continent, where, following the political compromise of 1848-51 between the aristocracy and emergent bourgeoisie, a period of conservative consensus dominated the 1850s. Amongst organised labour there was little industrial action nor any militant trade union or political movement, but in the better economic climate, trade unions enjoyed improved organisation and increasing membership.

In the USA,¹² the 1850 Compromise remained intact despite much antagonism between North and South. At the national level, the consensus over the issue of slavery held throughout the decade, and did not break down until the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. At the state level, however, it did not placate the militants of either side. The Democrats won the 1852 election on a 'Compromise platform'; whilst the Whigs

divided over abolition. In the same year, the Northern Whigs adopted a resolution stating that the Compromise of 1850 was only a temporary measure. The Southern Whigs left the conference, and in 1854 the split within the party became final due to divisions over the Kansas-Nebraska bill which proposed to extend slavery to these two newly formed states. The Northern Whigs opposed the bill, whilst the Southerners supported it, and the party thus ceased to be a national force.

The demise of the Whigs allowed the rise of the Republican Party and its replacement as the major opposition party to the majority Democrat Party. Republicanism stood for liberal capitalism, free labour, opposition to slavery, and supported the economic interests of independent farmers and small business. The conservative-controlled Democrats were now the party in favour of slavery. The Republicans quickly made electoral gains in the mid-1850s on a position of opposing the Kansas-Nebraska bill, notably in the North and amongst abolitionists, and were, within a few years, the majority party in the North. The Democrats, however, remained the majority party across the whole country, and won the 1856 election, but took the blame for the downturn in the business cycle the next year. The Republicans blamed the economic problems on the Democrats low tariff policy, and made further electoral gains in the North. By 1858, the party realignment of the 1850s was complete and the Democrat-Republican party system was firmly established. The political position before the industrialisation and Civil War of the 1860s was thus one of an abolitionist, pro-liberal capitalist Republican Party dominant in the North, whilst the Democrats were strongest among the slavery-supporting agricultural landowners of the South.

The 1860s saw the consensual period of the 1850s replaced with a more concerted attempt by left reformers to break with the status quo. In particular this revolved around breaking the power of landowners and attempts to extend capitalism, republicanism, parliamentary rule and representative democracy. This period saw the re-emergence of Republican and Liberal movements in France in opposition to the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon.¹³ Both movements gained in importance and influence sufficiently to influence Louis Napoleon to embark on a period of limited liberal reform throughout the

1860s, which included a switch to free trade, greater freedom for the press, educational reform, and the legalisation of trade unions and the right to strike.

In Germany,¹⁴ the political tide turned towards Liberalism after 1858. In the following decade, despite the presence of Bismarck, the Liberals made significant electoral gains and displaced conservatives as the dominant political force within the Prussian Reichstag and made some progress towards a more parliamentary form of government, though the monarchy continued to control the executive. However, on the left the Liberals witnessed sections of the working class moving away from liberalism and two Socialist parties emerged after 1863. In addition, the right to combine became established and increased trade union activity and organisation emerged during the 1860s, though strike activity was often met with state repression.

In the USA, by 1860, the political tensions over slavery had reached breaking point, and the Compromise of 1850 was on the verge of collapse. The coming Civil War was a result of these tensions, and represented a battle between two very different economic and social systems, systems that were increasingly incompatible as they sought different political solutions to their economic problems. During the war the Radical Republicans, supported by the industrial bourgeoisie and supporting the abolition of slavery, became the dominant political tendency in the North. In the South, the land-owning oligarchy was eventually defeated and with this military defeat came the end of slavery.

In Britain the 1860s saw the continued dominance of the Liberals, but also the renewed influence of Radicalism and more assertive trade unionism. Domestic politics was dominated by Gladstone's aims of achieving free trade, reduced government expenditure and low taxation through successive budgets, in line with the Radical thinking of the day. Support for suffrage extension began to be popular amongst both the middle and working-classes and also amongst trade unionists. From 1864 onwards an increasingly militant suffrage movement began to gain support, whilst support for an improved legal position for the trade unions also gained support amongst trade unionists and Radicals.

Across the industrialised world, this leftward shift was to result in more radical positions being adopted. The late 1860s also saw a period of rising working-class

militancy that culminated with a rapid increase in the level of trade-union organisation and the strike wave of 1866-73, numerous strikes occurring both in the industrial core and periphery. These were largely successful in nature, particularly in Britain where the 9-hour day was widely introduced. Associated with this increasing worker militancy was the First International, and the revolutionary socialist and anarchist movements within it. All enjoyed a period of considerable influence and were marked by an optimism and confidence that believed that social revolution was imminent. The stronghold of the International was France, and the Paris Commune of 1871 marked a high point for the movement, though the revolutionary aims of the Commune were suppressed through military force and the International suffered a period of concerted repression following the collapse of the Commune.

The final years of the upswing also saw the extension of the suffrage in Britain in 1867 and the radical administration of Gladstone (1868-74) and a period of concerted reform - a second highpoint for Liberal Radicalism. This included a protracted period of progressive trade-union legislation, and reform of the civil service and military in order to diminish the influence of the aristocracy. France, Germany and the USA all saw the introduction of universal male suffrage in this period.

In the USA, with the North militarily victorious, Radical Republicans whose support had grown during the war, were able to abolish slavery and extend the vote to blacks and thus implement universal male suffrage through a series of amendments to the constitution. As such they attempted to break the economic power of Southern landowners and to extend the system of liberal capitalism to the South through the process of Reconstruction

In Germany, Bismarck was finally able to create a unified Germany in 1871. Universal male suffrage was introduced to the German Reichstag, though the monarchy continued to control the executive through Bismarck. In the elections that followed the National and Progressive Liberals made significant gains and remained the dominant political force, spending the next two years instituting widespread constitutional reforms in the newly unified Germany.

In France the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon collapsed in 1871 following military defeat in the Franco-Prussian war. Republicans quickly seized their opportunity in the

power vacuum that followed and instituted a new Republic. The Paris Commune was suppressed by Thiers and the less radical sections of the Republican movement with the aim of securing the Republic, preventing the return of the monarchy and of paving the way for parliamentary rule and democratic elections.

The Second Long-Wave Downswing¹⁵ is *The Great Depression* of 1873-96, widely recognised by historians as a time of economic difficulties and characterised by a long agricultural depression, falling prices and profits. It brought the Golden Age of Liberalism and free trade to an end, and gave rise to protectionism and to imperialism. Politically, Liberalism faced numerous setbacks, whilst the Socialist movement was placed squarely on the defensive. The major beneficiary of the period was Conservatism.

The early period of the *Great Depression* was characterised by a growing reaction by rightist forces towards the radical reforms and militant industrial action that characterised the end of the upswing. Sections of the socialist left, however, continued to pursue radical or revolutionary aims and a period of political turmoil followed as each sought to gain the upper hand in the political arena, and in which government often changed hands as left and right successively gained the upper hand.

In Britain, the radicalism of Gladstones' government and trade-union militancy resulted in important sections of the aristocracy and middle-classes moving towards the Conservatives, resulting in the victory of Disraeli in 1874. Disraeli pursued a brief period of social reform until 1876 and a more openly imperialist policy, but, as the economy continued to suffer was voted out and replaced by an indecisive and divided Liberal administration in 1880. The Liberals aimed to implement a range of social reforms but internal divisions and opposition from the now Conservative-controlled House of Lords dogged the administration. The Liberals briefly rallied around a further extension of the suffrage, but once again divided over Home Rule for Ireland, protectionism and numerous other issues. The electorate more concerned by economic depression, than social or political reform voted in the Conservatives under the reactionary Lord Salisbury in 1886 and were to remain in power for most of the Great Depression.¹⁶

In France the battle between Republicans and Monarchists to define the nature of the French State initially swung in favour of the Monarchists, but with their movement

divided, they were forced to come to a compromise with the Republicans in 1875. From then on, the Republicans were able to gain the upper hand and by 1879 they had secured a parliamentary regime. The Republic was secured and a period of institutional reform that included freedom of the press, the legalisation of trade unions, and educational and local government reform was concluded by 1884. The Republican forces meanwhile promptly divided between right-wing Opportunists favouring a limited state and free market and left-wing Radicals favouring greater state intervention in social and economic matters.¹⁷

In Germany, the political dominance of the National Liberals was gradually eroded during the 1870s. Liberalism took the blame for the economic and financial crash of 1873 and the electorate shifted to the right, supporting protectionism and anti-Semitism, whilst the Conservative and Centre parties saw their electoral fortunes rise, and the left-wing Progressive Liberals pushed for greater public spending. In the late 1870s the National Liberals suffered declining support and split over an anti-Socialist law introduced by Bismarck in 1878, many moving to the right, and allowing a right-wing coalition to take power in 1878, after years of Liberal dominance. However, after purging the civil service and army of leftist elements and outlawing the socialist and trade union movements and introducing protectionism, the government was still confronted by continued economic difficulties. Taxes were increased and prices rose and the government lost the elections of 1881, to be replaced by a weakened left Liberal regime that also confronted economic difficulties and proved short-lived, ending in 1884.¹⁸

In USA, the Republicans attempted to reconstruct the South after its military defeat and impose a liberal capitalist economy. However, the Democrats were able to improve their electoral standing by denying blacks the vote through the use of mob rule and the Republicans were forced to withdraw their troops in the late 1870s. Faced with economic depression and continuing industrial unrest both major parties had to cope with the challenge of third parties advocating radical monetary policies in their respective electoral heartlands. Increasingly both the Democrats and Republicans were forced away from ideological battles and Radical Reconstruction towards economic matters, notably tariff and monetary policies.

The Democrats further eroded the voting rights of blacks in the South, whilst both major parties adopted increasingly conservative economic policies rather than the more radical ones favoured by the third parties. The earlier Republican drive to dominate the South gradually came to a halt and they were forced to consolidate their position in the North whilst the Democrats maintained their control of the South. Something of a stalemate ensued in American politics from the late 1870s onwards.¹⁹

In all four countries the workers movement was hit badly by rising unemployment and an employers offensive. Everywhere union movements were placed on the defensive and numerous union movements collapsed in the mid-late 1870s. Though the peak in strike activity passed after 1873, industrial action still remained relatively high. In Britain, working class Radicalism declined, as did the trade union movement, notably in the recession of 1878-9. The revolutionary anarchist and socialist movements on the Continent gradually lost impetus and faded away whilst the First International collapsed in 1874. Several short-lived attempts to revive the International ended in failure. Across much of Europe, notably in France and Germany repressive legislation diminished the effectiveness of organised labour. In Germany, in 1880, Socialist parties, clubs and newspapers together with trade-unions were outlawed and driven underground, whilst in France the repression of the labour movement following the defeat of the Paris Commune continued until an amnesty was secured in 1884.

The period of political unrest began to subside during the course of the 1880s. Government in this decade in all the major powers was characterised by conservative right-wing regimes. The period of radical social and political change largely came to an end as all regimes attempted to deal with the problems of the economy. Liberal free trade tended to take the blame for the economic difficulties and moves towards protectionism and imperialism gained support in an attempt to create a political and economic climate more conducive to economic recovery. Only in Britain did protectionism ultimately fail to become established, though the British Empire was greatly expanded. Imperialism offered the dual benefit of opening up new markets whilst providing government with a means of showing it was effectively dealing with the economic malaise. A more virulent

right-wing nationalism appeared to be successfully dealing with both political and economic crises.

In Britain, Salisbury and the Conservatives came to power in 1886 and were to remain there, with the exception of a short-lived and unimpressive Liberal administration in the mid-1890s, until the end of the Great Depression. The period was marked by a deepening commitment to imperialism and strong government, including the military suppression of Irish supporters of Home Rule. Little in the way of social reform was attempted, that which did occur was clearly designed to forestall more radical attempts at reform.

Similar regimes were presided over by the right-wing Opportunists in France, where the only significant issue was that of clericalism, as the monarchist right sought to use the issue to overthrow the Republic. In the event the battle centred over education and the Opportunists were able to secure a largely secular education system. In Germany the 1880s were dominated by Bismarck and the conservative Cartell alliance and both protectionism and imperialism were enthusiastically pursued in an attempt to revive the economic situation. In the USA, conservatives within the Democrats and Republicans came to political dominance in a lacklustre era that has become known as *The Gilded Age*. The only major political battle was that over tariff reform with the Republicans being the more protectionist of the two parties.

The only noteworthy political change was the emergence of a more virulent right-wing nationalism and imperialism associated with these conservative movements, whilst in France a rise in religious sentiment saw a protracted battle between secular and religious France dominate the political scene. In France in the mid-1880s, and in Germany in the early 1880s and early 1890s, extreme right-wing anti-Semitic movements challenged the status quo. However, despite achieving brief upsurges in support and appearing to be on the verge of making major political breakthroughs, they failed to eventually make any major long-term electoral impact.

For the working-class movements, the early-mid 1880s represented a period of protracted political and economic difficulties. Faced with periods of high unemployment, employers' offensives and political repression the movements dramatically scaled down their aspirations. Slowly, amongst socialists, revolutionary ideas died away, and more reformist currents developed within the movement. In addition, in Europe, antagonism

towards Liberal/Republican employers and the fact that Liberal movements were now rarely in power, encouraged the development of independent working-class political movements. A number of Socialist parties emerged, and under the aegis of Engels, developed a distinctly reformist version of Marxism, associated with economic determinism and 'vulgar materialism'. It was based on the fact that despite the profound difficulties of the time, socialism would ultimately prove inevitable, thus providing a moral-boosting reason for continued adherence to the socialist cause.

The emphasis for all these movements was moderation, support for democracy, gradual reform and universal suffrage, all of which it was hoped would eventually lead to socialism and workers control in the long run. The labour movement in USA remained an exception, where organised labour tended to support the Republicans. It also saw an upsurge in militant labour activity in the early 1880s and associated closely with the Knights of Labor. The movement rebounded from the long depression of the 1870s with an upsurge in union building, and a strike wave in 1886, closely associated with militant socialism and anarchism. However, the strike wave and union movement collapsed in failure and defeat following the trial of the Haymarket martyrs in Chicago in 1886.

The early 1890s saw something of a moderate left challenge to the prevalence of conservatism. A brief but largely unsuccessful Liberal revival in Germany and Britain occurred after the difficulties of the previous decade. In Britain, the Liberals had dispensed with much of their radicalism and had accepted imperialism. In power between 1893-5, Gladstone once again failed to achieve Home Rule for Ireland and the short-lived administration of Roseberry achieved very little. In Germany the Liberals were temporarily able to reduce protective tariffs between 1890-3 but collapsed under pressure from the conservative executive, and replaced with a more right-wing government.

In France the Radicals improved their position without securing power, except for a brief period in 1895-6. Under the government of Léon Bourgeois, an attempt at a third way between socialism and laissez-faire radicalism, known as solidarisme, was attempted and centred round the introduction of a progressive income tax. The movement failed and was replaced by the centrist Méline government that pursued a cautious reform programme that attracted increasing support from both left and right.

In USA, the Democrat Party was briefly captured by the left-wing Populist farmers movement, but electoral disaster followed in 1896 and allowed the Republicans to finally impose liberal capitalism, free enterprise and protectionism as the dominant economic hegemony across the entire country. Democrats, however, quickly rebounded, regained control of the Democratic Party and re-established their political dominance in the South.

With the economic revival of 1888-93, all four countries saw the emergence of a reinvigorated labour movement. However, initial gains made during the business cycle upturn were often reversed as the economy returned to depression after 1893. In Britain New Unionism was associated with the emergence of a working-class socialist movement, whilst Germany saw the emergence of the Social Democrats as a growing political force alongside a strengthened union movement. In France the revival saw the emergence of a revolutionary syndicalist union movement and a proliferation of small Socialist parties. In USA, the moderate and sectional American Federation of Labor (AFL) replaced the Knights of Labor and gained in strength, though remained considerably less radical than its European counterparts. With the exception of the French syndicalists and the AFL, all these movements were committed to reformist socialism, but as yet their parties only achieved minor electoral success.

2.3 Third Long-Wave 1896-1948

The **Third Long-Wave Upswing (1896-1920)**²⁰ corresponds with *La Belle Époque* or the American *Progressive Era*, though the outbreak of World War One during 1914-18 has tended to fracture the idea of this upswing as a coherent historical period.

In political terms the first period of the upswing was relatively quiet. In Europe, Conservatives, previously supporters of the agrarian order, had by now accepted industrial capitalism, the nation-state, limited democracy and some form of parliamentary constitution. On the left, Liberals and Radicals had, for the moment, ended their radical ambitions, accepted a strong state, imperialism and protectionism, and had also experienced a hemorrhaging of middle-class support to Conservative movements. In the USA, following the defeat in 1896, the Democrats had little choice but to accept the Republican agenda of liberal capitalism, protectionism and industrialisation.

The period did however, see the tentative beginnings of a Socialist revival and some increase in industrial action, notably in France, and initially, both Liberal and Conservative movements were united in their opposition to Socialism as part of the consensus that continued until the mid-1900s. In France, the consensus was interrupted by the Dreyfus affair during 1898-9 as both the left and the right attempted to use the affair to break up the centrist coalition of Méline. In the event this proved successful though the Bloc Républicain rallied in support of the Republic and the centre-left Waldeck-Rousseau government that followed was little different to that of Méline except more overtly anticlerical.

In the mid-1900s, however, all four countries experienced a revival of middle-class liberalism and radicalism. In Britain, the Liberals came to power in 1906, after twenty years of Conservative dominance, and in 1911 significantly reduced the power of the aristocratic House of Lords. They also presided over a period of progressive legislation between 1906 and 1914 that included land reform, progressive taxation measures, a wealth tax, and the beginnings of a welfare state that included national insurance, pensions, improved state education, health care, house-building, minimum wages and a number of other social provisions. This period also saw the consolidation of a successful electoral pact between the Liberals and Labour to prevent electoral defeat through a divided left-wing vote.²¹

In France the Radicals came to power in 1899 after two decades of conservative rule, though initially their policies differed little from the Opportunists. In 1905, however, following long-standing antagonism with the religious authorities they effected the divorce between the state and church. They also 'republicanised' the military and civil service by purging reactionaries from the two institutions. The Radicals remained in power until the outbreak of war whilst the parties of the right continued to lose electoral ground. However, Radical rule was marked less by social reform than by repression of the workers movement, as a significant strike wave under the anarchist-led CGT followed from 1904 intermittently through the following years. The Radicals major policy aim of introducing a progressive income tax never realised its objective.²²

In the USA, the Republicans under T. Roosevelt and his New Nationalism programme, shifted to a more progressive platform in the mid-1900s, a move that was shortly to be followed by the Democrats with their New Freedom platform. From this period onwards, known by historians as the 'Progressive Era', a progressive middle-class reform movement gained momentum, gave rise to the emergence of the Progressive Party, and most notably the implementation of aspects of direct democracy, municipal reform, reduced child labour and other progressive labour legislation. When the Democrats were elected under Wilson in 1912, the reform trend continued, though with a more economic emphasis as tariff reform, progressive taxation, banking and monetary reform and antitrust legislation were all implemented. This period also saw the emergence of the women's suffrage movement, the movement for prohibition and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and its attempt to establish greater civil and democratic rights for the black population.²³

However, in all the developed countries, Liberals, Progressives and Radicals faced a challenge from the Left - that of Socialism - a rising 'third force'. The mid-1900s saw the beginnings of an impressive upsurge in support for reformist Socialist parties, notably in Germany where the Social Democrats became the majority party by 1912, though they were unable to form a government whilst the executive was still controlled by the monarchist oligarchy.²⁴ Their success was reflected to a lesser degree in France, where the Socialists became the second largest party by 1914. In Britain, Labour steadily advanced, gaining both in the percentage of the vote and the number of seats they could obtain. Even in the USA, Eugene Debs and the Socialists experienced a period of electoral and organisational success in comparison with previous and later historical periods.

Further to the Left, this period saw the building of a large revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalist union movement in France, and this era is sometimes known as the 'Syndicalist Revolt'. The syndicalist union confederation in France, the CGT, was typical of many union movements at this time, committed to direct action and social revolution, and opposed to the state and 'political' action. It gained in size, militancy and influence and embarked upon a period of concerted industrial action, in the hope that this would

ultimately lead to social revolution and workers control of industry. In the USA, syndicalism arrived with the establishment of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1905. Industrial militancy increased from 1905 onwards both in the AFL and IWW, especially in the years 1910-12, years which saw a notable expansion in union membership for both organisations.

Britain also experienced a period of concerted industrial unrest between 1910 and 1914, as trade unionists became increasingly militant, with numerous outbreaks of industrial action, notably for improved wages at a time of rising prices. This movement lost momentum, as elsewhere, as the business cycle dipped in 1914 but also with the outbreak of World War One, with all four governments using the war as an excuse to disrupt the activities of the far left. In France this allowed the Socialists to capture control of the CGT from the anarcho-syndicalists, whilst in the USA, Socialists and syndicalists were widely persecuted for their opposition to the war from 1917 onwards.

World War One had the effect of disrupting the forces of the Left in other ways. In Britain the Liberals split in two over the conduct of the war, leaving Lloyd George's dominant faction reliant on Conservative support. In France the Radicals lost control of both the political and military situation leading to a Clemenceau-led government in 1917 that relied on support from the centre-right. In the USA, Wilson moved further to the left after 1914, and implemented an unprecedented series of economic and social reforms including progressive labour legislation, as he attempted to take the progressive vote away from the Republicans. However, entry into the war in 1917 proved controversial, the war slowed the pace of reform, and repression was directed at the socialist left, though women's suffrage was successfully implemented during the course of 1918-20. Congress came under the control of the more conservative Republicans in 1918.

In Britain, the Liberals instituted universal suffrage for both men and women in 1918, and the election that followed saw a continuation of Liberal government, though dependent on the majority Conservative Party. The coalition government under Lloyd George set about continuation of the pre-1914 reforms and extended the welfare state through pension increases, extended unemployment insurance, improved education,

health care and housing, and oversaw the establishment of collective national bargaining as a means of dealing with worker militancy.

In France, the left parties gained a majority of the vote in the 1919 elections but the Moderates (formerly the Opportunists) took advantage of a changed electoral system and a divided left, to form the government. Despite presiding over the implementation of the 8-hour day they failed to deal with the pressing economic and political problems that confronted France after the war.

Opposition to WW1 also accelerated divisions within the Socialist movement, as the more militant sections opposed the war and anticipated the imminence of social revolution. Many of those on the radical Left joined the Communist movements that emerged from 1919 onwards, following the apparent Bolshevik success in Russia. In Germany, opponents of the war on the left of the party split from the SPD to form the far-left Independent Social Democrats (USPD). In France, the Communist party (PCF) emerged in 1920 and was initially far larger than the Socialists, whilst the American Communist Party (ACP) was formed in 1919. In Britain guild socialism and syndicalism became popular on the left whilst the British Communist Party emerged in 1920.

Notwithstanding the divisions within the socialist movement, the final stages of the upswing saw a renewed upsurge of support for the socialist left, especially once WW1 was no longer a major distraction. Industrial militancy reappeared from 1916-17 onwards, and spread from skilled to unskilled workers as a massive strike wave spread across the industrialised world, much of it successful. In France, union membership soared after the war and industrial militancy culminated in an attempted general strike in 1920 but was poorly organised and proved unsuccessful. The strike wave did result, however, in the 8-hour day and 48-hour week being achieved in 1919.

In Britain, a rapidly increasing union membership launched a series of strikes between 1917 and 1921 that involved most sections of industry, notably the triple alliance of miners, transport and railway workers. Rapid gains were made with increased wages, reduced hours and improved working conditions. Support for socialism increased rapidly, and the Labour party officially adopted a socialist programme in 1918. In the same year their vote increased considerably to 22.2% and 63 MPs.

In the USA the 8-hour day was the major aim of the unions, and strikes over this issue were largely successful. The strike wave peaked in 1919 with the Seattle general strike and numerous strikes in the steel, lumber and mining industries, whilst union membership peaked at over five million the following year. Both the IWW and AFL enjoyed increased momentum in the years of low unemployment after the war despite a severe wave of repression from government, employers and conservative organisations directed at socialists and syndicalists alike in the 'Red Scare' of 1919. In the 1920 presidential elections the Socialist vote peaked at around a million votes.

In Germany the shift to the Left was the most significant. In the wake of the collapse of the aristocratic empire, the socialist and liberal forces gained in support, whilst the smaller revolutionary forces of the left pushed for social revolution. In 1918-19, revolution spread across Germany in the shape of Workers and Soldiers councils. Universal suffrage for both men and women and parliamentary democracy were instituted for the first time. In the following elections the Social Democrats came to power with 45% of the vote, whilst all the major parties offered somewhat more progressive programmes than before the war. The SPD government set about consolidating democracy and the new constitution, whilst instituting a series of reforms that included the 8-hour day, higher wages, better working conditions and a greater degree of worker participation in the workplace, all of which was approved by the workers councils.

The Third Long-Wave Downswing (1920-1948)²⁵ falls within the period known by Hobsbawm as the Age of Catastrophe or The Fall of Liberalism. In political terms it saw the rise of fascism and the far right, the rise and demise of Communism and the emergence of social democracy.

Politically, the 1920s were a period of turmoil, characterised by a polarisation of the forces of the left and right. The wave of democracy and revolutions that characterised the final years of the upswing produced a right-wing backlash of equal intensity. In much of continental Europe the reactionary right began to mobilise against the forces of the left. Even in those countries where democracy was more established, they were not, however, immune from a period of political turmoil. In general the political situation remained

highly polarised with socialists committed to the introduction of socialism and conservatives committed to laissez-faire capitalism.

In Britain the Liberal-led coalition collapsed in 1922 and there followed three elections in three years. Initially the Conservatives came to power, but in 1923, Baldwin, their new leader sought to introduce protectionism in order to improve the economy, but failed to gain electoral support for ending free trade. The Labour Party came to power in 1924 in the first of two minority administrations during the decade, but despite a number of social reforms were unable to make any lasting impact. The Liberals meanwhile united to preserve free trade, but, despite a short-lived revival in the late 1920s, were unable to preserve their previous position as the leading party of the left – much of their middle-class support shifted to the Conservatives during this period. In 1924 the Conservatives were returned to power, though by now had postponed any moves towards protectionism and ruled until 1929. Baldwin attempted to steer a middle course between Labour's demands for socialism, and the right of the Conservative Party calling for a more aggressive approach towards the unions, more assertive rule in India and for economic protectionism. As such he refused to concede to the demands of organised labour, notably during the General Strike of 1926, whilst waiting for the capitulation of union leaders.

The beginning of the decade saw the massive strike wave of the previous upswing decline from 1921 onwards. In particular this followed the defeat of miners' strike that had initially been promised solidarity action by the Triple Alliance of transport and railway unions. This left the miners strike isolated and thus defeated. The level of militancy died away, as did union membership as a result of high unemployment. However, following Britain's return to the gold standard in 1925, the miners faced a reduction in their wages and went on strike. In 1926 a general strike was called by the TUC in support of the miners strike and the General Strike paralysed the country for nine days. However, its failure severely dented the socialist belief in workers control and saw the arrival of a distinctly more moderate trade-union leadership in the years that followed and a notable decline in the level of strike activity.

Throughout the 1920s unemployment remained a protracted political problem, but neither the Conservatives nor the short-lived Labour government of 1929-31 were able to deal with the 'intractable million'. Neither was Labour able to deal with the economic

crisis that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929. A political deadlock resulted as the Labour leadership sought cuts in unemployment benefit and the government collapsed. Macdonald, the Labour leader, formed a National government to deal with the crisis and in the following election Labour were reduced to a rump party of 56 MP's and without their previous leadership. The Conservatives won a resounding victory, paving the way for a decade of Conservative rule.²⁶

In France,²⁷ a similar situation saw two short-lived left-wing periods of government in 1924-26 and 1932-4 but both were divided and neither were able to resolve the economic difficulties they faced, and both collapsed following their inability to introduce viable economic reforms. In general, governance passed increasingly from the Radicals to the Moderates, but they too were divided as to how to resolve the economic problems of the day. Divisions over economic remedies, over clericalism and social reform dominated political life on both the left and right.

On the left, the Socialists successfully diminished the importance of the Communists during the 1920s, and rapidly became the larger of the two parties. The Communist Party, starting the decade as a much larger political force, was soon consumed by faction fights and purges and it declined throughout the decade in both membership and electoral appeal until the party was left with only ten deputies in 1932. In the meanwhile, the Radicals sought a more right-wing approach and continually opposed the social reforms favoured by the Socialists. Within the labour movement, union membership dropped dramatically in the recession of the early 1920s whilst the CGT split into three factions, the largest supporting the Socialists, the smaller factions supporting Communist and revolutionary syndicalist positions.

On the right, the Moderates were divided into several loose party groups and sought to counter the rising tide of the far right and its opposition to the Republic. A proliferation of fascist, ultranationalist and other far right parties and movements emerged after 1924, and notably in the early 1930s, opposed to the far left, the industrial action being carried out by the unions, liberalism and democracy, and favouring authoritarian government, with some supporting the return of the monarchy.

Neither Moderate nor Radical governments could resolve the economic crisis of 1932-6, and in 1936 a Popular Front government led by Socialists came to power, followed by

a wave of sit-down strikes and a rapid increase in support for the trade-union movement. A series of social reforms were implemented, but were opposed by the Right, employers and financiers, and the economic situation deteriorated once more. The government collapsed after only 10 months to be eventually followed by a Radical administration that in 1938 shifted dramatically to the right, collaborated with employers to reverse certain Socialists' reforms considered damaging to economic reform, and adopted a more laissez-faire economic approach.

In Germany,²⁸ the first three years were characterised by a series of attempted insurrections by the far Left and attempted putsch's by the far right, notably in Bavaria. The German Communist Party (KPD) was formed in 1920, as a majority split from the USPD, and refused to recognise the new constitution, as was the case with the far right. It also saw the union movement split into a proliferation of movements variously supporting Socialist, Communist, anarcho-syndicalist and council communist positions. In the elections of early 1924, in the midst of hyperinflation, there was a shift towards the right, whilst the KPD and the far right made substantial electoral gains. The government that followed proved to be unstable, though the financial situation was rectified, and further elections that year saw support for the far right and far left fall significantly whilst the SPD remained the largest party in a centre-left coalition government.

The years 1924-30 saw a further decline in the fortunes of the left. The KPD dwindled in numbers and influence beset by splits and inter-faction purges, though the far right declined into almost complete insignificance. In 1928, the SPD vote declined to 30% and the coalition government made up of the SPD, Centre Party, and Progressive Liberals (DDP), was joined by the right-wing former National Liberals of the DVP. The coalition government throughout these years was dominated by in fighting over a number of issues, notably the issue of defence spending. In 1928, the Conservative DNVP shifted markedly to the right, adopting an anti-democratic, monarchist position that split the party in two. The DVP adopted a similar position the following year. These years saw the middle-class vote shift from liberalism to a number of right-wing single issue parties hostile to democracy, whilst far right paramilitary organisations maintained a high level of activity.

In 1930, parliamentary rule effectively came to an end, as the mainstream parties of the left and right failed to agree on benefit cuts as a means of dealing with the economic crisis that followed the Wall Street Crash. Political deadlock ensued between 1930 and 1933. The electoral beneficiaries of this were primarily the Nazi NSDAP, rising from 2.6% of the vote in 1928 to a peak of 37.4% in July 1932, and to a lesser extent the Communists, from 10.6% in 1928 to 16.9% in November 1932. In the meanwhile the SPD vote dropped to 20.4%, whilst reactionary elements of the Conservative DNVP sought to introduce a fully authoritarian, monarchist regime. Their failure to do so led them into collaboration with the NSDAP.

The Nazis, after the early dramatic rise in their electoral fortunes, saw a falling away of support in November 1932 to 33% of the vote, but following the failures of the reactionary monarchists to implement their own agenda, Hitler was able to take power with the help of the Conservatives. There then followed the implementation of a fascist regime, democracy was suppressed, and the Communists and then the Socialists outlawed. Political opposition was banned, independent trade unions were broken up and incorporated into Nazi-controlled State structures. Liberalism and democracy were effectively ended and a fascist dictatorship implemented.

In the USA,²⁹ the early 1920s saw the election of two conservative Republican presidents, Harding and Coolidge, committed to laissez-faire capitalism, but they oversaw a period of protracted political turmoil. Battles broke out between pro and anti prohibitionists, but also between supporters of the NAACP and the rapidly emerging Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The KKK spread rapidly in the 1920s, campaigning against immigration, Catholicism, Jews and organised labour, and attracting support mostly from lower middle-class whites hit by the early 1920s depression. There were also ideological battles between creationists and evolutionists.

The class struggle continued though the upper hand was now with the employers. Unemployment soared to over 15% in 1921 and union membership fell to a low of 3.6 million in 1926. The IWW split in 1924, never to recover, whilst the AFL was taken over by racketeers. Employers often imposed the 'open shop' and company unions. Strikes gradually became fewer, notably after 1922, whilst the courts became notably harsher after 1921 and anti-syndicalist laws were widely used. Both the ASP and ACP lost

support during the 1920s, whilst disputes within the labour movement often formed the backdrop to struggles between conservative and progressive factions within the Democrats, and to a lesser extent within the Republicans. In general the Democrats were too divided, and increasingly demoralised, to mount a serious electoral challenge to the Republicans, as they became the political home of disaffected sections of society.

The renewed prosperity of the mid-late 1920s saw a decline in political disputes, and the election of a more moderate Republican, Hoover, whilst the Democrats remained remote from the mainstream of the electorate. However, Hoover failed to address the economic crisis that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929, whilst the Democrats rallied behind a progressive, FD Roosevelt. Roosevelt's New Deal platform triumphed over the laissez-faire conservatism of the Republicans in the election of 1932. The New Deal programme addressed many long-standing grievances of those who supported the Democrats - in many respects it appeared as a more moderate version of Wilson's New Freedom programme.

The initial wave of New Deal legislation of 1933 concentrated on extending government intervention in the economy, greater centralisation and restructuring the banking and corporate systems. It also sought to increase employment through farm relief, public works programmes, regional development and increased public spending. The legislation was bitterly opposed by conservatives, and the Supreme Court soon declared much of it unconstitutional. However, the economy improved from 1933 onwards, and a second wave of legislation followed in 1935 which concentrated on introducing social security measures and progressive taxation, and which proved more longstanding, establishing the beginning of a welfare state.

The depression hit organised labour particularly hard, union membership and strike activity declined amidst soaring unemployment and wages were cut as labour was put on the defensive. The worst of the depression was over by 1933, and in 1934 strikes began to break out across the country. In 1935 the Wagner Act was passed in an attempt to regularise labour-management relations, a bill that followed on from the efforts of the National Recovery Administrations attempts to improve the position of labour. Fearing the legislation would soon be declared unconstitutional, unionists within the AFL formed

the Committee for Industrial Organisation (CIO) and set about unionising industrial workers.

Following the success of the Flint sit-down strike at the end of 1936, a wave of unionisation followed across the country in 1937 notably amongst steel, mine, and car workers. However, the CIO was expelled from the AFL and the union drive slowed notably during the depression that followed in late 1937 through to 1938. Strikes fell to a very low level during the depression as unemployment soared once again, though by now the AFL and CIO claimed to be organising around 19% of the workforce, and numbers rose slowly through to the 1940s.

The onset of the Depression of 1929-32 also had a profound political impact elsewhere. As unemployment rose, as businesses went bankrupt and economies faced chronic structural and short-term problems, the government response almost everywhere was protectionism and, after failed attempts to pursue laissez-faire solutions, piecemeal attempts to revive national economies through the introduction of managed economies. Most of these economic reforms were carried out in the early 1930s and gave way to a more conservative political climate in which economic revival was the overriding concern throughout the rest of the decade.

In Britain the Conservatives dominated the 1930s with massive majorities achieved through the creation of the National Government. Under the leadership of Baldwin, Britain experienced the beginnings of a managed economy, protectionism and state intervention in the economy. Little in the way of social reform was instituted, and for Labour this was a period of protracted existence in the political wilderness.

In France, after the collapse of the Popular Front, together with the failure of an attempted general strike that was followed by repression, worker apathy became the norm and union membership declined dramatically after the brief upsurge in 1936. The far right also declined in size and importance, and the following years were markedly conservative in nature. The Radicals whilst keeping many of the Socialists reforms, sought to follow a largely conservative economic policy and concentrated their efforts on creating a climate in which the economy could recover from the depression.

In the USA, the New Deal was only partially implemented, and faced the hostility of a conservative press, a conservative Republican Party, the Supreme Court and conservative sections of the Democrats. Much of the legislation was declared unconstitutional and reversed by the Supreme Court. Despite a landslide victory for Roosevelt in 1936, the depression of 1937-8 dampened enthusiasm for New Deal economics and the programme of reform petered out later that year. Little in the way of further reform was either contemplated or achieved, and American politics remained largely conservative in nature until the mid-1940s.

In Germany, once the Nazi dictatorship was established, attention was turned to reviving the economy through a mixture of public works, increased defence spending, deficit financing and imposing price, wage and currency controls. Initially the economy improved whilst a number of factors indicated that political support for the Nazis was falling from 1934 onwards. In 1936 economic problems also returned in the shape of a currency crisis, increasing inflation and a shortage of raw materials for industry. The response of Hitler was to turn to economic planning, which proved to be largely unsuccessful, but also an extension of Nazi control within the state, notably within the army and civil service, and a more aggressive foreign policy. In the following years, territorial expansion became the answer to Germany's problems.

The established democracies were not entirely immune to the extreme-right, but in general fascism and other forms of authoritarianism made a lesser impact. In France numerous extreme-right parties and movements emerged in the 1920s. In the 1930s their attempts to gain power and implement a reactionary agenda became more concerted especially during the worst of the economic depression – between 1932 and 1936 – when popular support for the far right was at its highest. However, they failed to displace the established parties, and their support began to fall away from 1938 onwards. Britain also experienced the rise of fascism in the early 1930s, but Moseley's Fascist Party, despite appearing to make rapid ground at the beginning of the decade, failed to sustain its challenge and its appearance proved short-lived as support fell away after 1936. In USA, the KKK and Black Legion organised against the strike movement of the mid-1930s but in general the far right was politically limited in scope.

The advance made by the radical left in the previous upswing and that had faltered during the early downswing, finally came to an end in the mid-1930s. It was during this period that 'the middle way' began to develop. In general, the Slump and the end of the gold standard in 1931 had forced the right to tacitly abandon laissez-faire capitalism and shift to a position where it was believed that capitalism could be managed. A similar movement on the left mirrored this shift. Socialism and any hope of social revolution were informally abandoned and an increasingly social democratic programme elaborated that combined a mixed economy with support for the welfare state and a belief that capitalism could be managed for the benefit of the working class. In Britain, Labour distanced itself from the far left and Communism, adopted much of the Liberal agenda of 1929 and sought to portray itself as party of moderation and responsibility. In France, the Socialists witnessed the collapse of the Popular Front government and saw some of their most important legislation reversed or effectively neutralised, leading to a reappraisal of their position. In the USA the Socialists saw a slight increase in support during the worst of the depression, but the ASP dwindled to almost nothing during the course of the 1930s as Socialists shifted their support to the New Deal Democrats. In Germany the SPD remained illegal.

Similar tendencies occurred within the Communist International. The 1930s were a particularly bad decade for the far left. In the USSR, the power struggle between Stalin, on the right, and Trotsky and others on the left, had ended in victory for the more nationalistic and reactionary path chosen by Stalin. Increasingly the Communist International became a means with which to advance Soviet foreign policy interests. In addition, faced with persistent economic crisis, high unemployment, falling union membership, declining or failed worker militancy, and a concerted and often extreme right-wing backlash, the Communists formally abandoned any hope of revolution in 1936 and opted to form Popular Fronts with other sections of the left, be they middle or working-class.

Their strategy became an essentially conservative one of defending the existing gains made by the left and by opposing the rise of fascism. As a result they were able to make slow but steady membership gains in Britain, largely amongst the middle-classes opposed to fascism, but remained very much a minority section of the left. In the USA, after a

small and brief increase in support for the ACP in 1932, the movement dwindled during the 1930s as former Communists switched support to the Democrats with the hope of preventing the right from reversing the New Deal legislation. In France, the PCF increased its vote in 1936 and supported the Popular Front government, though refused to actually form part of the government. Whilst supporting the Socialists reforms they continued to criticise the government, attempting to take credit for successes whilst being able to criticise its failures. Otherwise it made little progress. In Germany the Communists remained outlawed.

The mid-1940s saw something of a revival for the forces of the left, in those countries where this was still possible. In Britain a leftward-shift in the electorate from 1942 onwards resulted in the election of a majority Labour government in 1945, and the establishment of a welfare state, a mixed economy, and increased co-operation between government and unions. However, attempts to preserve planning as a means of running the economy after the war ran into opposition from unions and employers and Keynesian demand management was increasingly adopted as a means of intervening in the economy.

In USA, a left revival saw rapidly increasing support for the NAACP from 1943 onwards, followed in 1946 by a short-lived strike wave notably amongst miners and railway workers. The Republicans came to accept the New Deal and the emergent welfare state, but Truman, the Democrat leader, failed in his attempt to extend the achievements of the New Deal, through his own Fair Deal reform plan. The response of the Republican-dominated Congress to trade-union militancy was to suppress the unions through the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, and the period ended with something of a stalemate between mildly reforming Democrats and conservative Republicans.

The defeat of fascist and authoritarian regimes by the Allies in 1945 allowed the re-emergence of the forces of the left in those areas it occupied. In the countries of Western Europe previously occupied by the Nazis, democracy re-emerged with a large upsurge in support for both Socialist and Communist parties and others on the left. In France, Communists came to power in a left-wing coalition, but the main beneficiaries were the Socialists and the Christian Democratic MRP. The period saw both the centre-left and

centre-right vying to establish their own vision of a new future, though in general neither gained outright control, whilst in order to attract voters both set about instituting democratic constitutions, and the construction of rudimentary welfare states and mixed economies.

In Germany, no revival was possible until the fall of the Nazi dictatorship in 1945, and for four years political life was dominated by the occupying powers. The country effectively became divided in two, the politics of the East being dominated by the needs of the occupying Soviet forces. Under Soviet pressure the SPD was forced into unifying with the KPD and the Socialist Unity Party (SED) that was created became the dominant party in the East. The other political parties were effectively sidelined and the Communists, with help from the Soviets took control, and established a Soviet-style authoritarian regime, with most of the economy and the trade unions brought under state control.

2.4 Fourth Long-Wave 1948-1998

The **Fourth Long-Wave Upswing (1948-1973)**³⁰ is commonly known as the *post-war boom* but also known as *The Golden Age of Capitalism*, *Trente Glorieuses* or the *Golden Years*. Economically it was marked by a long and protracted economic boom and commonly associated with Keynesian demand management. In political terms it was associated with social democracy, the welfare state and the consolidation of liberal democracy in the West.

In political terms, the early period was marked by the post-war consensus or 'social democratic compromise', a period that led many to posit the end of ideology. The left had abandoned socialism and the right had abandoned laissez-faire capitalism as the two sides settled for a mixed economy, welfare state, full employment programmes and Keynesian demand management. The immediate post-war period thus saw a growth in progressive economic reforms, that saw the growth of the welfare state, corporatist arrangements in industrial relations and a rapid increase in the scope with which the state intervened in the economy, usually under the aegis of governments of the left.

In Germany,³¹ these reforms came in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the West, a new democratic and federal constitution was established in 1949, and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) (formerly the Centre Party) and the SPD emerged as the two main parties in the 1949 elections with the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) a distant third. The CDU/FDP coalition government that followed had instituted a welfare state and elements of corporatism by 1952. In the East, a welfare state and full employment were also established, but economic growth remained slow. From 1951 onwards a production quota system was imposed by the state on the workforce and resulted in the workers uprising of 1953. Although the uprising was crushed by Soviet tanks, the New Course economic strategy that followed made some concessions to worker grievances, until a new five year plan was instituted and accompanied by further repression.

After the reforms of the late-1940s, the 1950s tended to be dominated by governments committed to consolidating the arrangements of the 'social democratic compromise', predominantly by parties of the right, be it Conservatives, Christian Democrats, or Republicans. The decade was predominantly conservative in nature, and in general the post-war consensus in each country held until the end of the decade. Those challenges to the status quo that did occur, such as McCarthyism in the USA and Poujadism in France, were more likely to be from the right but ultimately made little impact on the consensus. The parties of the right remained dominant in electoral terms, whilst the centre parties were squeezed and the left fared poorly. In 1958, the German SPD formally abandoned Marxism and adopted a more social democratic programme as the parties of the left elsewhere had already done. There was little in the way of militant trade unionism or strike activity, though full employment facilitated trade union growth throughout the decade and a gradual increase in strike activity occurred towards the end of the decade.

Towards the end of the 1950s, however, challenges to the established hegemony began to appear. In USA,³² the beginnings of the civil rights movement amongst black Americans emerged, though attempts to translate this into positive legislation proved limited in nature. In France,³³ following protracted military conflicts within its colonies, the Fourth Republic collapsed, and a new constitutional arrangement giving more power

to the president was instituted by De Gaulle who then created the Fifth Republic. The elections that followed were won by the Gaullist UNR , and the powers of the president were further extended in 1962 when the president became elected by direct suffrage, following a second constitutional crisis.

Gradually, the parties of the left began to make electoral advances, a trend that accelerated during the later 1960s. In general they sought to deepen and extend the features of social democracy. In West Germany, the FDP shifted to the left, whilst the Social Democrats continued their gradual electoral advance of the 1950s and finally came to power in West Germany in a grand coalition with the Christian Democrats in 1966. Their government was marked by a somewhat more progressive stance and a series of constitutional amendments. In East Germany, by now enjoying rapid economic growth, 1963 saw the institution of the New Economic System that encouraged decentralisation within industry and also a more relaxed cultural and intellectual climate.

In Britain,³⁴ Labour came to power in 1964 with the aim of modernising the economy through corporatism and planning. In the event the project largely failed. However, a programme of progressive social reform, that included, equal pay, legalising abortion and homosexuality, making divorce easier and ending capital punishment proved more successful. In addition the welfare state was extended whilst major reforms were achieved in transport, health, housing and education, though an attempt to abolish the House of Lords ultimately collapsed.

In the USA, the Democrats took control of both the Presidency and Congress in the early 1960s. Although Kennedy initiated a number of reforms, progress was very limited and the administration spent much time combating rising inflation. It was only under Johnson's presidency from 1963 that an exhaustive reform programme was launched and successfully implemented. The 1960s witnessed a deepened and strengthened social democracy and welfare state, as well as extending civil rights and the vote to blacks in 1965, as Johnson sought to establish the Great Society.

In France, the beginning of the 1960s saw a marked increase in social unrest notably amongst public sector workers and farmers, the response of the Gaullists being to make it more difficult to strike. The vote for the left parties increased in the national elections of 1962 and 1967 and in the presidential election of 1965, though not sufficiently to take

power. The governmental policies of de Gaulle concentrated on improving the economy and were notably conservative in social matters.

In parallel with this development rose a new set of demands raised by the New Left. In general these revolved around 'post-materialist' concerns, equal rights for women and ethnic and social minorities, greater attention to environmental concerns, civil and human rights and a search for qualitative improvements in the democratic process. Towards the late 1960s/early 1970s the New Left, post-materialist politics, and the youth/student revolt were at the height of their influence. This saw the emergence of political movements committed to the liberation of women, blacks, gays and the Third World. Fuelled by opposition to the Vietnam War and 'imperialism in the Third World', the movements enjoyed mass support and a period of concerted militancy. The period also saw the emergence of radical green and environmental movements.

This period saw the re-emergence of the extra-parliamentary left as numerous Trotskyist, Maoist and anarchist parties and groups developed during a period of widespread optimism about the possibility of progressive and revolutionary change. The period was also one of industrial militancy. Union membership rose steadily during the long post-war boom, aided by full employment, and resulted in an increasing level of strikes that culminated in the strike wave of 1968-74. In general, strikes were predominantly unofficial in nature and largely successful in improving wages and working conditions.

In part, the far left gained as a result of the problems encountered by the social democratic parties. In Britain, Labour experienced a devaluation crisis in 1967 that effectively derailed both their economic and social reforms and lost them support on the left. In 1970, the Conservatives under Heath came to power, and attempted to introduce a modernisation package for both the state and industry. However, faced with concerted trade union militancy much of the package was abandoned or significantly altered.

In the USA, the Democrats became increasingly involved in the traumas of the Vietnam War and military conscription, whilst increased military spending slowed spending on social welfare projects. By 1968, radical and moderate Democrats were divided deeply over Vietnam, whilst conservative Southern Democrats defected over

civil rights creating partisan dealignment and leaving an opening for the Republican Nixon to become president. Nixon, despite much conservative rhetoric, continued with social policies similar to those of Johnson, extending the welfare state, enacting environmental legislation and improving health and safety legislation. On economic matters he initially attempted to control the money supply to combat inflation and allowed the unions to pursue generous wage claims, but inflation continued and unemployment began to rise and a wage and price freeze were accompanied by tax cuts and a devaluation of the dollar in 1971. In the 1972 presidential elections, Nixon faced a radical Democrat, McGovern and was re-elected whilst the Democrats retained control of Congress.

West Germany experienced far left student unrest, notably in the years 1967-8 and the establishment of the 'extra-parliamentary left' (APO), as dissatisfaction with the CDU/SPD grand coalition emerged. It also saw the re-establishment of the KPD, and the far Right NPD, though neither could make an electoral impact. In the 1969 elections, support for the left parties increased, notably for the SPD, and a left-wing SDP/FDP coalition government was established. In the following years it established a series of social reforms, extended the role of the welfare state and increased the level of worker participation in industrial decision-making. In the 1972 elections the coalition was returned with an increased majority. By contrast, in East Germany, after antagonising elements of the SED and the Soviet authorities, the party leader Ulbricht was removed from office and replaced with Erich Honecker in 1971. Honecker set about imposing a more orthodox position and during the next two years reversed the trend towards economic decentralisation.

It was in France, though, that the student and union militancy of these years came together most spectacularly in the events of May 1968, a two month period of riots, near insurrection and a widely supported general strike. The government under de Gaulle had remained largely conservative in terms of domestic policy, and had failed to respond to the calls for social reform. For two months the Fifth Republic appeared on the verge of collapse, but the Gaullists were able to counter mobilise and won a resounding victory in the crisis elections that followed.

However, de Gaulle's position was weakened and with a background of continuing left unrest, called a further referendum on constitutional reform the following year. The referendum failed and de Gaulle resigned to be succeeded by the Gaullist Pompidou. Pompidou followed a more socially progressive agenda instituting a series of reforms, notably concerning the position of workers. In the national elections of 1972, the left parties further continued the electoral rise evident in the early 1960s but failed to gain a majority.

The Fourth Long-Wave Downswing (1973-1998).³⁵

The crisis decades that followed the extended post-war economic boom have been labeled by Hobsbawm as *The Landslide*. The period was characterised by a gradually emerging crisis for social democracy, and the ascendancy of a New Right political agenda associated with monetarism, neo-liberal economics and a determined effort to reduce the role of the state in the economy.

In political terms, *The Landslide* began with a period of political turmoil as governments sought to deal with militant trade unionism, the damage caused by stagflation and its implications for the welfare state and in many cases left terrorist groups. Under the weight of these problems the steady electoral and governmental advance of the left that had marked the 1960s and early 1970s gradually lost momentum. With the onset of economic crisis, social democracy also went into crisis. Support for social democracy either declined, albeit unevenly, or remained static. Poor economic performance demanded cuts in public expenditure and resulted in declining support for the welfare state. Keynesian demand management appeared unable to cope with the twin problems of rising unemployment and high inflation, neither could it deal with the militancy of the union movement. Social democratic ideology, established during economic prosperity, failed to cope during the deterioration in the world economy.

In the meantime, as the social democratic left sought more specifically socialist answers to the problems of the 1970s, the forces of the right began to gather momentum. Motivated by the neo-liberalism of the New Right, parties on the right became increasingly antagonistic towards social democracy, Keynesian economics and state intervention in the economy and the militancy of the trade unions. The result was that the

political climate of the 1970s was marked by increasing polarisation - the left moving towards socialism, and the right to neo-liberalism and a more authoritarian state. Those guided by social democracy sought to steer a middle course, but the political and economic difficulties meant that electorates often found the results disappointing leading to frequent changes of government and a belief in ungovernability and governmental overload.

In Britain,³⁶ the Heath government was brought down by a combination of trade union militancy and economic crisis in 1974, and following two elections Labour managed to secure a small majority. Their attempts to advance the cause of social democracy soon ran up against a deteriorating economy, and after 1976 the governments strategy was guided by monetarism and reducing public spending. Although the intense strike wave of 1968-74 came to an end, the unions remained militant, though increasingly strikes became defensive in nature in the face of an employer's offensive.

Within the Conservatives, following Heath's defeat, a shift to the right resulted in the election of Thatcher as party leader. Increasingly the party adopted a hostile attitude towards the trade unions, welfare state, nationalised industries and Keynesian demand management - most of the social democratic package. On the Labour left, activists pushed for a more explicitly socialist direction and gained in influence within the party. The Labour leadership sought to steer a middle course, dealing with the unions through bargained corporatism and attempting to preserve social democracy in the face of a poor economic performance that reduced government revenues.

By 1979, however, the unions were once again on the offensive leading to the 'winter of discontent.' The Labour government collapsed as it failed to achieve Scottish devolution and the Conservatives came to power. Within a year the economy had entered a depression, unemployment and inflation soared and rioting broke out across much of Britain. For the government, the economy remained the main problem, and the Conservatives after first using monetarism, increasingly sought to improve the economy through a neo-liberal approach. Spending was reduced, the unions were legislated against, local government and the welfare state were attacked and the nationalised industries readied for privatisation. Within the Labour Party, the left came to power after election defeat, and adopted a more explicitly left platform, resulting in the party dividing

and the creation of the Social Democrat Party (SDP). The election of 1983 was won relatively easily by the Conservatives, paving the way for another 14 years of Conservative rule.

In the USA,³⁷ Nixon was forced to resign in 1974 to be replaced Ford. Ford attempted to reduce public spending and balance the budget and as a result vetoed a huge social-welfare reform programme initiated by Congress. Taxes were cut to stimulate the economy but inflation, unemployment and declining industrial productivity remained a problem. The Democrat Carter was elected president in 1976 and sought to expand public spending to stimulate the economy. However rising inflation imposed a more conservative deflationary approach whilst his plans for tax reform, extended health care and governmental reorganisation were all rejected or drastically revised by Congress. Both unemployment and inflation doubled during his administration and the budget deficit soared.

Both Ford and Carter attempted to steer a centrist course, between the Democrats left wing and the growing influence of the Republican right in the shape of Reagan and the New Right. Although the level of strikes remained relatively high, the union movement was in decline. Increasingly the AFL-CIO turned to political lobbying to preserve the agenda pursued by organised labour, but legislative attempts to guarantee employment and to extend picketing rights in the mid-1970s were unsuccessful. The right, however, were gaining in influence, and in 1980, the Republican candidate Ronald Reagan scored a crushing victory in the presidential elections.

In Germany,³⁸ following the 1973 economic crisis and faced with rising unemployment and inflation and declining tax revenues, attempts by the SPD to further expand the welfare state ran into problems. Their programme was increasingly compromised whilst the SPD left clamoured for a more socialist approach which led to long running disputes within the party. Further to the left, student unrest boiled over into a concerted terrorist campaign, notably in the shape of the Red Army Faction (RAF) that sought to provoke revolution. Corporatism was, however, extended in 1976 as increased worker participation was implemented on corporate supervisory boards, though the measures were considered insufficient by the unions, which by now were also calling for a 35-hour week to replace the 40-hour week established earlier in the decade.

In the 1976 elections the long advance of the SPD was reversed as both they and the FDP registered electoral losses, though the coalition remained in power. With regards to the far left the government managed to effectively combat the terrorism of the RAF in the following years. But it also faced a rapid growth in the anti-nuclear protest movement and the wider environmental movement; both growing in support in opposition to government policies on nuclear power and as a result of heightened awareness of environmental problems. Meanwhile the CDU/CSU moved to a more overtly right-wing position under Franz Josef Strauss, and lost seats in the 1980 elections, the SPD vote remained the same as in 1976, whilst the FDP made significant gains.

Immediately, however, the SPD/FDP coalition government faced severe economic recession. Unemployment soared and so did the financial deficit. The FDP – moving to the right - sought reduced public spending and lower taxes, policies that were unacceptable to the SPD and its trade union allies and in 1982 the government collapsed to be replaced by a CDU/FDP coalition under Helmut Kohl. New elections were called in 1983. The divided SPD fared badly and lost much support to the newly emerging Green Party. The FDP, which had also divided between its left and right factions also fared badly whilst the CDU/CSU scored a conclusive victory. A CDU/FDP coalition was formed and economic policy veered to the right under a more neo-liberal approach of reducing public spending and lowering taxes.

In East Germany, Honecker introduced delimitation – reduced contacts with the West - and the repression of intellectual dissidents from 1973 onwards. From the mid-1970s, an attempt was made by the regime to improve working conditions and housing, reduce working hours and to extend holidays and pensions. The economy continued to deteriorate in the late 1970s, production fell, debts rose and plans went unfulfilled. Unlike in the West though, no readjustment was made, instead austerity was pursued leading to a decline in imports and consumer goods.

In France,³⁹ Pompidou died in 1974. In the following presidential elections the Socialist and Communist parties formed a common front whilst a proliferation of candidates from the far left and far right stood for election. However, the centre-right candidate Giscard d'Estaing was narrowly elected president. Initially he sought to continue the more reformist policy direction of Pompidou through a series of

constitutional, social and industrial reforms. Much of this was successfully implemented but was increasingly disrupted by the deteriorating economic situation.

Throughout the 1970s the government was faced with rising unemployment, and high inflation. Union membership gradually declined though the level of strike activity remained relatively high and demands for industrial democracy continued. Initially the left parties were the beneficiaries of the discontent with the economic situation. A crisis developed within the Right and the prime minister Jaques Chirac was replaced in 1976 by a centre-right non-Gaullist, Raymond Barre. Barre's priority became improving the economy and he launched an austerity drive, reducing spending, raising taxes and freezing wages and prices.

In 1976, Chirac launched the Gaullist RPR, whilst the following year the left alliance between the Socialists and Communist collapsed as the Socialists appeared to be emerging as the dominant force in left politics. In 1978, the president launched the centre-right UDF. In the national elections of that year the two parties of the right secured an overall majority, whilst the Socialists emerged with a larger vote than the Communists for the first time since WW2.

Amidst a rapidly deteriorating economic situation the presidential elections were held in 1981. The Socialist Mitterrand narrowly emerged as the victor and in the following national elections the Socialists enjoyed a sweeping victory. Mitterrand and the Socialists set about instituting a distinctly social democratic package of reforms. Numerous companies and banks were nationalised, the political system was decentralised, social reforms were instituted and an attempt was made to stimulate the economy through improved working practices and social benefits. Within a year though, this approach was abandoned in the face of a deteriorating economic situation, and a period of fiscal austerity was imposed, which marked the beginning of a far more conservative period in French politics.

The 1970s and early 1980s also saw the re-emergence of the extreme right, after three decades of political isolation and only sporadic and short-lived upsurges in support. Across both Europe and North America, neo-Nazi and other fascist movements appeared, basing their rise on increasing discontent with immigration at a time of economic crisis. In Britain the National Front had gained significantly in size during the 1970s particularly

over the issue of immigration. In the late 1970s the party appeared to be on the verge of an electoral breakthrough, and was also engaged in a number of clashes with the far left. However, the breakthrough failed to occur and the fascist movement dwindled during the course of the 1980s. In France the Front National benefited from a switch to proportional representation in 1986 and was able to take between 10 and 15% of the vote for more than a decade. In Germany and the USA a proliferation of far right and neo-Nazi parties emerged though none were able to make a significant electoral impact, though the presence of these parties ensured that immigration and crime remained important policy issues throughout the 1980s.

By the early 1980s the New Right were making the intellectual running and the election of Thatcher and Reagan and their close association with neo-liberal political economics marked a watershed in post-war politics. The 1980s were dominated by these movements as they sought to roll back the gains of social democracy - the welfare state, the increased power of the trade-unions, state intervention in the economy and progressive social reforms established during the previous decades. The 1980s were a decade characterised by anti-labour, anti-regulatory, low tax, reduced government and pro-market policies.

In Britain, the 1980s were marked by the dismantling of the post-war social democratic settlement. The trade unions were weakened through legislation, a process made easier by the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984-5 and persistent high unemployment that led to a dramatic fall in trade union membership after 1979. A concerted attempt was made to further weaken the unions, reduce inflation, drive down public spending, reduce the welfare state and privatise the nationalised industries. By the end of the decade much of this was accomplished though the economy once again went in to recession. Though Thatcher resigned in 1990, the Conservatives remained in power until 1997, and continued with a largely neo-liberal agenda.

In the USA, Republican presidents were in power between 1980 and 1992. Reagan came to power in 1980 on a monetarist and neo-liberal agenda of reducing federal spending and cutting taxes. In the event monetarism was quickly abandoned, but a more assertive neo-liberalism was pursued. A policy of cutting taxes, rationalising government

and increased defence spending was pursued to revive the economy, whilst the defeat of the air controllers strike in 1981 paved the way for a generalised anti-union drive and a period of falling wages and union decline. Although inflation fell, unemployment and the public deficit rose. This heralded a period of disputes between a Congress still controlled by the Democrats, albeit increasingly conservative in nature, and Republican presidents over balancing the budget, notably after 1984.

Reagan's second period in office was characterised by the introduction of regressive taxation measures, high interest rates, immigration reform and the Gramm-Rudmann bill to balance the budget. Although Bush campaigned on a hard right platform, his period in office after 1988 was largely conservative in nature, with very little domestic reform and nothing done to upset the status quo. Taxes were raised to balance the budget, rather than impose further cuts in public spending. However, in the recession of 1990-2, growth slowed and unemployment rose once again.

In Germany, the CDU/FDP coalition remained in power until 1998. Its time in power was eventually beset by high unemployment and periodic economic recessions. Unlike in Britain and the USA, the strength of the social market model meant that it was unable to dismantle the social democratic settlement of earlier decades, despite the fact that the left opposition was divided by deep-seated antagonisms. Once economic reforms had been instituted in the early 1980s, the government was largely conservative in nature. In the 1987 elections both the CDU and SDP suffered losses as the FDP and Greens scored successes, but the CDU/FDP coalition continued as before.

In East Germany, the regime became increasingly dependent on loans, economic co-operation and increased trade with West Germany, and in return delimitation was ended and concessions made on human rights. Dissent, particularly from pacifists, environmentalists and socialists continued through the 1980s though it was usually met with repression, whilst foreign debts rose dramatically. Following glasnost and perestroika in Moscow, and a visit by Gorbachev in October 1989, protests against the regime began and within a month the Berlin Wall had come down. The ruling regime soon collapsed and in March 1990, the CDU won the first open elections.

Following the reunification of Germany in 1990, the CDU/FDP coalition remained in power. The euphoria that followed reunification soon dissipated, however. The cost of

rebuilding the East proved far more expensive than originally thought, and inflationary pressures were met with increased interest rates creating a depressed economy that soon spread to much of Europe. In the 1994 elections the CDU/FDP were returned to power but with only a slight majority.

In France, the Socialists spent most of the mid-1980s battling with inflation and fiscal deficits and unsuccessfully attempting to lower unemployment - the few social reforms contemplated were abandoned. Unemployment, crime and immigration dominated the electoral campaign of 1986 in which the right-wing parties scored a resounding victory. The Chirac government followed a more openly neo-liberal approach, and rapidly set about privatising the nationalised industries, abolishing the wealth tax and deregulating prices, but was unable to improve the employment situation, whilst attempts to reduce public spending provoked a short-lived, but successful wave of defensive strikes and demonstrations.

In the presidential elections of 1988, Mitterrand was returned to power on a platform that emphasised consolidation – ‘no more privatisations or nationalisations’. In the national elections that followed a minority Socialist government came to power. The government sought to rule from the centre, with few new directions taken. After a brief period of economic improvement, fiscal austerity was once more pursued as recession returned, and unemployment rose from 1990 onwards. The government introduced new social security measures and a plan for urban regeneration to alleviate the worst aspects of persistently high unemployment, but repeated attempts to reduce the unemployment rate proved unsuccessful and in 1993 the right wing parties enjoyed a crushing victory in the national elections.

The government of Balladur that followed pursued an extensive privatisation programme and sought to reduce the budget deficit through increased borrowing whilst cutting taxes and raising social benefits. Unemployment remained high and this and financial stability were the main themes of the 1995 presidential elections. In 1995 Chirac was elected president, but attempts to reduce unemployment through increased spending proved unsuccessful, and economic growth slowed. Attempts to rectify the situation through increased taxes and reduced spending were met with concerted resistance from public sector workers, and Chirac was forced to abandon much of his reform programme.

An increasing social conservatism and opposition to the permissiveness of the 1960s and 1970s also marked this period. The 1970s and 1980s saw a conservative backlash based around support for the family and marriage and opposition to abortion and homosexuality. Racial quotas, immigrant workers and affirmative action were also opposed. In the face of this trend and also facing the rise of religious fundamentalism, the 'post-materialist' groups of the New Left - feminists, anti-racists, environmentalists and gay rights campaigners - became increasingly defensive. Long gone were the flirtations with Marxist and socialist ideology and the talk of revolution that had characterised the early 1970s. Faced with the need to consolidate the gains recently made, positions were moderated to gain wider acceptance in a conservative social climate, and policies adjusted to take account of the new neo-liberal reality.

In general the more reactionary social movements including the right-wing religious fundamentalist movements, although gaining much support, proved largely unsuccessful and much of the progressive social legislation of the 1960s and 1970s remained, although the far right's attacks on race quotas, affirmative action plans, immigrant workers produced some reversals. The Thatcher government also passed legislation that discriminated against homosexuals. In general, the anti-abortionists had little legislative success.

In general, the 1980s saw the left demoralised as a result of electoral and ideological defeat, and increasingly on the defensive. In the early years it was beset by divisions. In Germany, the Greens were divided between fundamentalists and realists, the latter eventually proving victorious, whilst the SPD was divided over its stance towards NATO and nuclear weapons. In Britain, Labour split in two over Europe and the differences between its socialist and social democratic wings. The 1980s also saw a decline in union membership, notably in France, Britain and the USA, to a lesser extent in West Germany. There was also a marked decline in industrial action notably after 1982-4. Much of the 1980s were marked by attempts to counter anti-union legislation in Britain, an anti-union drive in the USA and to prevent deregulation of workplace activities. The drive towards industrial democracy that marked the 1960s and 1970s disappeared during the 1980s as unions became increasingly defensive, and eventually many unions found they had little choice but to co-operate with employers in the new more deregulatory environment.

In the face of the neo-liberal onslaught, a conservative social climate and long years in opposition, the left faced little choice but to moderate its aims whilst adopting elements of the New Right agenda. Socialism and Keynesian social democracy were abandoned, as were state intervention in the economy and support for militant trade-unionism. In place came an accommodation with market forces, private industry and working with business leaders. By the 1990s, the left began to recover from the electoral and ideological nadir of the 1980s, and the decade saw a series of electoral victories for the moderate left across Europe and North America. In general this re-emergence was accompanied by the emergence of the 'third way' - an attempt to steer a centre-left course between right-wing neo-liberalism and redistributive social democracy. In general, this meant accepting the right's neo-liberal economic agenda, whilst pursuing a more progressive social agenda, often attempting to use the welfare state to increase working opportunities to reduce unemployment.

The first to recover were the Democrats in the USA, where Clinton, helped by a split in the right-wing vote came to power in 1992, on a platform of stimulating the economy through tax cuts and increased public investment and spending on education. Greater attention was paid to social issues, more emphasis was made on using welfare as a means to finding work, whilst a hardened right-wing stance on crime was accepted. However, ambitious plans for health reform failed. Although the economy was recovering, it became known as the 'jobless recovery', wages were still falling and unemployment was still high, many jobs being lost through downsizing and globalisation. Widespread insecurity about the economy helped the Republicans to take control of Congress in 1994.

Gingrich, the ideological leader of the Republican right, sought to establish his neo-liberal Contract for America agenda, notably the downsizing of the federal government and, deregulation, reduced welfare and a balanced budget. Clinton and the Democrats were forced to adopt a more defensive approach, much of the Clinton agenda being abandoned, but in the standoff much of the Contract also failed. Eventually the two sides accepted a compromise position, accepting the need for a balanced budget, but with little in the way of reduced welfare. In 1995, interest rates came down improving the economic outlook and in an improving economy Clinton was re-elected in 1996. His second term

saw a mildly progressive, but limited, domestic reform agenda, mostly blocked by the Republican Congress, but attempting to preserve free trade and reform welfare in order to expand employment.

In Britain, after 18 years in opposition Labour came to power in 1997. For the most part neo-liberal economic policies were continued, though the party sought to improve the situation of the poorest sections of society through mildly redistributive budgets and a series of social measures that facilitated workplace opportunities. A minimum wage was introduced and union recognition made enforceable through law. A series of constitutional reforms were enacted that gave devolution to Scotland and Wales, ended the hereditary domination of the House of Lords, and introduced elements of a constitution via the European Charter on Human Rights.

In Germany, after 16 years in opposition, the left finally came to power in the shape of a SPD/Green coalition in 1998, on a platform of accepting the right-wing pro-market economic agenda together with a more progressive social agenda. In France, where its years in opposition were less in number, the Socialist programme was less modified than elsewhere. In 1997, the Socialists were returned to power and formed a left coalition government with the Greens, independent socialists and Communists. Although attempts were made to follow a more pro-labour policy with the reduction in the working week to 35 hours, the extensive privatisation policy of the right was continued.

2.5 The Correlation between Long-Wave Economics and the Left and Right.

Having described the political histories of the four countries, it is now possible to address the question of whether the fortunes of the left and right fluctuate in accordance with long-wave economics and whether any pattern found corresponds with those posited by the authors discussed in the previous chapter.

The historical chronology of the political and social changes within Britain, France, Germany and the USA does indeed show a distinct correlation between political changes experienced by the left and right and long-wave economics, notably during the second, third and fourth long-waves. The first economic long-wave is somewhat more doubtful - the pattern existent in the latter three long-waves being only partially present during the

first. As anticipated in Chapter 1 and as might be expected within a wave-like structure, the pattern appears to be distinctly cyclical – the political climate at the beginning and end of each long-wave being of a similar nature.

The pattern within each long-wave, particularly the last three, appears to follow the following trajectory:

Each long-wave upswing begins with a period of political consensus amongst the major political forces, often based on a compromise between the forces of left and right and which lasts approximately a decade. It is the centre that dominates rather than the left or the right. However, since the period is also characterised by a lack of any strong change in either direction, it tends to be conservative in nature, a fact that probably explains the predominance of right-wing parties in power during this period.

Eventually, the consensus gives way to the emergence or increased support for left-wing movements and ideologies, whilst the right tends to decline and become defensive. The rapid increase in economic growth appears to give an impetus to radical reforming political tendencies that not only end the consensus, but also attempt to challenge the prevailing political hegemony. In structural terms these movements often appear to be linked to the increasing influence of a particular social class that finds itself growing in economic importance as the expansion of the upswing proceeds.

Initially, the shift to the left appears to be gradual and moderate in nature, and largely concerned with social and political matters. However, as each upswing proceeds the last 6-10 years ends with a period of radical left militancy, and intense class struggle activity, which is often accompanied by a period of radical reforming government. Even the parties of the right can find themselves pursuing this trend. For the most part, however, it benefits the forces of the left. This accords with the findings of most of the literature covered in Chapter 1.

The pattern within the downswing is distinctly different. The first decade of each downswing is characterised by a period of political turmoil, often with several changes of government. The political forces of the left, attempting to extend the gains of the upswing, are challenged by the right as it attempts to limit the amount and intensity of political and social change. Neither the left nor the right necessarily dominate this period but the level of ideological competition is intense.

However, as the downswing continues and experiences its worst depression, the right appears to usually gain the upper hand in this struggle, and a political climate characterised by either conservative or reactionary movements begins to prevail, although the exact timing of this can vary from country to country. In this period the left appears to lose momentum, whilst economic issues become those dominating the political discourse. Thus, the 'crisis period' of downswings are associated with a period of political turmoil that gives way to the ascendancy of right-wing movements and ideologies. The central period of the downswing is one of a distinctly conservative political climate and an overriding concern with economic considerations.

Each downswing then appears to end with something of a recovery for the forces of the left, though the strength of this recovery appears to vary considerably, and is on a distinctly more moderate basis than the upsurge witnessed during the upswing. The end result, though, is always the same - a second period of political consensus, though the form the consensus takes may be initially defined by either the left or the right. Thus, the 'recovery period' of the downswing appears to be associated with partial left-wing recoveries, and the emergence of a new left-right consensus.

The most notable exception to this pattern appears to be the first economic long-wave, although elements of the pattern are evident, especially within Britain. The upswing saw an increase in support for Radical, Reformist and trade union movements at the expense of Loyalism, but the peak in militancy arrives early in the downswing. The forces of the Left retreat during the 1830's but re-emerge in the shape of Chartism, New Model Unionism and the Anti-Corn Law League in the 1840's.

In France, the political trajectory at this time appears to be more one of reform and counter-reform occurring over shorter periods than the long-wave. Initially the country moves towards authoritarianism under Napoleon, followed by a moderate shift to the left after 1815. This is followed by a more reactionary period of the Restoration. The forces of the left do increase in influence but a first peak in militancy comes in the early downswing in 1830. A period of conservatism follows in the 1830s and is increasingly challenged in the 1840s until revolution breaks out in 1848. The end of this long-wave does witness a left upsurge, but of a revolutionary, rather than moderate, nature. Thus

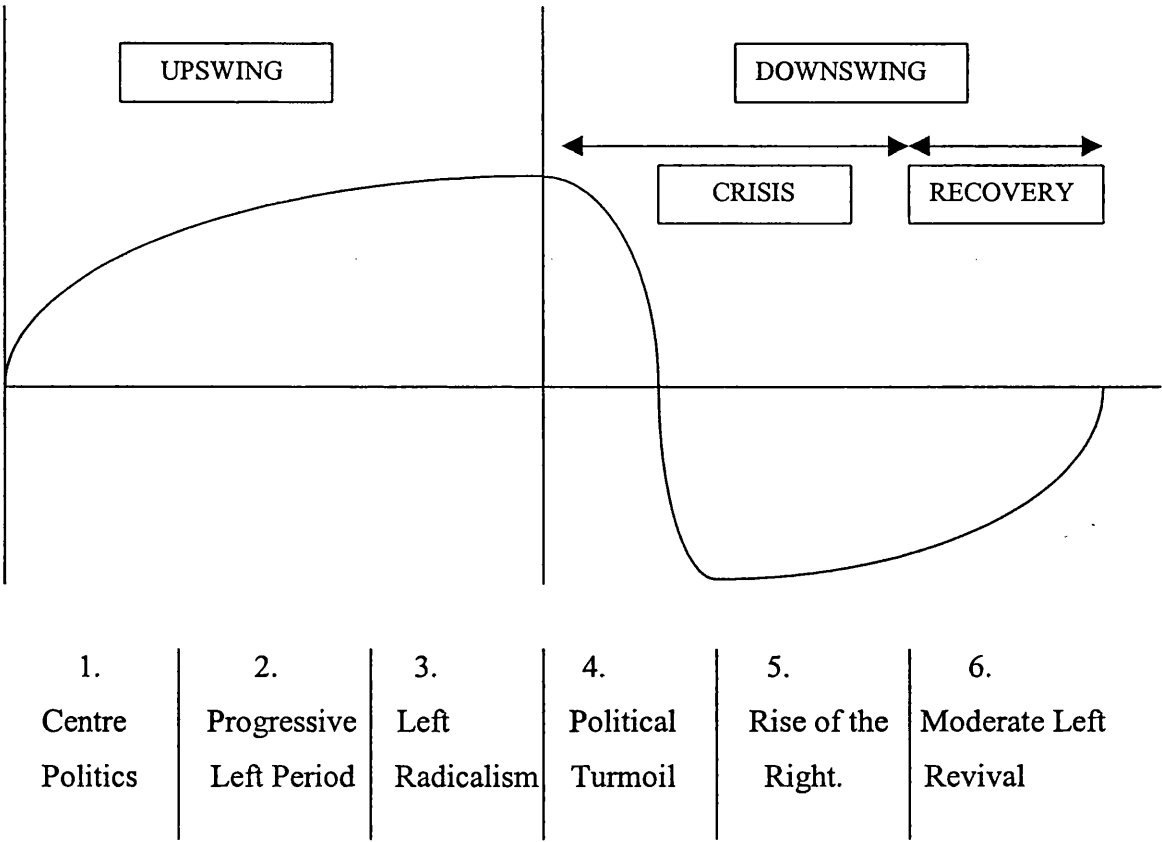
aspects of the pattern are present, but the dominant trend appears to be the continuing fall-out from the 1789 revolution – the battle between revolution and counter-revolution. In many respects this pattern also occurs in Germany, though in a more moderated form.

In the USA, the initial period sees Jeffersonian Republicanism and a wave of democratisation replace conservative Federalism. However, by 1816 the movement loses momentum, and does not arise again until the election of Jackson in 1828. This time the dominant issues are economic, rather than political, but after some successes the radical Democrats lose momentum to be replaced by more conservative Whig and Democrat administrations after 1840. Anti-slavery Republicanism does, however, gain political momentum in the 1840's leading to the Compromise of 1850. Thus elements of the long-wave political trajectory appear to be mixed within other trajectories.

The reason for the poor correlation between political change and the first long-wave probably results from the fact that France, USA and Germany still have predominantly agrarian economies, and even in Britain agriculture is still of considerable importance. As noted in Appendix B, long-waves appear to be closely connected to an economic conjecture that has gone beyond the agrarian and that is dominated by the business cycle, class struggle and relatively rapid economic growth. Further, evidence for the first economic long-wave is limited outside Britain and thus it is unlikely that the political trajectory would have solely followed an economic pattern that is only barely in existence.

Notwithstanding the problems of the first long-wave, in all four countries the following three long-waves all show a distinct pattern of political change that appears to correlate with long-wave economics. (See Figure 3) However, correlation is not proof of linkage between the two phenomena, conceivably other forces could be creating this pattern of political change. In addition, the authors discussed in Chapter 1 offered a variety of explanations as to why social and political developments might be resulting from long-wave economics. The following three chapters will turn to the question of causation. Why should long-wave economics impact upon the political and social movements of the left and right and have differing impacts at different stages of the long-wave?

Figure 3: The Political Long-Wave



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<sup>1</sup> Literature consulted for British politics during the first long-wave upswing includes:

**H.T. Dickinson**, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815*, Basil Blackwell, 1985; **E.P. Thompson**, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Pelican, 1968; **E.H. Hunt**, *British Labour History 1815-1914*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1981; **R. K. Webb**, *Modern England: from the 18th Century to the Present*, George Allen & Unwin 1980; **A. Wood**, *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914*, Longmans, 1960; **D. Read**, *Peterloo: The Massacre and its Background*, Manchester University Press, 1958; **J. Rule**, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*, Longman, 1986; **D. G. Wright**, *Democracy and Reform, 1815-1885*, Longman, 1970; **J.R. Dinwiddy**, *Radicalism and Reform in Britain 1780-1850*, Hambledon Press, 1992; **R.F. Wearmouth**, *Some Working Class Movements in the Nineteenth Century*, Epworth Press, 1948; **G. De Ruggiero**, *The History of European Liberalism*, Peter Smith, 1981; **S. MacCoby**, *The English Radical Tradition, 1763-1914*, Nicholas Kaye, 1952; **S. & B. Webb**, *History of Trade Unionism*, (2nd ed.) Longmans Green & Co. 1920; **A.E. Musson**, *Trade Union and Social History*, Frank Cass, 1974; **M. Bentley**, *Politics without Democracy 1815-1914*, Fontana, 1984; **G.D.H Cole & R. Postgate**, *The Common People 1746-1946*, Methuen & Co. 1961; **B. Hilton**, *Corn, Cash and Commerce: the economic policies of the Tory governments, 1815-1830*, OUP, 1977; **J. Belcham**, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth Century Britain*, Macmillan, 1996; **C. Behagg**, *Labour and Reform: Working Class Movements 1815-1914*, (2nd Edition) Hodder & Stoughton, 2001; **R. Bellamy**, (ed.) *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth Century political thought and practice*, Routledge, 1990.

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<sup>2</sup> Literature consulted for the American politics of the first long-wave upswing includes:

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<sup>3</sup> Literature consulted for French politics during the first long-wave upswing includes:

**R. Tombs**, *France 1814-1914*, Longman 1996; **D.M.G. Sutherland**, *France 1789-1815 Revolution and Counterrevolution*, Fontana, 1985; **G. Dupeux**, *La Société Française 1789-1960*, Armand Colin, 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Literature consulted for German politics during the first long-wave upswing includes:

**D. Blackbourn**, *The Fontana History of Germany 1780-1918*, Fontana, 1997; **J.J. Sheehan**, *German History, 1770-1866*, Clarendon Press, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Literature consulted for British politics during the first long-wave downswing includes:

**E.P. Thompson**, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Pelican, 1968; **E.H. Hunt**, *British Labour History 1815-1914*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1981; **R. K. Webb**, *Modern England: from the 18th Century to the Present*, George Allen & Unwin 1980; **A. Wood**, *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914*, Longmans, 1960; **J. Rule**, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*, Longman, 1986; **D. G. Wright**, *Democracy and Reform, 1815-1885*, Longman, 1970; **G. De Ruggiero**, *The History of*



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<sup>6</sup> Literature consulted for the American politics of the first long-wave downswing includes:

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<sup>7</sup> Literature consulted for French politics during the first long-wave downswing includes:

**R. Tombs**, *France 1814-1914*, Longman 1996; **D.M.G. Sutherland**, *France 1789-1815 Revolution and Counterrevolution*, Fontana, 1985; **G. Dupeux**, *La Société Française 1789-1960*, Armand Colin, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> Literature consulted for German politics during the first long-wave downswing includes:

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<sup>9</sup> Literature consulted for the revolutions of 1848 includes:

**R. Price**, *Revolutions of 1848*, Macmillan, 1988; **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975; **D. Blackbourn**, *The Fontana History of Germany 1780-1918*, Fontana, 1997; **J.J. Sheehan**, *German History*, Clarendon Press, 1989; **R. Tombs**, *France 1814-1914*, Longman 1996; **D.M.G. Sutherland**, *France 1789-1815 Revolution and Counterrevolution*, Fontana, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> General literature consulted for the politics of the second long-wave upswing includes:

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<sup>12</sup> Literature consulted for the American politics of the second long-wave upswing includes:

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<sup>13</sup> Literature consulted for French politics during the second long-wave upswing includes: **R.D. Anderson**, *France 1870-1914, Politics and Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977; **J-M. Mayeur**, *Les Débuts de la Troisième République 1871-1898*, Editions du Seuil 1973; **G. Wright**, *France in Modern Times* (4th Ed.) W.W. Norton & Co., 1987; **J. Bron**, *Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier Française*, (Tome I), Les Editions Ouvrières, 1968; **J.M. Thompson**, *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire*, Basil Blackwell, 1956; **G. Dupeux**, *La Société Française 1789-1960*, Armand Colin, 1964; **A. Horne**, *The Fall of Paris 1870-71*, Reprint Society, 1967.

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<sup>15</sup> General literature consulted for the politics of the second long-wave downswing:

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<sup>17</sup> Literature consulted for the French politics of the second long-wave downswing includes:

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<sup>19</sup> Literature consulted for the American politics of the second long-wave downswing includes:

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<sup>20</sup> General literature consulted for the third long-wave upswing includes:

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<sup>21</sup> Literature consulted for the British politics of the third long-wave upswing includes:

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<sup>22</sup> Literature consulted for the French politics of the third long-wave upswing includes:

**G. Wright**, *France in Modern Times*, (Fourth Edition), Norton & Co., 1987; **R.D. Anderson**, *France 1870-1914: Politics and Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977; **J. F. McMillan**, *Twentieth Century France: Politics and Society 1898-1991*, Edward Arnold, 1992; **G. Dupeux**, *La Société Française 1789-1960*, Armand Colin, 1964.

<sup>23</sup> Literature consulted for the American politics of the third long-wave upswing includes:



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<sup>24</sup> Literature consulted for the German politics of the third long-wave upswing includes:

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## CHAPTER THREE

### IDEAS and VOTING BEHAVIOUR

#### Introduction

The previous chapter established what appears to be a distinct pattern of correlation with regards to long-wave economics and the fluctuation in the fortunes of the political and social movements of the left and right. However, there still remains the question of causation, or why this correlation should occur, and as indicated in Chapter 1 a number of possible causative factors have been suggested. This chapter and the following two chapters will explore the possible causations for the changing fortunes of the political and social movements of the left and right. How do long-term changes in the economy impact on the forces of the left and right? What are the mechanisms that transmit changes in the economic to changes in the political and social?

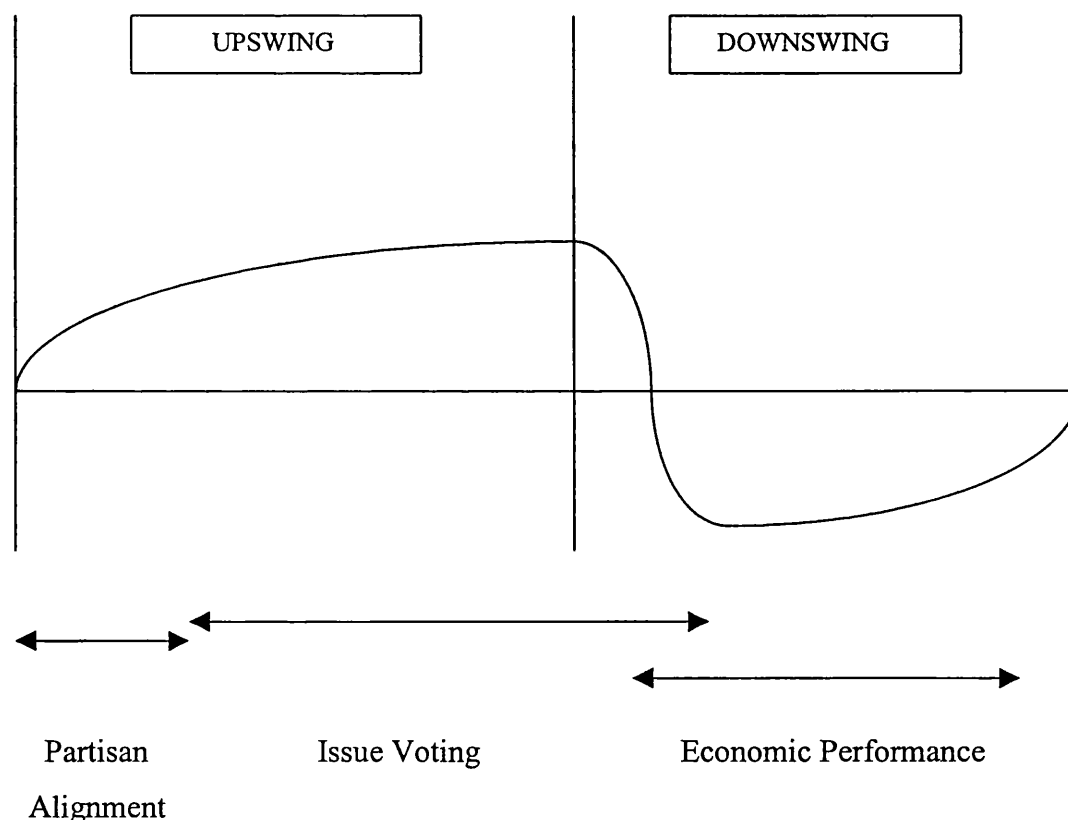
Traditionally political scientists have most commonly used three mechanisms by which to explain the dynamic nature of the political process in modern times; to explain the relatively fast pace of change that has characterised modern polities. Firstly, changes in the ideas, beliefs and thinking of a country's population. Increasingly, as democracy has become the dominant political process, this has meant the changing behaviour of voters. Secondly, and most closely associated with Marxism, the struggle between the different social classes is seen as creating and shaping a dynamic political process. Thirdly, as political parties have also become the characteristic form of political organization within democracies, so party competition is seen as an important dynamic process in modern polities. Together these three chapters will attempt to offer an explanation as to why the changing fortunes of the left and right should correlate with the presence of long-waves in the international economy.

With regards to voting behaviour, researchers have identified three main tendencies during the course of the fourth long-wave.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, a period based on *partisan alignment* which lasted from the 1940s through to the 1960s. During the course of the 1960s and 1970s, however, this gave way to *issue voting*. This in turn gave way to voting based on



*economic performance* from the late 1970s/early 1980s onwards, and was considered to be important at least until the mid-1990s. This chapter will attempt to offer an explanation as to why these trends should have occurred within the time period of a long-wave, and thus how they impact upon the political parties and movements of the left and right. It will also propose, using the chronology of Chapter 2, that this pattern has occurred at least twice before, during the second and third long-waves. Although democratic institutions were scarce during the first long-wave, there is some evidence to suggest that elements of this pattern were also in existence.

Figure 4: Trends in voting behaviour across the fourth long-wave.



### **3.1 Partisan Alignment**

Studies of voting behaviour from the 1940s through to the 1960s over a wide number of liberal democracies indicated that the dominant form of voting in this period was

partisan identification.<sup>2</sup> This was a form of voting based on loyalty to a particular political party. Voters at the beginning of the period identified with a political party and consistently voted for that party through the following elections. It was also found that the choice of party rested around a particular cleavage within each society. The most common of these national cleavages was that of social class, or *class alignment*, where the middle-class predominantly voted for the parties of the right, whilst working-class voters predominantly voted for parties of the left. Other national cleavages were those that centred upon an urban-rural divide, a centre-periphery divide or a divide based upon religious differences. Whatever the cleavage, the result was partisan alignment.

These findings were somewhat different from what had been expected. Earlier writers such as John Stuart Mill and Joseph Schumpeter had stressed the rational nature of the voter, maintaining that voting was based on a clear and thorough evaluation of policies.<sup>3</sup> Voters voted according to their conscience and intelligence. The voters in the early post-war period appeared otherwise, voting was based on loyalty and appeared unthinking. In the period of these findings, researchers concentrated largely on the mechanism by which this form of voting behaviour occurred, on the largely ahistorical assumption that voting behaviour had probably always followed this pattern. However, as the pattern began to break down in the 1960s and give way to issue voting it was realized this was a period-specific phenomenon and attempts were made to explain its existence at this particular period in history.

In general, most of the explanations for partisan alignment tended towards a structural causation.<sup>4</sup> As the tertiary, or post-industrial, sector expanded in the post-war boom, it was maintained that so did the education system and mass media. It was believed that voters were increasingly well educated and better informed and thus increasingly able to make informed decisions based on a greater level of knowledge with regards to the political process. In a society based on the service sector, it was believed that voters would vote according to issues, ideas, beliefs and attitudes, in place of the rather unthinking voters of the industrial era who were presumed to be only sufficiently educated to place their faith in the political party that most closely represented their social position.

However, there are a number of problems with a structural causation for this change in voting behaviour. Such an explanation tends to clash with much of the literature within political history. The nineteenth century is often portrayed as being marked by the ideological clash of Liberalism and Conservatism, whilst in the early twentieth century, there were the ideological clashes between Conservatism and Socialism and between Fascism and Communism to name but only two. The passion and commitment with which these battles were fought between competing ideologies appears unlikely to be the result of a rather unthinking and resigned form of popular support.

Neither is partisan alignment able to explain the changing pattern of voting within the industrial era. If industrial era voting had been entirely characterized by partisan alignment then it could be expected that the party alignments that crystallized during the onset of the industrial era in the early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century would still have been in place in the period after WW2. This would have mirrored the alliances established in the early period, and would have seen a huge urban working and middle-class vote for the Liberal/Radical/Republican parties and a small aristocratic and agrarian vote for the Conservative parties. In reality of course, the middle-class Liberal parties were a much diminished force, whilst the middle-classes voted for their former ideological enemy, the Conservatives or Christian Democrats. Working-class votes went primarily to social-democratic parties.

Partisan alignment would also be unable to explain the two great movements of the middle-classes from Liberalism to the parties of the right during the 1870s and 1880s, and later during the 1920s and 1930s. Nor could it explain why the working class broke with the liberal middle-class parties in the 1860s through to the 1880s, and established socialist parties of their own. Nor could it explain the fact that a significant section of the working class broke with Socialist parties to establish the Communist parties in the early 1920s and that the Russian revolution clearly had an ideological impact amongst left-wing radicals.

There are additional problems with the structural thesis. In Britain dealignment was found to be most marked amongst Labour voters<sup>5</sup>, whereas amongst the presumably better educated and wealthier middle-class Conservative voters partisan alignment proved more persistent. In addition, it was common in the industrial era for party loyalty to exist,

not only for individuals, but across several generations of the same family even amongst very wealthy, educated and well-informed elites – somewhat in contradiction to the idea that such voters are more likely to demonstrate a more rational nature in their voting behaviour.

It seems highly unlikely that partisan alignment was always the characteristic form of voting behaviour in the industrial era. Significant dealignments and realignments occurred within electorates before the 1960s. Neither can these have simply been some automatic response to changing social background since party loyalties shifted amongst voters remaining within the same social class. In addition party loyalty can be present or absent amongst well-educated and informed individuals. As such these objections all cast doubt upon the rise of issue voting as a product of a structural shift from an industrial to post-industrial society.

An alternative explanation of partisan alignment was offered by Himmelmweit et al.<sup>6</sup> They concluded that the strong and often enduring partisan commitments of the early post-war period resulted from an absence of distinctive policies in a time of political consensus. With little to choose between the main parties in the 1950s, voters tended to identify with that party that appeared to come closest to their own social background, using this as a ready-made voting identikit, that helped guide them through a period that offered little political choice.

“ Thus, in the United States in the 1950s, where few issues divided the voters, the decision may well have been more influenced by vote habit and party identification compared with the late 1960s and 1970s where the country was divided on such issues as the Vietnam war, minority rights, law and order and the extension of state and federal aid.”<sup>7</sup>

However, this explanation still leaves the question of why voters remained loyal to their preferred party. If the policies of the mainstream parties were very similar it would presumably be easy for voters to switch between parties, yet this was not seen to be the case. A possible alternative causation for partisan alignment could be that voters were loyal to a party that had delivered certain benefits to them in the past, when there were still major differences between the mainstream parties, and before the period of

consensus developed. Voters would associate a particular party with their own particular aspirations and became loyal to this party in the face of opposition from the other major party or parties. However, if developing party loyalty was more likely to occur during a period of political polarization, the reason as to why this would continue during a period of consensus still needs to be explained. With the rise of political polarization being dealt with below, possible reasons for the development of partisan alignment will be dealt with later in the chapter.

### **3.2 Issue Voting**

#### **A. Social Psychology**

In the late-1960s and early-1970s psephologists noticed that both partisan and class alignment were diminishing in importance in terms of voting behaviour, whilst voting based on a considered choice was increasingly important.<sup>8</sup> This was described in a number of ways; as the rise of the rational voter, value judgement voting, ideological voting or voting according to beliefs and attitudes, but most commonly as 'issue voting'. No longer were most voters faithfully voting for a chosen party, they were now evaluating party policies and performance and then making a considered judgement on which party to vote for.

As mentioned above, explanations sought for the rise of issue voting largely centred round structural changes in the economies of the developed world, notably the changing position of the working class.<sup>9</sup> Butler & Rose had earlier suggested that increased levels of prosperity had encouraged working-class voters to aspire to middle-class values and with it, vote for right-wing middle-class parties.<sup>10</sup> This 'embourgeoisement' of the working-class became a favoured explanation for the decline of partisan alignment, with others such as Franklin, suggesting that left social democrat parties had become a victim of their own success.<sup>11</sup> With the rise of the welfare state, full employment and improved economic growth, poverty was thus declining and working-class voters no longer needed parties dedicated to socialism. They were no longer attached to class-based parties and were free to vote elsewhere.

However, as outlined above there are good reasons to doubt social structure as a major source of causation for partisan alignment, and thus also its breakdown. For a start it

failed to explain the increasing level of support for the left in the 1960s/early 1970s. In addition a number of researchers found that skilled working-class voters, with generally higher rates of pay, were more likely to vote for left parties than those lower down the pay scale, thus damaging the theory of embourgeoisement.<sup>12</sup> Other researchers looked elsewhere for an explanation to the rise of issue voting, notably at the changing beliefs of voters, rather than their changing social position, and claimed that voters were not captives of their social background.<sup>13</sup> Prominent amongst this line of thinking was the work of Inglehart, who looked at the effect of economic change on political direction.<sup>14</sup>

Inglehart established a longitudinal study into the causative factors for a perceived increase in post-materialist values during the 1960s and early 1970s, and considered two major causative factors. One was the shift from an industrially based economy to that of a service-sector economy - in other words a structural causation. The other possibility considered was that the rapid economic growth of the post-war boom had altered the political values held by people living within Western Europe, Japan and North America.

Inglehart considered that both structural and economic factors had caused a shift in political values. Traditionally the major concerns of any population were those of economic well being and security - materialist values. However, during the prolonged period of economic expansion in the post-war period, there had been a general increase in levels of economic wealth, such that traditional materialist values were being replaced by post-materialist values. These included a greater concern for non-economic issues, such as human rights, free speech, the quality of democracy, concern for the environment, women's issues, along with a more supra-national, rather than parochial outlook as concerns international matters, and a greater level of participation at the political level.

Much of Inglehart's work was based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy - the idea that people first and foremost seek to meet basic subsistence needs. Once these have been attained they then pursue needs further up the need hierarchy. As each set of needs are attained, the individual then re-orientates towards a further set of needs - each level being fulfilled due to a saturation effect. Thus, those who have acquired a satisfactory level of wealth, then pursue non-material needs. These were the post-materialists of the late 1960s and early 1970s. A satisfaction gap emerged between the political aspirations of these

individuals and the perceived level of progress that the societies they inhabited had achieved.

He maintained that political changes were most notable in the social classes that had experienced the most rapid improvement in their level of wealth. Thus it was amongst the rising or aspirant middle-classes that a shift towards post-materialist values was most pronounced during this period. It was also the case that those countries that had experienced the most rapid economic growth during the post-war boom, namely Italy, France and Germany, were those that recorded the greatest increase in post-materialist values amongst their populations. Those countries' whose economies grew more slowly, such as Britain, experienced the smallest increase in post-materialist values, and a greater remaining attachment to materialist concerns.

Inglehart also concluded that the shift of significant sections of the middle-classes towards post-materialist values was responsible for the increased level of support amongst this class that left-wing parties enjoyed in the 1960s and early 1970s. Their newfound values were at odds with the materialist values traditionally promoted by governments and political parties of the right. The post-materialist middle-classes sought political change and a more egalitarian society, and since left-wing parties were most closely associated with a desire for reform and major changes to society in a more egalitarian direction, it was to these parties that the post-materialists increasingly gave their support.

In addition, Inglehart offered a further factor as to why increased economic growth would favour the parties of the left. An improving economic position provides a sense of greater security for individuals, and 'an increasing sense of security brings a diminished need for absolute rules', since individuals can tolerate greater ambiguity.<sup>15</sup> An improving economic position also increases opportunities and allows individuals greater autonomy and independence. As such they are less deferential to authority. Given that the parties of the left favour greater egalitarianism whereas the parties of the right tend to support the more hierarchical structures that already exist in society, a less deferential electorate is more likely to favour the left. Thus, increasing levels of economic wealth translate into increased support for the left for two major reasons: a desire for progressive change and less deference to authority.

With the post-materialist middle-classes voting for left parties, Inglehart's study offered an alternative explanation as to why party loyalties were breaking down, and why voters were increasingly voting on the basis of issues, rather than party loyalty. It was not simply structural changes within society but also the presence of a long economic boom. It is also noticeable that the issues that most concern voters in this period are social and political issues. In Chapter 2 it was evident that social and political issues had often been the dominant issues within the latter half of long-wave upswings, and that this trend in the 1960s and early 1970s was a repetition of earlier periods.

The 1810s had seen a wave of democratization within the USA by populations inspired by Jeffersonian Republicanism. In Britain the same period saw the rise of middle-class Radicals and working class Reformists agitating for democratic government.<sup>16</sup> The 1860s and early 1870s saw an upsurge in support for more democratic government and constitutional change, but also for social reform that improved the position of trade unionists and the working class in general. In Britain a whole proliferation of interest groups seeking social reform lobbied the Liberal party to support their causes.

The period between 1905 and 1920 saw a similar set of circumstances. In the USA, both Republicans and Democrats sought the votes of the progressive reform movements agitating for improved working conditions, extended democracy, prohibition, and the early feminist movements supporting votes for women. A similar picture emerged elsewhere as developed countries experienced a wave of democratic reform for both men and women. The Progressive Era/Belle Époque also saw the early beginnings of feminist, anti-racist, animal rights, pacifist, and internationalist movements, often thought of as a product of the 1960s onwards. As in the 1960s and early 1970s it was political and social issues that dominated the political agenda at this time. A closer look at past political trends and movements by Inglehart would have revealed the fact that post-materialist issues had emerged in periods previous to the 1960s, most notably during long-wave upswings, and thus could not simply be a product of the structural shift to a post-industrial era.



Thus Inglehart provides an essentially socio-psychological explanation for the rise of issue voting and a shift to the left at the same time. In the same vein, Beckman also used a socio-psychological explanation as to why an era of prolonged prosperity would benefit the parties and movements of the left.<sup>17</sup> Based on a theory of alternating rhythmic cycles of optimism and pessimism, he provided a purely psychological explanation for the political trends accompanying the long-wave pattern of economic behaviour. Expectations begin to rise as the economy becomes more prosperous and as the upswing progresses expectations become increasingly heightened. As increasing signs of prosperity appear, people become more outgoing and sociable.

Increasingly, electorates favour governments “whose policies allow maximum permissiveness”, self-indulgence and the minimum of restrictions. Censorship is opposed. Prosperity makes people carefree; they begin to see the world as risk-free and are increasingly willing to assume risk-taking. The parties of the left are associated with political change but a risk factor is always associated with change. But during the upswing individuals are more likely to engage in risk-taking. The left is thus likely to benefit from an electorate willing to engage in risk-taking changes.

For Beckman, towards the end of the upswing there is a more marked tendency towards left-wing politics, to such an extent that politicians are no longer able to meet the heightened expectations of the electorate. Trade-union membership and power increase, whilst interest in politics reaches a peak “as people feel that not only do they have the power to solve their own problems, but also the problems of society at large.” The increasing prosperity brings a wave of social and political legislation. Politicians promise the earth whilst people believe they are witnessing the dawn of a new era - success and prosperity it is believed are guaranteed. At the end of the upswing people believe they will soon be able to liberate themselves “from the discipline and authority of repressive social and political institutions”.<sup>18</sup> In many ways this described trend is similar to the position of Inglehart. Heightened levels of optimism and greater risk-taking encourage populations to be less deferential, challenge authority and contemplate radical change, a trend that tends to benefit the parties of the left electorally.

However, one problem with attributing the rise of issue voting, and specifically voting on political and social issues, in the 1960s to the economic growth of the post-war boom is the fact that the 1950s were just as prosperous as the 1960s, yet partisan alignment dominated the 1950s. This would appear to be contradictory. Attempts to reconcile this problem have concentrated on the existence of *generational cohorts*. A number of writers have maintained that each generation holds a distinct set of beliefs and values which differ from those before and after them. These result either from the shared experience of a common set of political developments and/or as a reaction to the values and beliefs of the preceding generation. As such they differ from a belief in *life-cycle* effects, the most common of which is that youth is radical and the aged are more moderate or conservative.

Inglehart believed that each generation was affected by the political and social developments that occurred during its youth, 'that early socialization seems to carry greater weight than later socialization.'<sup>19</sup> Thus each generation is 'imprinted' by the political, economic and social developments it experiences as it becomes politically aware, and carries this collective experience with it throughout the rest of its life. Later developments will have some impact, but to a lesser extent than early experiences. Thus he believed that the majority of voters in the 1950s had their formative experience in the more economically insecure period that predated the post-war boom.

In contrast, the generations that came of political age in the 1960s and early 1970s had only known expanding economic prosperity, and increasingly numerous within the electorate, they began to pursue different political ends to previous generations, and impact upon the political process. These generations were more interested in post-materialist values, and for the reasons given above were not necessarily loyal to any particular party but were more inclined to vote on issues and for the parties of the radical left.

This trend is also reminiscent of observations made in earlier upswings. In the 1860s, the younger generation of radical workers within the First International were attracted to the revolutionary anarchism of Bakunin, quickly replacing the more measured and moderate mutualist anarchism of Proudhon, preferred by the older generation. In the 1910's it was the younger generation of workers that was attracted to the Left Socialist

and Communist parties believing that the established Social Democrat/Socialist parties, preferred by their elders, were too staid, bureaucratic and compromised by capitalism and liberal democracy.

Thus a psychological and generational theory could be offered for the demise of partisan alignment and the rise of issue voting, and one based upon the increasing prosperity of the long-wave upswing and that explains the shift to the left during this period.

## **B. Voter Volatility and Political Polarization**

Issue voting and a shift to the left were not the only features noted within voting behaviour studies at this time. One other notable feature that accompanied the rise of issue voting was that of voting volatility.<sup>20</sup> With voters loyalties no longer fixed to one particular party it became evident that one consequence of dealignment was that party systems became less stable and more unpredictable. At a time of increased interest in ideas, attitudes, beliefs and ideologies this opens up the possibility of new parties and ideologies emerging to challenge the ones previously associated with the period of partisan alignment. Given that the economic prosperity of the upswing has usually produces a leftward shift within the electorate, the first challenge to the party system is likely to come from parties associated with the left. Indeed, at a time of heightened expectations, especially amongst the young, all long-wave upswings have seen the dominant left parties challenged from further to the left.

In the 1860s and 1870s radical, socialist and anarchist movements emerged to challenge the mainstream movements and parties associated with Liberalism and Republicanism. In the 1900s and 1910s, many Socialist parties emerged to challenge the middle-class Liberal parties of the left. The Socialists in turn were challenged by Left Socialists and anarcho-syndicalists and later Communist parties. In the 1960s the mainstream social democratic parties of the left were challenged by the New Left, and a variety of Socialist, Trotskyist, Maoist and anarchist groups in addition to the political movements concerned with post-materialist issues.

Almost invariably these developments appear to provoke a reaction within the movements of the right and an opposite response. In the 1880s, a more hard-line

imperialist Conservatism developed alongside the anti-Semitic parties of the far right, a movement that presaged the development of fascism in the 1920s and 30s. In the 1970s and 80s, the New Right developed an ideological position hostile to social democracy whilst neo-Nazism and right-wing religious fundamentalism reappeared on the political scene. All these appear to be, at least in part, a response to the rise of the radical left and had as a major aim the neutralization of radical left policies.

Many on the political right are alarmed by the development of an influential radical left, as well as the general leftward shift in the political climate. Radical political change brings the possibility of instability, revolution and a threat to vested interests. Again, with electoral volatility and issue voting in evidence, openings may appear for new parties on the right. The traditional parties on the right may be considered to be too passive or too accommodating in the face of the leftward shift, and thus offer an opening for parties on the far right to exploit voter dissatisfaction on the right. Thus, the shift to the left may also see a shift by a section of the electorate in the opposite direction, as a reaction to counter the leftward shift.

In response to these developments activists within the parties may also adopt hardened left and right positions to stem the flow of electoral support to the emerging parties. In addition, with issue voting predominant, all parties will find it necessary to engage with new ideas and issues. The result appears to be a polarization of the electorate and usually, the period of the very late upswing and early downswing is marked by the existence of the full array of political movements across the left-right spectrum. Political instability is common in this period – the 1870s, 1920s and 1970s - with governments often being short-lived, and switching between antagonistic positions on the left and right. Ideological battles are commonplace, whilst new parties and ideologies challenge the mainstream.

This tendency appears to be exacerbated once the economic difficulties of the downswing emerge; voter volatility and economic deterioration are likely to increase political instability. Initially the heightened expectations of the electorate carry over into the downswing, but governments and political parties are decreasingly able to deliver on these expectations.<sup>21</sup> Government performance comes under increasing scrutiny and often unable to deliver, government may change hands on several occasions in the early

downswing. Weak parliamentary systems may succumb to authoritarian solutions, as in the 1920s.

In a period of scarcer resources but with still high expectations, the positions of left and right may become increasingly hardened and intransigent adding to the already existing polarization within the electorate. With relatively fewer resources available for distribution, the battle to secure those resources becomes more intense. Where the mainstream parties are unable to deliver the expected goods, voters may transfer their support to the parties of the far left and far right adding further to the polarization of this period.

Thus the political instability and polarization of these periods, identified in Chapter 2, can be attributed to increasing voter volatility at a time when heightened expectations within the electorate are rapidly followed by a deterioration in the economic position – the onset of the downswing. The rise of issue voting and voting volatility, whilst partisan loyalty declines, would appear to be a major factor in the period of political turmoil that has characterised the early part of long-wave downswings.

### **3.3 Economic Performance Voting**

From the early 1980s onwards voting studies in a number of Western democracies increasingly found that the issues that most concerned voters were economic ones.<sup>22</sup> Voters were found to be concerned about high levels of unemployment, inflation, taxation and interest rates in particular, and the performance of the economy in general. Increasingly psephologists considered that voters party preference was determined by which party was believed to offer the better performance on the economy. Often this choice was based on retrospective voting – based on the performance of the incumbent party – but voting patterns also indicated that this could be based on prospective performance and thus also applied to the opposition parties as well. This trend was seen to continue at least until the mid-1990s.

The debates concerning this trend tended to centre upon methodology and the exact nature of any economic model of voting, with attempts to identify how voters evaluated their position. Explanations for this changing trend were less evident, possibly because

with so many economies facing profound problems, the reason seemed self-evident. Some suggested, somewhat ahistorically, that voters had probably always had economic performance uppermost in their minds when voting – contradicting the findings of partisan alignment in previous decades.<sup>23</sup> Those that did offer an explanation were largely based on the belief that this was simply one manifestation of issue voting, voting on the issue of the economy.<sup>24</sup>

That economic performance should become the dominant voting behaviour in this period is indeed hardly surprising. The post-war boom of 1948-73 lasted for twenty-five years and towards the end of the period rapid economic growth was taken for granted. The economic downturn after 1973 was unexpected and came as something of a shock and once it was realized that this was not simply a short-term phenomenon, voters became increasingly concerned by the state of the economy.<sup>25</sup> A return to better years was desirable or at the very least stabilization and prevention of further deterioration became a priority to voters previously used to relatively high levels of economic growth.

This is the inverse of Inglehart's causation for the rise of post-materialist values. Once economic prosperity is not guaranteed, a shift down Maslow's Need Hierarchy once more results in priority for materialist concerns. The shift to voting according to economic performance does however undermine Inglehart's causation of a shift to a post-industrial society as being a major factor in the shift to voting on social and political policies in the 1960s and early 1970s. Although Inglehart foresaw the possibilities of either a right-wing backlash or economic deterioration as being capable of slowing down or even reversing the shift to post-materialism, he optimistically believed this was not likely to be significant in a post-industrial society.<sup>26</sup> In the recession-hit 1980s, however, the industrial sector fared very poorly, huge swathes of industry being destroyed by depression, whilst the service sector continued to expand and society became more post-industrial.

Yet, in this increasingly post-industrial society, materialist issues dominated the political agendas of the 1980s and early 1990s. Unemployment levels, taxation, inflation, balanced budgets, interest rates, the ERM and EMU, were all identified as the major voting issues of this period.<sup>27</sup> At the same time the dominant shift in political ideology was towards the New Right and neo-liberalism, an ideology specifically grounded in

economic, or material, issues. Thus, even within a post-industrial society economic-based issues proved important. It therefore seems that Inglehart overestimated the importance of post-industrialism as an explanation for the rise of post-material issues, thus leaving the post-war boom, or long-wave upswing, as the main causative factor.

The chronology in Chapter 2 also indicated that voting on economic performance was not an occurrence unique to the 1980s and early 1990s. Clearly previous long-wave downswings had also given rise to voting based on economic issues and on economic performance.

In the 1820s, the Jacksonian Democrats built a coalition around groups that believed abolishing the National Bank would bring the economic stagnation of the decade to an end. In Britain, the economic depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s saw the re-launch of the Anti-Corn Law League. Agricultural protectionism and the high price of corn were believed to be preventing manufacturers from lowering wages and thus squeezing profits. At a time of economic depression and falling prices this was considered particularly damaging and led to renewed and ultimately successful efforts by middle-class Radicals to end protectionism. Elements within the aristocracy, notably Peel, believed that by ameliorating the economic position they could reduce support for further constitutional and democratic reform.<sup>28</sup>

In the second long-wave downswing it was Liberal free trade that took the blame for the economic depression that followed the financial crisis of 1873. Increasingly voters lost interest in the social, political and democratic reform that had dominated the late 1860s and early 1870s and concentrated on economic matters.<sup>29</sup> Free trade became increasingly unpopular and political parties began to support protectionist moves and the raising of tariffs. A further economic issue came to prominence in this period, that of imperialism. Imperialism offered politicians a way of convincing electorates that they were actively dealing with the economic problems of the Great Depression, whilst opening up new markets to industry.

In the third long-wave downswing, unemployment and deflation became pressing problems for political parties in the 1920s. More specifically almost every party in power at the beginning of the Slump was ousted, voters blaming the incumbent party or parties for the economic crisis of the early 1930s, the Republicans in the USA, Labour in Britain

and the mainstream parties in Germany. Opposition parties that appeared to have programmes that addressed the economic difficulties of this period were elected and once in government were either re-elected or ousted on the basis of economic policy competence. The previous incumbents were usually associated with poor economic performance and remained out of office whilst the economic problems of the 1930s persisted. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, prolonged periods of economic malaise have repeatedly resulted in economic performance becoming a priority for voters.

Thus, each long-wave downswing witnesses the importance of voting by economic performance, a factor arising from the crisis occurring within the international economy. Increasingly, parties need to be seen to be competent on the economy, indeed this issue becomes prevalent over all others. In addition, such is the level of economic crisis, that a new economic strategy needs to become established both to improve the economy and to reassure voters. Invariably the old 'economic orthodoxy' takes the blame for the crisis and a new ideology is offered to stimulate recovery.

#### **A. The Shift to the Right.**

A noticeable phenomenon of each long-wave downswing is that the political climate nearly always shifts to the right in the middle part of the downswing. There are one or two notable exceptions to this such as the Democrat victories in the 1930s and those of the Socialists in France in the 1930s and 1980s, but in general the left fare badly in the middle downswing period, particularly the far left. Using the observed changes in voting behaviour there appear to be several possible reasons as to why a deteriorating economic climate might benefit the right at the expense of the left.

Firstly, the parties of the left are likely to be more electorally successful during the long-wave upswing and thus in power when the economy first enters the crisis period of the long-wave downswing. The ruling party is likely to be associated with and blamed for the economic downturn and thus identified by voters as poor on economic performance. Given the increased importance of this factor as a form of voting behaviour this is likely to be damaging to the parties of the left, especially where electorates tend to see the parties of the right as being 'better on the economy'.



Secondly, the parties of the left have been electorally popular on the basis of their political and social programmes during the long-wave upswing. It is these that have propelled them forward and that have inspired activists on the left to become involved in political parties and movements. Further it is unlikely, given the high aspirations of the late upswing period, that these aims have all been successfully implemented, or that they will be quickly abandoned. The process of government is often a slow one and not all social and political demands can be addressed rapidly. An example of this would be the adoption of the 1989 Berlin Programme by the German SPD, a response to poor electoral results in the 1980s. For the most part the new programme addressed social and environmental issues, was aimed at gaining support from Greens and post-materialists, but failed to substantially improve the SPD's electoral success in the early 1990's.

Thus whilst the economy deteriorates and increasingly concerns the electorate, there may be a tendency for a large section of the left to insist on the continued importance of political and social problems. In particular these may be the more affluent post-materialist sections of the left who are hit less by the economic crisis, and thus lead to the possible alienation of working class voters. Working class voters who are least committed to the causes of the left may then be attracted to the parties of the right if they appear to be addressing the economic crisis. This, of course, makes the parties of the left less electable.<sup>30</sup>

The shift towards more economic matters is less of a problem for the parties of the right who were more reluctant to engage in political and social reform in the first place. Many on the right believe that the social and political experimentation of the upswing period has gone too far. Leftward change brings with it the possibility of instability and an uncertain future, a threat to vested interests and egalitarianism is believed to be based on a false notion of human nature. Reformers are never satisfied and always desire more reform. It is never entirely apparent as to where and in which direction any form of social experimentation will eventually end. Attending to economic problems offers a safer course of direction. For the right it comes more easily, for improved economic performance may be achieved without progressive redistributions of power, or even by reversing those that have been implemented, as was the case in the 1970s with the New

Right's attempt to return to a position existing before the establishment of the social-democratic compromise.

A third explanation is the inverse of the argument offered by Inglehart for explaining voting behaviour during a period of increased prosperity.<sup>31</sup> Just as voters become less deferential in a period of growing prosperity, in a period such as a long-wave downswing, economic stagnation or decline leads to greater insecurity and what Inglehart calls the 'authoritarian reflex'. Faced with economic crisis, and often associated political crises, insecure voters start to search for a 'strong leader', a powerful figure who is able to rectify a deteriorating situation. Given that the parties of the right stress a greater role and importance for leadership and respect for authority than the egalitarian-leaning left, it is the parties of the right who are more likely to provide or offer such a figure and thus more able to attract economically insecure voters.

It appears that for these reasons the political polarization and voter volatility of the early downswing give way to a period of right-wing domination once it is clear that the economy has deep-seated problems. In general it is the parties of the right that have dominated the second two-thirds of each downswing. Rosenberg, in his study of the political and social consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-96 in Central Europe<sup>32</sup> offered a particular example of this trend as he attempted to link political change with long-wave economics. Although he saw the crisis as causing structural changes within the economy, his explanation for the changing political situation was largely psychological in nature.

Following the boom years of the 'Age of Capital', the sudden, but prolonged, economic crisis after 1873 had a major psychological impact upon the population. For Rosenberg, the prolonged economic crisis and the failure of the business cycle to boom for more than brief periods "account for the gloom and the feeling of tension, insecurity, and anxiety prevalent throughout the period. Economic pessimism appeared to be deep-rooted and firmly entrenched". Further, such a climate of pessimism "was a golden opportunity for prophets of disaster" and followed a search for scapegoats upon which the economic crisis could be blamed.<sup>33</sup>

First and foremost, the architects of the economic order were blamed - Liberals and their close association with Jewish financiers. Public opinion moved against Liberalism at

the same time as anti-Semitism became widespread. With the parties of the right exploiting the changing political climate, they were able to attack the prevailing Liberal political order and place the Liberals on the defensive. By 1878, the increasingly conservative political climate gave an electoral victory to a coalition of right-wing parties, reversing nearly two decades of Liberal dominance.

According to Rosenberg, the continued economic insecurity brought on by the Great Depression caused the shift of public opinion to the right to persist and ensured the adoption of a more conservative political climate. It was this that allowed Bismarck to break his alliance with the National Liberals, create a Conservative coalition government and pursue a more distinctly conservative political programme. "Instead of controversies about political freedom, the fight for economic security became the focus of public discord". Continued economic insecurity preserved a climate of political conservatism that saw Bismarck entrench the power of the prevailing monarchical system of government and end any thought of further constitutional change.<sup>34</sup>

Bismarck and the German Conservative parties were not the only political beneficiaries of the Great Depression or second long-wave downswing. In Britain, following three decades of Liberal dominance, the Conservatives came to power in 1886 and were to remain there for most of the following twenty years. In France the right-wing Opportunists were politically prevalent between 1884 and 1900, whilst in the USA it was the conservative elements within the Democrat and Republican parties who dominated the course of events at this time.

The third long-wave downswing also saw a political shift, not only to the right, but also to the far right, most notably in the shape of fascism, which was successful in seizing power not only in Germany but in numerous other European countries. In Britain, the Conservatives dominated the 1930s with large majorities. In France no political tendency was able to gain the upper hand, as a series of Moderate, Radical and Socialist governments failed to substantially improve the economy until a centre-right Radical government presided over economic recovery from 1938 onwards. In the fourth long-wave downswing in the 1980s, Conservatism dominated British politics, in the USA, right-wing Republicans. In Germany as in much of Europe, the Christian Democrats were prevalent.

## **B. The shift to conservatism.**

In the historical chronology of Chapter 2 it was notable that the period of fifteen to twenty years into a long-wave downswing is characterized by an increasing tendency towards conservatism. In the late 1880s/early 1890s, the policies of Salisbury and the Conservatives in Britain, Bismarck and the Cartel coalitions in Germany, the Opportunists in France and both the Democrats and Republicans in the USA were largely designed to establish the superiority of the right and prevent any leftward change. In the late 1930s British Conservatives, German Nazis, French Radicals and American Democrats all attempted to preserve the new economic arrangements and political status quo. In the late 1980s/early 1990s, the Bush presidency largely concentrated on consolidating the Reaganite reforms, whilst the Christian Democrats in Germany presided over little in the way of domestic change. In France by this period Mitterrand was supporting the status quo whilst both the left and right concentrated on little other than attempts to improve the economy. The Major governments were something of an exception, though even here the pace of economic reform slowed and a consolidationist trend developed.

This period comes after the implementation of the strategy for economic regeneration. In general, little in the way of social or political reform is either attempted or implemented within this period. The priority for both voters and governments is improvement in the economy and social and political changes, especially radical ones, are perceived as jeopardizing this process and the desire for such reforms diminishes. Dramatic deviations to the left or right or the launch of controversial political or social changes may disturb or even reverse this process. The most important issue is the revival of the economy and nothing should disturb this.

Initially the new economic reform programme is supported, often enthusiastically, by sections of the electorate. However, the downswing period usually suffers a further recession before the final recovery and this may dampen enthusiasm for the programme.<sup>35</sup> Not only did the old economic programmes fail but the new one appears to

be no better. This further dampens enthusiasm for change or reform and makes voters increasingly sceptical about the possibility or desirability of change.

However, there are other reasons for the increasing conservatism of the electorate. One is that of Ingleharts' explanation for increased deference as mentioned in the section above. Beckman also provides a psychological reason as to why downswings should be associated with increasing conservatism.

"Economic hardship will produce an emotive response. When people experience pain or hardship they often become subdued, retrench, and seek some type of solace to avoid further discomfort. When people see their friends and relatives suffer a depression, and see the world as a risky place to live, they feel helpless. Individuals lose faith in their own powers. Most people believe they are in complete control of their own destinies, but during periods of severe economic dislocation, this belief is openly challenged. People become cautious, introspective, and unwilling to accept risk. They attempt to shelter themselves from uncertainty wherever possible."<sup>36</sup>

In other words, a deteriorating or poor economic climate leads to pessimism - a vast change from the excessive optimism of the late upswing. At a time of economic uncertainty and instability there is an aversion to risk-taking. Change is potentially dangerous and perceived as offering the possibility of further instability. Voters feel that they have less control over events and are more likely to defer to a higher authority.

Additionally, it is usually the right that are in power, and conservatism and a desire to preserve the status quo is what comes most easily to the political right. Much of the downswing is spent attacking the changes previously offered by the left, or blaming these for the economic deterioration and/or political instability of the earlier period. Industrial militancy can also be blamed for these occurrences. In addition to reviving the economy, the right makes efforts to either halt the advance of progressive reform or implement reversals. Overall these measures help to add to a climate in which progressive change is perceived as harmful and undesirable.

Finally, at a time of slow or negative economic growth, there are fewer economic opportunities and sections of society are less amenable to distributing economic wealth to alleviate poverty. The importance of the issue of cutting taxes in the 1980s and 1990s suggests that in a climate of economic uncertainty a significant section of voters are more

interested in their own plight. In other words, there is greater competition over scarce resources, leading to a less altruistic outlook and a greater level of self-interest, and it is unsurprising that fascism should have gained support in the 1920s and 1930s. At a time of increased competition over resources, the belief fostered by the left that a future based on egalitarian cooperation and solidarity appears to be increasingly utopian and unrealizable. The more pessimistic view of human nature being based on self-interest preferred by the right looks more realistic. It appears that progressive change is not only undesirable, but not even possible.

### **C. The Left Revival and the return to Consensus**

The final period of each long-wave downswing, the 'recovery period', has witnessed a revival of the political forces of the left, though the degree of success achieved by the left at this time has varied considerably. In Britain, the 1840s saw the rise of Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League, though they achieved significantly different levels of success. In the 1890s Liberal revivals occurred in Britain and Germany although neither were particularly strong and they achieved very little. In the USA, the Republicans finally managed to spread their economic agenda to the conservative South with the unwitting aid of the Populist movement. Socialist parties did however improve their standing at this time, revivals occurred in Germany and France whilst syndicalism also emerged in France.

In the 1940s, Labour came to power in Britain and, despite setbacks over projects such as planning and corporatism, implemented a successful programme of social and economic reform. In the USA, the NAACP revived and Truman offered the Fair Deal though neither had much success. In Germany the Social Democrats re-emerged but narrowly missed coming to power whilst the left dominated early post-war governments in France. In the mid-late 1990s there were electoral victories for the parties of the centre-left in Britain, USA, France, Germany and elsewhere, often after long periods of right-wing domination.

The possibility and reasons for a revival of the centre-left in the late 1990s were discussed by a number of psephologists.<sup>37</sup> The position of the British Labour Party was typical, if somewhat exaggerated, of that being experienced by other centre-left parties at

this time. Assessing the possibilities for a Labour revival, Rose maintained that the structural decline of the working-class now meant Labour had little or no chance of being re-elected.<sup>38</sup> However, Crewe, following the recent dominant trend in voting behaviour, maintained that whilst Labour was seen as poor on economic performance they were unlikely to accede to government, but improvement on this might allow re-election.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, Heath, Jowell & Curtice detected some change within the electorate during the 1990s and suggested that 'party image' was a major problem for Labour.<sup>40</sup> Other commentators noted a decline in the importance of economic performance and an increased emphasis on social policies such as education, health and crime.<sup>41</sup> Following both a renewal of party image and greater emphasis on social policies Labour scored a landslide victory in 1997, despite a low turnout and percentage of the vote. Assessments of this victory also concentrated on Labour's ideological re-positioning towards the centre and its shift away from a distinctly left wing stance.<sup>42</sup> With a similar position being followed by the Democrats in the USA to end their image as a left-wing 'tax-and-spend' party and the development of the 'neue mitte' by the Social Democrats in Germany this was seen as part of an international trend.

The recent nature of these findings and the possibility that some of these trends may be incidental or only transitory make an explanation of the left revival at the end of downswings using voting behaviour somewhat uncertain. However, they do at least suggest that the following reasons may explain this revival. During the course of the downswing voters become distinctly pessimistic about the possibility of implementing social and political change. At a time of economic difficulties neither are they prioritized. The electorate shifts to the right and if the parties of the left want to come to power they have little choice but to follow the electorate. In order to attain power they have to offer a distinctly less radical and somewhat more centrist agenda. The 'third way' of the 1990's in many respects was presaged by the social democratic 'middle way' adopted by the left in the 1930s and 1940s, and even earlier by the third way 'solidarisme' of the Bourgeois government in the 1890s. Other examples would be the acceptance of Liberalism by the New Model Unionists of the 1840s and the more determinist and reformist socialism encouraged by Engels in the 1880s/90s.

At the end of each downswing the economy begins to recover, albeit in a moderate way. With the worst of the economic downswing over, some voters are cautiously optimistic about the possibility of some social change. In general, the downswing has exacerbated poor social conditions and led to higher crime levels, together with a neglect of political and social issues. Voters continue to desire improved economic performance, but once this is in evidence some social and political matters can also be addressed. It is the left that is more likely to address the pressing social problems created by years of economic difficulty, assuming the left can also be trusted with the economy.

However, the economic recovery can appear fragile, and the left may have difficulties in resisting its more natural tendency of embarking on profound social and political change. Whether voters are willing to pay for these changes, bearing in mind recent economic difficulties, may also be a problem for the parties of the centre left. In addition the right will usually attempt to limit progressive reform to a minimum, and in a still largely conservative political climate, the left revival can be short-lived and unsuccessful.

Thus, a detectable shift away from voting by economic performance towards the importance of social issues together with a more moderate approach by centre-left parties appear to offer an explanation for a left revival. However, the climate of conservatism may result in this revival being short-lived.

### **3.4 Realignment**

Having discussed the reasons for the rise of issue voting and voting by economic performance and the effect these have on the political climate it is now possible to return to the question of why partisan alignment might form at the beginning of each upswing, thus helping to explain the pattern of change identified in Chapter 2. The early period of each long-wave upswing appears to be characterized by partisan alignment and consensus. As the upswing progresses, continued prosperity causes partisan dealignment and the rise of issue voting. Voting behaviour is volatile whilst the left-right dichotomy becomes increasingly polarized. If partisan alignment and voter loyalty are to be the characteristic form of voting behaviour in the early part of the next long-wave upswing, then some form of voting re-alignment needs to occur during the course of the



downswing. However, realignment would not necessarily be based on the same factors as the previous alignment – much has changed in the intervening period. Why, though should realignment occur?

When voting behaviour dealigned in the late 1960s/early 1970s there was some speculation as to whether a realignment would occur. Early theories often rested on structural changes in society, towards a divide between the industrial and service sectors, or possible other social factors and a possible shift towards voting according to region, the public/private sector divide in industry and housing.<sup>43</sup> However, to date there has been no detected realignment although a number of studies investigated whether the 1997 election in Britain might bring about a realignment in voting behaviour.<sup>44</sup>

Several alignments and realignments do however, appear to have occurred within the last two centuries, the pattern in Europe being different to that of the USA. In Europe, by the 1850s, on the left the middle and working classes supported a broadly liberal or republican agenda in contrast to the traditional aristocratic and agrarian order supported by the right. In the boom of the 1860s through to the depression of the 1870s and 1880s this dealigned. Large sections of the middle-class, fearful of socialism, trade-union militancy and economic ruin shifted to the right, whilst a small section of the working class shifted towards a largely reformist socialist position. The alignment that developed in the 1890s was of an aristocratic and middle-class right facing a reduced middle and working class left still attached to Liberalism, Radicalism and Republicanism. In addition a small section of the working class supported socialist or syndicalist positions.

In the boom of the 1910s issue voting reappeared and increased support for the middle and working-class left-wing parties occurred, to be followed by the worsening economic climate of the 1920s and 1930s. This dealigned the previous arrangement. The liberal middle-classes, initially supportive of the left were once again fearful of socialism, revolution and economic destitution and joined the Conservative or Christian Democratic right, sometimes via fascism. The working class shifted first to socialism and anarcho-syndicalism, sometimes to Communism in the upswing, and ultimately to social democracy during the 1930s and 1940s. The realignment that formed in the 1940s and 1950s was of a middle-class right and working class left, which eventually dealigned from the 1960s onwards.

In the USA,<sup>45</sup> the initial alignment of Jeffersonian Republicanism/Jacksonian Democracy versus the Federalist/Whig alignment gave way in the boom and bust of the 1830s and early 1840s. It was replaced by an alignment constituted by a Republican North opposed to slavery and a Democrat South in favour of slavery and the Compromise of 1850. The boom of the late 1860s/early 1870s and subsequent depression offered the possibility of dealignment and the two mainstream parties faced a number of third party challenges. Ultimately, however, probably as a result of the bitterness engendered by the Civil War an alignment based on regional antagonism was perpetuated. The critical election of 1896 may have allowed the Republican agenda of liberal capitalism to dominate the whole country, but the Democrats quickly re-established political control in the South and the previous alignment persisted.

The economic boom of the 1910s gave rise to issue voting, notably on progressive issues, and partisan dealignment. In the more difficult years of the 1930s, the electorate began to realign and the party system that emerged bore a stronger resemblance to the left-right European model. The New Deal was able to attract the industrial and urban working class to the Democrats whilst the middle-classes opposed to wealth redistribution opted for the Republicans. However, in rural areas the old North-South divide persisted with the conservative South still supporting the Democrats. The alignment that persisted into the 1940s and 1950s and usually associated with the New Deal coalition contained a mixture of regional and left-right elements. In the 1960s this dealigned, most notably over civil rights and the extension of the vote to blacks, with the conservative South now supporting the Republicans. Thus the regional element finally disappeared leaving the American party system further resembling the left-right dichotomy typical of European party systems – the Democrats on the left, the Republicans on the right.

Based on this history, and having rejected a structural explanation for dealignment in the 1960s/1970s in the first section of this chapter, one possible explanation for partisan alignment is that party loyalties in the early consensus period of the upswing are grounded in the ideological and economic battles of the previous long-wave. In the early part of the downswing the positions of the left and right parties become increasingly

polarized, each associated with particular policies, beliefs and ideas. Voters are judging parties initially on issues but increasingly on economic performance. To reverse the deterioration of the early downswing economic reforms need to be implemented - government needs to be seen to be doing something. In the zero-sum game of distributing resources at a time of economic slowdown there will invariably be winners and losers.

During the latter stages of the downswing voting positions are still in a state of flux but voters become increasingly aware as to which parties in government have either improved or worsened their economic and social position. Voters begin to form loyalty to the party that has improved their position, or enmity towards a party that has caused a deterioration. At a time of economic difficulties and of political conservatism these loyalties gradually become entrenched. Party loyalty is based upon preserving gains that have been made, or upon preventing further losses. In addition, as political apathy sets in towards the end of the downswing, many voters lose interest in politics, especially as the policies of the mainstream parties converge. Often it is simply easier to vote for the same party as in the previous election, rather than take the trouble of discovering how the policies of other parties differ in minor detail. This leads to the reemergence of partisan alignment.

In addition, the generation that has politically matured during the economic downswing has only known a period of difficult economic circumstances or instability. In contrast to that which emerged during the later upswing, it is cautious, conservative, materialist, averse to risk-taking and more deferential to authority. In the meantime the older generation, more likely to be interested in post-materialist affairs, has had to modify or moderate its political ambitions. Faced with declining economic conditions and opportunities during the downswing it has had to downgrade its expectations. Large sections of the electorate are now cautious, conservative and pessimistic about the future. There is a consensus on both the left and right that radical change is either not possible or not desirable, or both. Not until there is another prolonged period of economic expansion will this begin to change. In the meantime there is consensus and a new alignment in voting behaviour.

## Summary

The 'political long-wave' identified in Chapter 2, thus appears to be constituted by three (or possibly four) distinct phases of voting behaviour: partisan alignment, issue voting, voting by economic performance, and possibly a form of realignment voting. It is these changes within the electorate that contribute to the changing fortunes of the parties of the left and right. The explanation for these changes appears to be largely a psychological one, rather than a result of structural changes. Following a line of thought developed by Inglehart, much of this development can be attributed to changing economic circumstances. Material prosperity during the upswing leads to greater confidence, increased optimism, reduced deference, more risk-taking and a wider interest in political and social issues. This development benefits the political forces of the left.

However, the rise in issue voting also leads to greater electoral volatility and political polarisation. This helps give rise to the period of political turmoil that follows, especially when the economy starts to deteriorate in the early downswing period. A return to material uncertainties follows the economic deterioration and a political climate less conducive to progressive change and largely concerned with economic matters and the importance of establishing an economic strategy for recovery. This tends to benefit the right, a process that is enhanced by an increasing degree of conservatism within the electorate. Finally, the left finds it necessary to adapt to the realities of the new situation and with a more moderate agenda and a renewed interest in social reform, it becomes more electable once the worst of the economic problems appears over. However, success is not guaranteed. At this point some form of realignment becomes evident within voting behaviour, a result of voter volatility being followed by a period dominated by economic reconstruction and political conservatism.

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<sup>1</sup> For the most comprehensive coverage of these changes see: **D. Butler & D. Stokes**, *Political Change in Britain*, Macmillan, 1974; **A. Heath, J. Curtice, G. Evans, R. Jowell, J. Field, & S. Witherspoon**, *Understanding Political Change*, Pergamon Press, 1991; **S.M. Lipset & S. Rokkan**, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, Free Press, 1967; **D. Denver**, *Elections and Voting Behaviour in Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994; **P. Norris**, *Electoral Change since 1945*, Blackwell, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance: **B. Berelson, P.F. Lazarsfeld & W.P. McPhee**, *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a Presidential campaign*, University of Chicago Press, 1954; **P.F. Lazarsfeld, B.R. Berelson & H. Gaudet**, *The People's Choice*, Duell, Sloan & Pierce, 1944; **D. Campbell, P.E. Converse, W.E. Miller, & D.E. Stokes**, *The American Voter*, Wiley, 1960; **D. Butler & D. Stokes**, *Political Change in Britain*, Macmillan, 1974; **R. Rose** in *Electoral Behaviour*, Free Press, 1974, and **A. Lijphart** 'Political Parties' in **D. Butler, A. Ramney & H.R. Penniman** (eds), *Democracy at the Polls*, AEI Press, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> **J. Schumpeter**, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Allen & Unwin, 1943; **J.S. Mill**, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government*, J.M. Dart, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> **D. Denver**, *Elections and Voting Behaviour in Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994; **P. Norris**, *Electoral Change since 1945*, Blackwell, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> **D. Denver**, *Elections and Voting Behaviour in Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> **H. T. Himmelweit, P. Humphreys, & M. Jaeger**, *How Voters Decide*, Open University Press, 1985, pp.4-10.

<sup>7</sup> **H. T. Himmelweit, P. Humphreys, & M. Jaeger**, *How Voters Decide*, Open University Press, 1985, p.10.

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance: **H. T. Himmelweit, P. Humphreys, & M. Jaeger**, *How Voters Decide*, Open University Press, 1985; **M.N. Pederson**, 'Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility in European Party Systems: 1948-1977', and **M. Maguire**, 'Is There Still Persistence? Electoral Change in Western Europe 1948-1979', both in **H. Daalder & P. Mair** (eds), *Western European Party Systems*, Sage, 1985. **N. Nie, S. Verba, & J. Petrocik**, *The Changing American Voter*, Harvard University Press, 1979; **I. Crewe & D. Denver**, *Electoral Change in Western Democracies*, Croom Helm, 1985; **M. Franklin, T. Mackie & H. Valen et. al.**, *Electoral Change*, Cambridge University Press, 1992; **H. Schmitt & S. Holmberg**, 'Political Parties in Decline?' in **H-D Klingemann & D. Fuchs** (eds), *Citizens and the State*, Oxford University Press, 1995; **S. Popkin**, *The Reasoning Voter*, University of Chicago Press, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> See for instance: **B. Sarlvick & I. Crewe**, *Decade of Dealignment*, Cambridge University Press, 1983; **R.T. McKenzie & A. Silver**, *The Working-Class Tory in England*, in **P. Worsley**, *Problems of Modern Society*, Penguin, 1972; **E. A. Nordlinger**, *The working-class Tory*, *New Society*, 13/10/66; *Working-Class Tories*, MacGibbon & Kee, 1967; **J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, & J. Platt**, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour: The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour; The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge University Press, 1968/69; **F. Parkin**, *Middle-Class Radicalism*, Manchester University Press, 1968; **F. Parkin**, *Class Inequality and Political Order*, Paladin, 1972; **B. Jessop**, *Traditionalism, Conservatism and British Political Culture*, Allen & Unwin, 1974; **M. Franklin**, *The Decline of Class Voting*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> **D.E. Butler & R. Rose**, *The British General Election of 1959*, Frank Cass, 1960.

<sup>11</sup> **M. Franklin**, *The Decline of Class Voting*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

<sup>12</sup> **E. A. Nordlinger**, *The working-class Tory*, *New Society*, 13/10/66; *Working-Class Tories*, MacGibbon & Kee, 1967; **J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, & J. Platt**, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour: The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour; The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge University Press, 1968/69.

<sup>13</sup> See for instance, **B. Sarlvick & I. Crewe**, *Decade of Dealignment*, Cambridge University Press, 1983; **R.T. McKenzie & A. Silver**, *The Working-Class Tory in*

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England, in **P. Worsley**, *Problems of Modern Society*, Penguin, 1972; **F. Parkin**, *Middle-Class Radicalism*, Manchester University Press, 1968; **F. Parkin**, *Class Inequality and Political Order*, Paladin, 1972; **H. T. Himmelweit, P. Humphreys, & M. Jaeger**, *How Voters Decide*, Open University Press, 1985.

<sup>14</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>15</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> This was despite the uneven impact of the Napoleonic Wars upon the economy at this time. In particular, economic resources were diverted from manufacturing to agriculture, causing particular problems within the manufacturing sector.

<sup>17</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave*, Milestone Publications, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave*, Milestone Publications, 1983, pp.34-47.

<sup>19</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> See for instance; **B. Sarlvick & I. Crewe**, *Decade of Dealignment*, Cambridge University Press, 1983; **D. Denver**, *Elections and Voting Behaviour in Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994; **P. Norris**, *Electoral Change since 1945*, Blackwell, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> A number of articles appeared in the 1970s and centred upon this phenomenon, identifying the period as one characterised by 'government overload' or a 'crisis of governability'. See for instance, **A. King**, "Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s" *Political Studies*, 23 pp.284-96, 1975; **J. Douglas**, 'The Overloaded Crown' *British Journal of Political Science* 6.4 pp. 483-505, 1976; **N. Tiratsoo**, *From Blitz to Blair: a new history of Britain since 1939*, Phoenix, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> This trend appears to begin with **M. Fiorina**, *Retrospective voting in American national elections*, Yale University Press, 1979. See also: **M. Lewis-Beck**, *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*, University of Michigan Press, 1991; **H. Norpeth, M. Lewis-Beck & J-D Lafay** (eds), *Economics and Politics*, University of Michigan Press, 1991; **H. Norpeth**, *Confidence Regained: Economics, Mrs. Thatcher and the British Voter*, University of Michigan Press, 1992; **D. Sanders & S. Price**,

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'Economic expectations and voting intentions in the UK 1979-87: a pooled cross-section study' University of Essex, 1992; **D. Sanders**, 'The economy, political forecasting and the marketing of UK political parties', University of Essex, 1995; **D. Sanders**, 'The real economy and the perceived economy in popularity functions: how much do voters need to know?: a study of British data 1974-1997, University of Essex, 1999; **D. Sanders**, 'Voting Behaviour in Britain: Lessons of the 1980's', *Contemporary Record*, February 1991; **A. Heath, R. Jowell, & J. Curtice**, *How Britain Votes*, Pergamon Press, 1985; 'Trendless fluctuation: a reply to Crewe', *Political Studies*, 1987; **A. Heath, J. Curtice, G. Evans, R. Jowell, J. Field, & S. Witherspoon**, *Understanding Political Change*, Pergamon Press, 1991; **I. Crewe**, 'On the death and resurrection of class voting: some comments on how Britain votes', *Political Studies*, 1986; **I. Crewe**, 'Changing votes and unchanging voters', *Electoral Studies*, December 1992.

<sup>23</sup> **D. Sanders & S. Price**, 'Economic expectations and voting intentions in the UK 1979-87: a pooled cross-section study' University of Essex, 1992; **D. Sanders**, 'Voting Behaviour in Britain: Lessons of the 1980's', *Contemporary Record*, February 1991.

<sup>24</sup> **I. Crewe**, 'On the death and resurrection of class voting: some comments on how Britain votes', *Political Studies*, 1986; **I. Crewe**, 'Changing votes and unchanging voters', *Electoral Studies*, December 1992.

<sup>25</sup> This line of thinking is followed by Beckman and van Duijn in explaining shifting attitudes in the early part of downswings. **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave*, Milestone Publications, 1983; **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long Wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>26</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>27</sup> **H. Norpeth, M. Lewis-Beck & J-D Lafay** (eds), *Economics and Politics*, University of Michigan Press, 1991; **H. Norpeth**, *Confidence Regained: Economics, Mrs. Thatcher and the British Voter*, University of Michigan Press, 1992; **D. Sanders**, 'Voting Behaviour in Britain: Lessons of the 1980's', *Contemporary Record*, February 1991;

<sup>28</sup> **M. Lustzig**, 'Solving Peel's Puzzle. Repeal of the Corn Laws and Institutional Preservation' *Comparative Politics* Vol. 27 No.4 July 1995 pp.393-408, 1995.



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<sup>29</sup> **H. Rosenberg**, Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe, *Economic History Review*, 1943, Vol. 13, No's. 1&2.

<sup>30</sup> For the election of Thatcher and Reagan in the late 1970s/early 1980s much was made of the shift in voting preferences of the skilled working-class, traditionally supporters of Labour and the Democrats and giving rise to the concepts of 'Basildon Man' and the 'Reagan Democrats'.

<sup>31</sup> **R. Inglehart**, Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies, Princeton University Press, 1997.

<sup>32</sup> **H. Rosenberg**, Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe, *Economic History Review*, 1943, Vol. 13, No's. 1&2, pp.58-73.

<sup>33</sup> **H. Rosenberg**, Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe, *Economic History Review*, 1943, Vol. 13, No's. 1&2, p.62.

<sup>34</sup> **H. Rosenberg**, Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe, *Economic History Review*, 1943, Vol. 13, No's. 1&2, pp.61-65.

<sup>35</sup> This is offered as a reason for the decline in support for the New Deal in the 1930s, (**M. Barone**, *Our Country: the Shaping of America from Roosevelt to Reagan*, Free Press, 1992) and for neo-liberal economics and Reaganism in the early 1990s (**W.C. Berman**, *America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) John Hopkins University Press, 1998)

<sup>36</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave*, Milestone Publications, 1983, p. 39.

<sup>37</sup> The possibilities of such a trend were discussed by several psephologists, see for instance: **R. Rose**, 'Long-term structural change or cyclical fluctuations? The 1992 Election in dynamic perspective', *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1992; **I. Crewe**, 'Why did Labour lose (yet again) ?', *Politics Review*, September 1992; **A. Heath, R. Jowell & J. Curtice**, 'Can Labour win?' in **A. Heath, R. Jowell, J. Curtice & B. Taylor** (eds), *Labour's Last Chance?*, Dartmouth Publishing, 1994; **R. Rose & I. McAllister**, noted the growing importance of 'political values' in determining voter choice during this period, *The Loyalties of Voters*, Sage, 1990; **D. Sanders & M. Brynain**, 'The Dynamics of Party Preference Change in Britain, 1991-1996', *Political Studies*, 1999, XLVII, pp.219-239; **P. Riddell**, Worries at the front of Blair's mind, *The Times*, 7/1/2000; **G. Evans**, Economics

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and politics revisited: exploring the decline in Conservative support, 1992-1995, *Political Studies*, 47, 1999, pp.139-151.

<sup>38</sup> **R. Rose**, 'Long-term structural change or cyclical fluctuations? The 1992 Election in dynamic perspective', *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1992.

<sup>39</sup> **I. Crewe**, 'Why did Labour lose (yet again) ?', *Politics Review*, September 1992.

<sup>40</sup> **A. Heath, R. Jowell, & J. Curtice**, 'Can Labour win?' in **A. Heath, R. Jowell, J. Curtice & B. Taylor (eds)**, *Labour's Last Chance?*, Dartmouth Publishing, 1994.

<sup>41</sup> **R. Rose & I. McAllister**, noted the growing importance of 'political values' in determining voter choice during this period, *The Loyalties of Voters*, Sage, 1990; **D. Sanders & M. Brynkin**, 'The Dynamics of Party Preference Change in Britain, 1991-1996', *Political Studies*, 1999, XLVII, pp.219-239; **P. Riddell**, 'Worries at the front of Blair's mind', *The Times*, 7/1/2000; **G. Evans**, 'Economics and politics revisited: exploring the decline in Conservative support, 1992-1995', *Political Studies*, 47, 1999, pp.139-151.

<sup>42</sup> **I. Budge**, 'Party policy and ideology: reversing the 1950s?' in **G. Evans & P. Norris (eds)** *Critical Elections: British Parties and Voters in Long-Term Perspective*, Sage, 1999.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance; **P. Dunleavy & C.T. Husbands**, *British Democracy at the Crossroads*, Allen & Unwin, 1986. Inglehart posited the possibility of a realignment of a left-wing post-materialist middle-class and a right-wing materialist working class. **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>44</sup> These were collected in **G. Evans & P. Norris (eds)** *Critical Elections: British Parties and Voters in Long-Term Perspective*, Sage, 1999. The conclusion of the editors was that the 1997 election was probably not a critical election, despite the fact that there had been a distinct shift in Labour's ideological position. There was no hard evidence for a realignment, though if Labour was able to secure partisan loyalty amongst the large number of younger voters that supported their new position at this election, then a new alignment was possible.

<sup>45</sup> A considerable body of literature has developed over the years with regard to political alignments, critical elections and realignments within American politics. The most notable exponents of these theories have been V. O. Key (*Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*, Thomas Y Crowell, 1942), J.L. Sundquist (*Dynamics of the Party System*:

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Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States, The Brookings Institute, 1983) and W. D. Burnham (The American Party Systems: stages of political development, Oxford University Press, 1967; The Current Crisis in American Politics, Oxford University Press, 1982).

However, the emphasis of these studies has been more concerned with the positions of the major parties rather than the behaviour of electorates, though in a functioning democracy the two are obviously inter-linked. Although variations occur on the exact chronology of these changes, most accounts broadly endorse the following pattern:

1<sup>st</sup> party system: 1800-1828 Jeffersonian Republicanism (dominant) versus Federalist,  
2<sup>nd</sup> party system: 1828-1850s Jacksonian Democrats (dominant) versus Whigs,  
3<sup>rd</sup> party system: 1850s-1890s Republicans versus Democrats, one party domination did not occur, this was an era of close party competition,  
4<sup>th</sup> party system: 1896-1930s Republicans (dominant) versus Democrats,  
5<sup>th</sup> party system: 1932/6 – 1960s/1980s New Deal Democrats (dominant) versus Republicans.

There is then uncertainty about the change from a 5<sup>th</sup> to a 6<sup>th</sup> party system,

6<sup>th</sup> party system: 1968 - ? Republicans (dominant) versus Democrats,  
1980 - ? Reaganite Republicans (dominant) versus Democrats.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CLASS STRUGGLE and LONG-WAVE ECONOMICS**

#### **Introduction**

In recent decades the changing nature of voting behaviour has been an important concept in explaining the dynamic of the political process and thus the changing fortunes of the left and right. However, it is not without its rivals, one of which is the role of class conflict. Many political history narratives and theories have involved the use of social class as a means of identifying the different actors in any given historical situation and their likely motivations, actions and goals. Further, since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the competition between social classes has also been seen as a key factor in creating a dynamic political process. Although, the struggle between the aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie was a key component of the political battles of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, attention has increasingly turned towards the struggle between employers and employees, the middle classes and the working class.

The political parties of the left and right have often been closely linked with particular social classes and if class conflict is a key component of the modern political process it could be expected to have an important impact on the fortunes of the left and right. In addition, historically, there have been close links between trade-union movements and working-class parties of the left, whilst employers federations have also, at times, been supportive of particular political parties. As such the changing fortunes of these two social movements and their importance in modern society might also be expected to have an important impact on the fortunes of the left and right, and thus class struggle theories may help to explain the pattern found in Chapter 2.

As reviewed in Chapter 1, a number of authors have linked changes in class struggle activity, trade union membership and other features of industrial relations to changes in long-wave economics.<sup>1</sup> In general, in recent years, these authors are largely agreed upon a common pattern of correlation that links features of industrial relations to long-wave economics, although there is considerably less agreement on why this pattern occurs.

The general pattern agreed upon is that the level of worker mobilization tends to rise during periods of economic prosperity, reaching a peak of intensity towards the end of long-wave upswings. A typical upswing pattern is one of low, but rising, levels of trade union membership and strike activity in the first half of the upswing. The second half of the upswing sees a generalized increase in strike activity and union membership, until a peak in militancy is reached in the final three or four years of the upswing. Screpanti describes this peak in militancy as proletarian, general, autonomous and radical.<sup>2</sup> In the downswing this trend is reversed, levels of worker mobilization decrease to a low point mid-way through the downswing. Some authors also recognize a revival in mobilization towards the end of the downswing though there is somewhat more disagreement on this.

This chapter will assess the competing theories put forward to explain this pattern of worker mobilization, and explore the possible implications of this pattern of mobilization for the political forces of the left and right.

#### **4.1 Long-Wave Upswings**

For structuralists, a major feature that both causes and enables political change is the presence of a class-divided society. The existence of social structures both enables and defines the limits to which political change can take place. All modern societies have been marked by divisions based on social class, and these often determine the major political fault-lines within any given society. Within such a stratified society conflicts of interest will almost inevitably occur, and the way in which they do so, is according to a number of theorists structured by the path of the long-wave.

Cronin, developed a **structural** explanation linking long-waves and worker mobilization drawing on theories developed by Gordon and Hobsbawm, in addition to Schumpeter's theory of waves of innovation driving the long-wave process forward.<sup>3</sup> Gordon saw the processes of depletion and regeneration of the economic infrastructure during downswings as being closely tied to the constitution and reconstitution of the social structure.<sup>4</sup> Using this as a basis, Cronin closely linked the rise and fall in the fortunes of organized labour and proletarian insurgencies to the pattern of the long-wave.

In terms of the history of working-class protest he largely follows the theory outlined by Hobsbawm in *Labouring Men*.<sup>5</sup>

According to Hobsbawm, at some point in the mid-nineteenth century, industrial workers typically began to protest at the height of the trade-cycle, rather than during poor economic times as had been the case with agricultural workers. For Cronin, this came about, partially as workers learnt to adapt to a new economic environment and to press for changes at the most propitious time, but above all for structural reasons. Each new upswing in the long-wave recreates the working class. With social structure tied intimately to the economic infrastructure, each new upswing and its new technological innovations brings with it a new set of workers - "long waves, specifically the upswings of long waves, do not simply produce prosperity and economic growth, but are profoundly innovative in terms of social relations as well"<sup>6</sup>.

As such, each new manifestation of the working class attempts to assert its own interests within wider society. Each change implies "different possibilities and patterns of collective organization", the chance to "redraw the lines of class cleavage throughout society and the parameters of collective action".<sup>7</sup> As the working-class exerts itself during the upswing, there is an increase in industrial action, union membership and left activity all of which lead to an insurgent peak of strike activity found at the end of each long-wave.

This explanation would not of course necessarily apply to only the working class. The emergence of any new social class after a major restructuring of the economy would likely see that social class attempting to project both its political and economic demands. Quite likely the prevailing possible conditions in which this new class emerges will not be entirely to its liking and at a time of confidence it will attempt to alter the social, political and economic conditions in such a way as to make its existence more amenable. Thus, such a process could also apply to the emergence of the industrial bourgeoisie in the early nineteenth century. In Britain, for instance, this class had two long-lived political upsurges, those between 1812 to 1832 and between 1860 and 1874, as it attempted to incorporate itself into the political mainstream at the expense of the landed aristocracy. As part of this process it introduced a substantial raft of political, social and economic legislation that suited the particular needs of this social class.

Cronin's explanation would thus apply to the emergence of any social class. However, a weakness of this structural approach is that it does not identify the specific mechanisms by which a particular social class might mobilize once it has identified its overriding interests. New social classes may emerge or be re-made but why does their political mobilization follow a particular pattern? For this it is necessary to turn to other explanations.

Implicit within many theories attempting to explain higher levels of worker mobilization is the assumption that low levels of unemployment greatly favour the position of the working class.<sup>8</sup> During a long-wave upswing forces in the **labour market** appear to work in favour of the workforce. Long-wave upswings have been characterized by low levels of unemployment, typically averaging less than 5% (See Table 1, Appendix B), at a time of increased demand for labour. In particular, shortages of skilled and semi-skilled labour lead to an improved bargaining position for workers in these categories. Both wages and working conditions can be improved easily if labour scarcity is a continued problem for employers. This also has the effect of raising the general wage levels even amongst unskilled workers.

In addition, at times of economic boom and when profits are easily made, employers will not want to see production paralyzed for long periods of time. They will want to settle disputes quickly, often conceding the demands of organized labour, at a time when high levels of profit also allow concessions to be made with relative ease. However, although a belief in the ability to effect change in the workplace and favourable market forces are conducive to worker mobilization, a mechanism for effecting change is still needed.

One approach that linked changes in the level of worker mobilization to long-waves and using a largely **psychological** explanation was provided by Screpanti.<sup>9</sup> In an attempt to explain the recurring working-class insurgencies at the end of each long-wave upswing, he maintained that the level of working-class militancy is determined by two factors - achievement and frustration. During the course of the long-wave upswing, the high employment levels and greater job security that economic growth brings produces greater workers' self-confidence. As economic conditions improve workers press for greater claims, and, at a time of prosperity employers are able to offer better wages and

working conditions. As a result, the level of achievement increases, but as achievements are consolidated so greater expectations are raised. However, as the level of demands rises it begins to outstrip achievements – there is a limit as to what is available. This leads to a high level of frustration, which is amplified by the arrival of a new more militant generation of younger workers. This frustration explodes into a militant working-class insurgency at the end of the long-wave upswing.

However, there are a number of problems with this explanation. Firstly, the level of success achieved by industrial action at the end of the upswing is typically higher than at any other time in the long-wave. Each upswing peak has seen a notable pay explosion, indicating a high degree of success in raising wages. This was the case in the period 1917-20 and also during the 1968-74 strike wave, when wages often rose well above the rate of inflation. In addition, it is common in this period for workers to achieve a reduction of working hours and other improvements in working conditions. In the early 1870s many British workers secured the 9-hour day, whilst during 1918-20 the 8-hour day and 48-hour week were secured in a number of countries. Finally much of the legislation favourable to workers organizations has been secured in this period, British trade-unions enjoyed a notable run of success between 1867 and 1876. Typically strikes are short-lived and often achieve the demands put forward by labour. It is thus unlikely that frustration is a motivating force at this point in the long-wave.

Kelly offers an alternative explanation for this militancy based on **strike effectiveness**.<sup>10</sup> The peak in industrial militancy is not a result of frustration but quite the opposite, a result of success. Reviewing the situation between 1908 and 1920 he concludes;

“As the scale of strike activity increased, so did the win rate, and as the win rate increased, bargaining coverage rose, more workers perceived unions to be effective and joined them, which in turn enabled more strikes to be called... and so on.”<sup>11</sup>

In other words success breeds success. Once strike action is perceived to be successful in one area, usually a key group of workers, other workers calculate that the likelihood of success is also high in their own industry leading to a generalized strike wave. This suggests that Screpanti's causation of frustration is incorrect, and that achievement, resulting from high levels of employment, is a more likely factor in generating a



generalised wave of militancy. As with theories of voting behaviour, it is increased levels of confidence that appear to be driving higher levels of worker mobilisation.

Kelly also, however, considered that a heightened awareness of injustice might be at the root of worker militancy during upswings. Likewise, Phelps Brown, in an attempt to explain the pay explosion of the late 1960s/early 1970s, maintained that a raised awareness of 'relative deprivation', or of being less wealthy than others, increased during the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> Possibly due to the impact of television many workers saw that others had benefited from the boom to a greater extent than they had, due to the uneven distribution of wealth as it was created.

However, somewhat in contradiction of this, Kelly also found that the number of discrimination cases taken to citizens advice bureau's was actually higher in the downswing years of the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> This may indicate a higher level of perceived injustice at this point in time, or possibly that strikes are used when they are likely to be successful and other means of resolving injustice used at other times. It may not be the case that awareness of injustice or relative deprivation is the motivating factor here, since this is always present in a society where wealth/power is unevenly distributed. An alternative explanation might be that there is always an awareness of injustice, but only at certain times is there a sufficient level of confidence that industrial action is capable of addressing this.

Writing in 1975, Phelps Brown followed a further line of thinking in attempting to explain the rise of worker militancy and the pay explosion between 1968 and 1973.<sup>14</sup> He used a largely **generational** approach for an explanation of this period of union militancy, and likened it to the period of worker militancy that occurred between 1910 and 1920. He maintained that both periods of militancy resulted from a very similar set of conditions – raised expectations, trade union expansion, a high level of strike success and full employment. Both followed long periods of buoyant economic expansion, so much so that the generations growing up during these periods knew only increasing prosperity, and were oblivious to the difficult economic times that preceded them.

The early part of both these periods of prosperity (Phelps Brown does not refer to long-waves) were relatively tranquil in terms of class struggle activity. This, he maintains, was

because the generation that had entered into the workforce during the previous difficult economic conditions was cautious and conservative in its outlook. Having experienced periodic bouts of high unemployment, economic crises and thus high levels of job insecurity, this generation of workers was not inclined to industrial militancy. They placed job security before increased income. However, during the prolonged periods of prosperity that followed, the workforce was increasingly made up of a younger generation that had not experienced the hard times of the older generation.

This younger generation had known only increasing levels of wealth and expected continuing improvements and thus had higher aspirations and were more optimistic about the possibility of change than older generations. These younger generations of workers reached a critical mass within the workforce by 1968, by which time they constituted 75% of the workforce, and the result was a period of union militancy and a pay explosion.

He also described the way in which the absence of unemployment during the economic booms changed the mindset of workers. At times of high unemployment workers were subordinate within the corporate hierarchy, since they were easily replaced from within the reserve army of labour that existed. The absence of unemployment during protracted periods of economic prosperity, however, removed a major weapon in the employers' disciplinary armoury. With the threat of the sack or redundancy no longer effective, workers became more assertive, more independent of employers and more likely to challenge the prevailing working arrangements. Workers also began to question the very nature of the society that they lived in, and their subordinate position within it, leading to the political upheavals of the periods around WW1 and around 1968, and an increased level of interest in workplace occupations and socialism. Thus the major causation for periods of worker mobilization was to be found in a belief that existing injustices could be rectified.

The above discussion indicates that heightened levels of confidence are key to initiating high levels of worker mobilisation, but there is still the question of how this mobilisation is effected. **Organizational** arguments, such as that of Kelly, have looked at the way in which the changing nature of trade-union organisation affects the ability to

mobilize.<sup>15</sup> To effect successful mobilization it is necessary that workers have the appropriate organizational means to do so. In the modern era, this has effectively meant trade union or associated bodies. It is also likely that these bodies will be affected by the economic climate within which they operate. It could be expected that the very different economic climates of the long-wave upswing and downswing would have markedly different effects upon the ability of workers organizations to operate.

In the economic expansion of the long-wave upswing, crises and recessions are few and relatively mild, thus labour movements are likely to find it considerably easier to expand their organizations without the major disruptions caused by economic crises. High levels of employment provide a larger pool of possible adherents, and all long-wave upswings have seen a notable rise in union membership and density, at first slowly, but dramatically towards the end.<sup>16</sup> In addition, with higher consumer demand and rising profits, employers are able to concede more of the demands of organized labour. Unions become associated with successful bargaining thus attracting more members hoping to share in elevated levels of success.

The absence of damaging periods of high unemployment also allows greater continuity at the rank-and-file organizational level. It is difficult for employers to blacklist or intimidate union activists at times of full employment. Rank-and-file activists are able to build up levels of organization unhindered by high unemployment, periodic recession and employer intimidation. This process allows a gradually improving ability in the use of the strike weapon (or other forms of industrial activity) and an improved learning of how it can be most effectively used and with least damage to union members.

It might be expected that changes in the long-wave would have a comparable effect upon employers' federations.<sup>17</sup> Upswings bring prosperity, a larger number of businesses and thus potential members, together with an influx of funds and greater lobbying possibilities. Conversely downswings bring bankruptcy and fewer potential members and funds and thus reduced lobbying possibilities. However, the acute variations experienced by organized labour do not appear to be experienced quite so dramatically by employers' federations. Even at the depth of the downswing, employers federations do not suffer the range of hardships being experienced by trade-union members - persecution and intimidation, a hostile media and government and possible anti-union legislation. Elite

economic groups usually have greater access to power resources and a thus a greater ability for political leverage. Thus employers federations do not suffer to the extent of trade unions during long-wave downswings. When the upswing returns both employers and trade-union federations benefit, but the unions start from a lower base and their position thus shows a relatively more acute improvement throughout the upswing.

Thus a number of factors are needed to explain the pattern of worker mobilization in upswings described by long-wave theorists. Firstly a structural element that sees the expansion of new sections of the working class at a time of low unemployment and a beneficial labour market. In addition, with this economic expansion arrives a younger generation of workers uninhibited by the experience of previous economic difficulties. At first, worker mobilization rises only slowly but, aided by low levels of unemployment, these forces accumulate, union membership and density rises, organization improves and strike effectiveness increases, and so confidence soars leading to an explosion in worker militancy at the end of the upswing.

### **The Effect on the Left and Right**

In general, given the often close link between union movements and the parties of the left, it might be expected that increased worker mobilization would tend to benefit the political parties and movements of the left. Typically, the political forces of the left draw most of their support from the subordinate social classes within society. Long-wave upswings are characterized by increased levels of economic activity and thus increasing levels of employment. New sectors of economic activity, new technologies and new innovations also produce a changing workforce, much of which will initially be in a subordinate position in society. The potential support for political movements supporting subordinate social classes is thus improved, notably for the left since its aim is a progressive redistribution of power within society.

Indeed this appears to have been the case in each upswing. During the 1860's Liberal, Socialist, Radical and Republican movements all gained increased momentum, in part due to increased support from working-class organisations. During the third upswing, Socialist parties enjoyed a notable and prolonged upsurge in membership and electoral

support from the working class. Again, in the 1960's left parties and movements enjoyed increased support and membership at a time of increased worker mobilisation. Initially, at least, the heightened level of confidence amongst the working class appears to translate into improved prospects for the left.

However, one major factor may work against the parties of the left at such a time. In a study of nineteenth century labour movements, Hunt found a direct relationship between industrial action, political action and the ups-and-downs of the short-term business cycle.<sup>18</sup> Over the short-term, when the business cycle improved and economic conditions were advantageous, workers concentrated on industrial action, since they were most likely to effect gains at this time. Conversely, during economic recessions, attention shifted towards effecting change through the political process, since gains were unlikely to be extracted from employers in the workplace during difficult times, or in order to do so may have proved extremely damaging to trade union movements. At such times workers were more likely to turn to the parliamentary process to effect gains, a classic case being the Chartist movement at the depths of the 1842 depression.

As such, the period at the end of the long-wave upswing, which is characterized by an intense peak in industrial militancy by organized labour, could actually witness a decrease in support for the parliamentary parties of the left amongst the working class. With gains being effected in the workplace with relative ease, working class activists may devote their attentions to effecting change through economic organizations. There may be a belief that the political level is of little importance, and thus a lower level of support for the parliamentary parties of the left than might be expected at such a time.

Thus, a period of intense worker radicalism may actually benefit the parties of the right. In addition, as shown in Chapter 3, this period is characterised by issue voting, electoral volatility and increased ideological awareness. Many younger workers and activists may be attracted to extra-parliamentary or revolutionary left movements and parties, further eroding the electoral support of the mainstream left. Added to any backlash or reaction that the period of labour militancy generates, this could explain why parties of the left might begin to lose momentum in the latter part of the upswing or in the early part of the long-wave downswing

## **The Revolutionary Left**

Chapter 2 strongly indicated that the revolutionary movements of the left have experienced a heightened level of support and mobilisation at the end of each upswing.<sup>19</sup> The first International at the end of the second upswing, anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary Communism at the end of the third and the revolutionary Marxist, anarchist and post-materialist groups in the late 1960s/early 1970s. The explanation for this appears to lie in the above discussion. During upswings, trade unionists are achieving higher levels of success at both the level of national bargaining and the level of industrial action. Together with the fact that rank-and-file activists are effecting much of this action, and taking matters into their own hands, this situation leads to an increased level of interest in socialist ideas of workers control and other facets of socialist thinking

An implication of these findings, is that they tend to directly contradict one of the assertions of Marx, namely that workers are radicalized through immiserisation and that socialism will emerge from economic crisis.<sup>20</sup> Influenced by the French Revolution of 1789 and the revolutions of 1848, both of which followed an economic crisis brought on by poor harvests over two or three years, Marx adopted the belief that revolution would follow on from economic crisis.<sup>21</sup> However, revolution did not follow the downturn of 1857, as Marx had hoped. In fact, during the prosperous 1850s and 60s, the organized working class in Britain appeared to be increasingly incorporated within mainstream society, supporting Liberalism and further democratization, and benefiting from a series of laws passed between 1867 and 1876 that were favourable to the trade unions. To explain this level of integration Marx invented the theory of the aristocracy of labour.

According to this theory, as a result of Britain's profitable Empire, capital was able to raise the standard of living for some workers, notably skilled workers, and these workers began to identify politically with capitalism, particularly through their support of the Liberals and thus lost interest in revolution. A lack of mobilization by unskilled workers resulted from the fact that skilled workers had collaborated with capitalists leaving the unskilled with no one to lead them. A more modern manifestation of this argument was the theory of 'embourgeoisement', raised in the 1970s to explain a perceived decline in support for Labour and class dealignment amongst the working class. This theory

maintained that the raised living standards of the 1950s and 1960s had led to more affluent workers losing interest in socialism and the parties of the left and being more likely to accept bourgeois values and identify with middle-class parties.

However, both theories had a number of problems. As mentioned in Chapter 3, studies by Nordlinger and Goldthorpe found that affluent workers were more likely to support the Labour Party than those who were financially worse off.<sup>22</sup> This chimed with a widespread observation in the nineteenth century, that those workers involved in socialist and radical parties and trade unions were likely to be the more skilled, better-educated and more prosperous members of the working-class. Unskilled workers were considered to be more conservative, apathetic towards any form of politics, uninterested in social affairs and also as potential strikebreakers.<sup>23</sup> Thus both the theory of the aristocracy of labour and embourgeoisement appear doubtful.

These studies also call into question the likelihood of when revolution will occur. The Marxist position was that social revolution, one that led to systemic changes, was most likely during a period of deepening economic crisis. The reasons for this were, firstly, that the economic system was clearly failing and thus needed replacing with something better, and secondly that the poverty induced by economic crisis would have a motivating force, inspiring workers to take action against the ruling forces in order to improve their position.

Marx was influenced by the revolutions of 1789 and 1848, but these occurred in agrarian societies, could it be assumed that a similar pattern would follow in industrialized economies? During the long-wave downswings of 1873-1896, 1920-1948, and 1973-1999, only one proletarian social revolution occurred, the short-lived and unsuccessful Spanish revolution of 1936/7. Hobsbawm also called the theory of Marxist revolution into question in *Labouring Men*.<sup>24</sup> He found that the pattern of protest during the 19<sup>th</sup> century changed as the workforce shifted from being predominantly agrarian to industrial. In agrarian societies, protest and rebellion followed high unemployment and high prices brought on by poor harvests and economic crisis. In industrial societies, protest and rebellion came at the top of the business cycle, whilst during recessions he

believed that falling prices offset high unemployment, making economic crises more bearable.

The implication of this is that economic crisis is not likely to induce revolution in an industrial society and an alternative to the Marxist position was put forward by Davies.<sup>25</sup> Davies suggested that revolutions followed a J-curve pattern. He maintained that revolutions occurred after a two-stage process. Firstly a society enjoys a long and protracted period of economic prosperity and success, a period in which expectations amongst the population are raised but also met. The society then experiences some form of economic, military or political crisis. This leads to a position where raised expectations can no longer be satisfied and revolution breaks out amongst a dissatisfied population. Davies cites the French Revolution, Russian Revolution, Dorr's Rebellion of 1842 and Egyptian Revolution of 1950 as examples. Perhaps of more importance, however, are those cases he does not mention. Virtually every industrializing or industrialized country experienced such scenarios in 1873, 1920, and 1973 or shortly afterwards, yet no revolutions occurred in these years or in the immediate aftermath of the economic downturn.

The chronology in Chapter 3 would suggest, however, that Davies is partially correct. Revolutions broke out in 1871 in Paris, in Russia in 1917, Germany in 1919 and most of eastern and central Europe in the same year. All occurred towards the end of a long-wave upswing and a long period of expanding prosperity, but also following military defeat, or perhaps more crucially, once military defeat had created a temporary or unstable power vacuum. A power vacuum after a long period of economic prosperity would seem to be the most likely environment for social revolution in industrialized economies, not at the depths of an economic crisis. This would also explain the widespread absence of revolution as a feature of industrialized economies, as opposed to the predictions of Marx, since such short-lived windows of opportunity have been few and far between. In addition, in democratic polities power vacuums are rare, since elections can be called to replace a failing government before any such power vacuum becomes a serious threat to the polity.

Thus, contrary to the beliefs of Marx, the above discussion appears to indicate that interest in socialism and revolution are more likely to occur towards the end of a long



period of prosperity rather than during a prolonged economic crisis. The overriding reason for this appears to be that the conditions produced by economic prosperity lead to a growing belief within subordinate social classes that revolutionary change is not only desirable but also possible; the conditions of the upswing bring a newfound confidence that encourages people to believe that they have the ability to run their own lives. It is this that would appear to explain, as found in Chapter 2, that the most promising period for the revolutionary left is the late upswing and it is at these times that they have enjoyed the greatest level of support and influence

#### **4.2 Long-Wave Downswings – the ‘Crisis Period’.**

Both the work of long-wave researchers and the chronology in Chapter 2 show that the pattern of class struggle in downswings is distinctly different to that in upswings.<sup>26</sup> Typically industrial militancy peaks at the end of the upswing. In the early downswing, the level of worker mobilization remains high but unevenly declining. During the middle period of the downswing worker mobilization reaches a low point. This is then followed by a short-lived revival towards the end of the downswing during the ‘recovery period’. Sometimes, however, the latter appears to be absent. A similar pattern for the fortunes of trade union movements occurs. As with the upswing there is general agreement on the pattern of mobilization, but disagreement on its causation.

Cronin’s reasons for the decline of working class and left political activity during the long-wave downswing were predominantly **structural**, though additional reasons were given. The repression of organized labour in the early years of the downswing was seen as a major reason for the decline of social movements, as is the onset of economic depression. To compound this “the failure to storm the heights at the peak of insurgency leads to apathy and cynicism, to in-fighting within the left, and ultimately to passivity or, at least, to a lowered plateau of struggle.”<sup>27</sup>

Above all, however, the reasons he cites are structural. The onset of depression brings the collapse of major industries and with it the collapse of the social structure, diminishing the capability to mobilize. The working class is then re-made during the

depressions of the long-wave downswing, with the recreation of the economic infrastructure. Out of the slump materializes a new social structure that begins to exert itself, at first tentatively towards the end of the downswing, but with greater force throughout the course of the following long-wave upswing. However, as with his explanation for the upswing there still rests the specific mechanisms by which this process unfolds.

In the depressed economic conditions of the downswing, forces in the **labour market** tend to eventually favour employers. In the initial period, worker militancy is still high, and at a time of economic decline this creates protracted problems for employers. A poor economic climate means reduced demand and a squeeze on profits. Employers will typically respond with job losses or by attempting to reduce wages and working conditions. Industrial action is likely, with trade unions put on the defensive. Employers can no longer afford to end disputes quickly and strikes may be protracted and bitter.

However, with employers offering less, expectations amongst employees are slowly lowered. Increasingly workers attempt to defend concessions they have already gained rather than go on the offensive and seek improvements. Strike action tends to be defensive rather than offensive. Higher levels of unemployment allow employers to lower wages and working conditions. Job scarcity also leads to inter-union disputes and declining levels of worker solidarity as competition for jobs increases.

Turning to further mechanisms by which this occurs, Screpanti followed a **psychological** argument that was the inverse of that he used for the upswing.<sup>28</sup> At the beginning of the long-wave downswing, in the worsening economic climate, achievements secured by workers start to decline whilst demands are still high. This means levels of frustration are still high and continuing, though declining, and relatively high levels of industrial militancy still occur. As the level of economic growth remains low, however, it brings with it high levels of unemployment and low levels of workers' welfare. Claims are gradually lowered, bringing them into line with achievements, thus lowering frustration and resulting in the low levels of worker militancy that characterize

the later part of the downswing. As with his explanation for the industrial militancy at the end of the upswing, however there is still a problem with using the concept of frustration. If frustration is not causing the initial militancy, then a decline in frustration, if it occurs, is not likely to be pertinent.

Phelps Brown explained the absence of intense industrial militancy and political upheaval between 1920 and 1968 in Britain as resulting from the **generational** experiences of the inter-war years.<sup>29</sup> High unemployment, wage cuts, and the failure of industrial action in the 1920s, notably the devastating defeat of the 1926 general strike, all left their imprint on the generation of workers that entered the workforce during the 1920s and 1930s. These workers saw industrial action as potentially damaging and disruptive and their overriding concern was job security. In difficult economic times industrial action often failed, and conditions were made worse as employers took advantage of defeat and weakened unions.

Even after the return to full employment in the post-1948 boom, the workforce was mainly constituted by workers who had entered the workforce during the previous difficult period. These workers carried generational experiences with them, making them reluctant to engage in any mass political or industrial upheaval. In the 1920s and 1930s militant left movements had often provoked the rise of fascist movements. The economic recovery after World War Two often appeared fragile and many expected a return to the mass unemployment of the 1930s. Any engagement in radical left activity or industrial action could, it was thought, produce a return to the problems of the inter-war period.

As with patterns of voting behaviour described in Chapter 3, Phelps Brown believed that generational effects could explain apparent time lags in class struggle behaviour in relation to the long-wave. In the early downswing industrial militancy is still relatively high because a generation of workers that emerged in a period of prolonged prosperity take time to adjust to a new set of economic conditions and to be joined by a younger and less radical workforce. In the early upswing, industrial militancy is initially low since a generation that emerged in a period of prolonged economic deterioration and instability constitutes a considerable section of the workforce.

As with the upswing there is also the question of **organizational** abilities. Kelly noted that typically unions experienced a decline in both membership and density during downswings.<sup>30</sup> The difficult economic conditions of the long-wave downswing, the periodic crises and recessions, and higher levels of unemployment all have a detrimental effect on both the size and density of trade-unions and the effectiveness of their organization, notably at the rank-and-file level. Economic crisis usually results in an employer's offensive against organized labour. A loss of markets and profitability results in a greater need to break strikes and the ability to intimidate and blacklist union activists.

As the economic situation declines at the beginning of the downswing, employers are able to concede fewer demands made by labour whilst confidence amongst the workforce remains relatively high initially. This may lead to high levels of confrontation, and the early downswing period is usually marked by a number of lengthy, bitter and expensive industrial disputes that easily turn violent.<sup>31</sup> However, in a deteriorating economic climate employers are less able and less willing to make concessions. In addition rising levels of unemployment make it easier to break strikes.

Organized labour suffers a greater number of defeats than previously, thus breaking workers confidence and resulting in a lowered level of militancy. **Strike effectiveness** now declines; strike action is now potentially damaging to workers. Loss of employment, expensive loss of pay, union derecognition, blacklisting, picket-line violence and the threat of arrest, fines and imprisonment have all to be considered when taking industrial action. With membership, and thus finances, reduced, trade unions are weakened and industrial action is harder to organize and less likely to be successful. The likelihood of success through industrial action is diminished, and thus workers are less likely to engage in such action.

The overall result is that by the end of the 'crisis period' of the downswing, forces in the labour market have tended to work in favour of employers. High unemployment breaks the organizational abilities of organized labour and thus reduces the abilities of trade unionists to effect favourable changes at the economic level

## **The Effect on the Left and Right**

At the beginning of the downswing the increasingly confrontational nature of the class struggle has the effect of intensifying the sense of political turmoil identified in Chapter 2. Strike activity initially remains relatively high at a time of economic decline adding to a sense of impending chaos. Many of the strikes are prolonged, violent and take on a specifically political character. Both sides know the stakes are high and thus winning is of crucial importance. Wider political forces on both the right and left, already polarized, are drawn into disputes, the disputes then taking on a symbolic and highly politicized character.

Much of this tends to favour the political forces of the right. Industrial action appears disruptive, damaging and a major feature in the ongoing economic deterioration. Blame for economic deterioration and industrial violence can be directed towards the left, sections of which are still agitating for revolution. In addition, the left's belief in progress comes into doubt, the attempt to fundamentally change society appears to be leading towards chaos, political turmoil and possibly economic breakdown.

There are, however, some countervailing tendencies. In the initial downturn, in the worsening economic climate, workers may turn away from industrial action towards the parliamentary process in order to effect change. With expectations of political change still high, this is most likely to translate into increased support for the left and may well result in pressure on left parties to adopt a more radical position, even whilst a more generalized rightward shift occurs amongst the wider electorate. As the economy further deteriorates, this may work to the detriment of the parties of the left. Shifting to the left whilst the wider electorate shifts to the right will most likely lead to electoral defeat.

In the longer run, however, most factors work in favour of the right. With labour market forces working in the employer's favour, industrial action often results in failure. As the economy deteriorates, expectations are lowered. The social classes that emerged in the upswing with a gradually increasing set of demands now realize that they will have to settle for what they have already achieved. Further demands might result in losses. The emerging social classes become increasingly conservative and thus more susceptible to voting for the right.

## **The Demise of the Revolutionary Left**

Marx maintained that a deteriorating and crisis-ridden economic period would lead to proletarian revolution, but the chronology in Chapter 2 showed that it is more likely to lead to political reaction - revolutions in economic downswings have been few and far between. The above discussion indicates why revolution is unlikely. For revolution to occur, a large section of the population need to feel discriminated against and that the present system is unable to meet their expectations. More importantly however, they need to feel confident and well organized, that revolution is not only desirable, but also possible and that any attempt at revolution will result in success, rather than defeat and the possibility of repression, reaction and death. During a downswing both expectations and confidence are lowered making revolution increasingly unlikely.

In fact during long-wave downswings, the forces of revolution are more likely to dissipate than storm new heights. In the 1860s and early 1870s workers were attracted to the revolutionary ideas of socialism, anarchism and the First International and the insurrection of the Paris Commune. But in the more difficult economic climate of the Great Depression revolutionary enthusiasm gave way to less utopian expectations. The socialist movements that emerged in the 1890s at the end of the downswing were, with the exception of the French syndicalists, almost entirely reformist in both practice and outlook.

In the 1910s, workers were attracted to the revolutionary movements of anarcho-syndicalism, left Socialism and Communism, and the revolutionary events in Eastern and Central Europe. But once again revolution gave way to reform during the difficult decades of the 1920s and 1930s. Anarcho-syndicalist movements were destroyed, socialists became social democrats, and Communists opted for Popular Front alliances with social democrats and the progressive middle-classes. The movements that emerged in the 1940s at the end of the downswing were largely social democratic in nature, with revolutionary forces almost nowhere to be seen.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a large array of anarchist, Marxist, post-Marxist and post-materialist movements of the New Left emerged proposing revolution, attracting both middle and working-class support. Again these movements declined during the economic difficulties of the 1970s and 1980s to be replaced by a social democratic 'third

way', or Green or other alternative parties working within the parliamentary framework. Post-materialist groups in this period were more likely to turn to market forces than Marxist ideology, in order to argue their case

On each occasion prolonged economic crisis has, in contrast to the position taken by Marx, produced not revolution, but a dramatic decline in the fortunes of revolutionary left movements. As unemployment rises, as the economy worsens, as unions fail to deliver, the belief in the possibility of socialism or any other form of utopia declines. Workers no longer feel they are able to control events. Strike failures lead to further demoralization. A feeling of loss of control leads to a situation where union and party leaders are able to regain control from the rank-and-file. Increasingly leadership is seen as more important, whilst a deteriorating economic and political situation encourages the leadership to pursue a more cautious and conservative approach.

### **The Rise of the Reactionary Right**

Chapter 2 showed, that during downswings, the forces of the reactionary right have been in the ascendant, sometimes with sufficient support to take power. In addition to being a means to mobilise against the revolutionary left, the reactionary right appears to be more popular for two main reasons. Firstly, downswings result in heightened economic insecurity and/or an absolute decline in living standards for certain sections of the population. This may result in Inglehart's 'authoritarian reflex'- a desire for strong leadership, and a willingness to accept a more subordinate position and thus a diminished distribution of political power.

Secondly, the economic contraction may occur whilst the economy is being restructured, with certain social classes facing extinction or severe diminishment and the prospect of immiserisation at the same time. Under such circumstances, sections of the population may seek to return to a previous era, a supposed 'golden age' in which they enjoyed relative prosperity. They may attempt to reverse the progressive changes that have previously been made and for which they blame their economic deterioration. Under such circumstances they resort to supporting reactionary political parties and movements

in an attempt to reverse political, social and economic changes that are perceived to have put them at a disadvantage.

As can be seen from the chronology in Chapter 2, prolonged periods of economic malaise are more likely to produce political reaction than revolution. In the 1870s and 1880s European workers faced reaction and repression after the defeat of the Paris Commune as state and employers sought to smash the First International. In addition the German socialist parties and unions suffered a period of illegality between 1878 and 1890, whilst Bismarck staffed state institutions with reactionaries. In France, Boulangism sought to destroy democracy and liberalism, whilst a rise in support for the monarchist and religious right challenged the new republic. In both France and Germany, far right anti-Semitic parties became a feature of the political scene. In the USA, blacks in the South were effectively disenfranchised.

In the 1920s and 1930s fascism and a proliferation of far right movements emerged with the intention of smashing organized labour along with liberalism and democracy. Attempts to attract the working class were largely unsuccessful and fascism relied largely on the middle-classes and agrarian classes for its support. It was successful in a number of countries, effectively destroying the independent labour movements.

Thus, contrary to the predictions of Marx, this appears to indicate that interest in socialism and left revolution are less likely to occur during a period of economic crisis. The overriding reason for this appears to be that the conditions produced by economic crisis lead to a growing belief within subordinate social classes that revolutionary change is neither desirable nor possible. The conditions of the downswing bring a sense of insecurity that discourages people from believing that they have the ability to run their own lives. Reaction, rather than revolution, is more likely.

#### **4.3 Long-wave Downswings - The 'Recovery Period'**

For long-wave researchers linking changes in industrial relations to long-waves this is the most contentious period of the cycle. This period is believed to see a renewed increase in worker mobilization though it is of considerably less intensity than that of the upswing and not always present - in some countries it appears to be entirely absent. This



has led Screpanti to maintain that these periods of worker mobilization are purely 'national peculiarities'. However, in a discussion on this period of the cycle, Kelly believes this to be 'neither plausible or parsimonious' but does not arrive at any firm conclusions, noting that the 'minor strike waves' in this period are 'more variable in duration, intensity and timing compared with major strike waves'.<sup>32</sup>

In an attempt to shed further light on this period it seems most productive to return to the historical record. In Appendix B, the 'recovery periods' were dated as 1843-48, 1888-1896, 1938-1948, and 1993-1998. Following the chronology outlined in Chapter 2 a brief description of the state of worker mobilization during these periods can be used for further evaluation.

In Britain, the period of the mid-late 1840s, saw a revival of unionism after the disastrous years of 1836 to 1843 in the shape of the New Model Unionism, notably amongst skilled artisans, and that went on to form a close alliance with Liberalism. The years after 1844 saw some revival in industrial action, notably amongst building workers and masons in the North West and skilled mining workers in the North East, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. Despite initial gains successes tended to be short-lived and soon reversed by employers during the period of depressed trade that occurred in 1847/8. In Germany, the most notable strike action was the Silesian textile workers revolt in the mid-1840s which ultimately failed, and the strike action during the 1848 revolution, as in France, but which also resulted in failure after initial successes. In the USA, there appears to have been only the most limited of revivals after the depression of 1837-42.

The years between 1888-1893, years of economic recovery, saw a revival of trade unionism and industrial action in Britain, France, Germany and the USA. All four movements experienced rapid increases in union membership, notably amongst sections of the workforce that had previously been organized, but had experienced deunionization during the difficult years of the 1880s. Demands were for raised wages and the implementation of the 8-hour day. Initially all four movements scored notable successes, but in the economic decline of 1893-96, most of these were reversed and trade union membership fell sharply except in France.

The years 1938-1948 saw a revival of industrial action in France in 1947-8 and USA amongst miners and railway workers in 1945-6, but neither of these were extensive or as

militant as the movements in 1936-37. In the USA, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 represented a major defeat for organized labour. There was no great revival of industrial action in Britain though the average number of strikes rose between 1944 and 1947. In Germany revival was always unlikely. According to Cronin, there was no revival in Britain as industry shifted to areas not traditionally noted for union organization, whilst industry failed to revive in areas of traditional unionism.<sup>33</sup>

In the 1990s, France witnessed the public workers strike of 1996 successfully prevent the governments attempts to reduce the scope of the public sector. In Germany the early 1990s saw an increase in strike activity notably amongst metal workers, but mobilization fell later in the decade. Britain and the USA saw only a limited increase in industrial action from already very low levels.<sup>34</sup>

In general, these 'strike waves' appear short-lived, vary in militancy and usually occur at the height of the business cycle. Quite often they are of less intensity and militancy than strike waves earlier in the downswing. In many cases a strike wave is only apparent because previous levels of activity have been extremely low, making any level of activity look reasonably impressive. In general they appear to be confined to sections of the workforce where unionization is well established, whilst early successes are often reversed.

It seems possible that the revivals that do occur are as a result of workers having adapted to the difficult conditions of the long-wave downswing. In many cases, unions have responded to employers offensives by federating existing unions together in the hope that larger bodies are more likely to be able to resist attacks on wages and working conditions or to survive anti-union drives. This was particularly notable in Germany, France and the USA during the Great Depression of 1873-1896, and also occurred unsuccessfully in Britain in the 1829-34 period of militancy. In the USA in the 1930s the CIO was launched to overcome the narrow sectionalism of the AFL. In other cases, trade unionists adopted different methods of industrial action, for instance the sit-down strikes of 1936 and 37 in France and the USA. At times of high unemployment, walkouts are less likely to produce union victories.

Revivals of industrial militancy in the late downswing tend to coincide with the gradual improvement of the economy, slowly increasing employment and increased trade union membership. The improving economic climate allows for improved working conditions, if workers can organize successfully. It also offers the possibility of correcting reversals suffered during the depths of the 'crisis years'. In contrast to the generalized strike peak at the end of the upswing, that at the end of the downswing, if it occurs, tends to be confined to skilled workers or those in industries that have a tradition of strong organization. In general it is only these groups that are confident enough to benefit from an improving economy.

However, even when these movements achieve notable success, their gains have often been reversed when the economy dips in the final downturn of the long-wave downswing, or further ambitions thwarted by changes introduced by employers or politicians. This appears to finally end the militancy that arose at the end of the upswing. Possibly, following Phelps Brown's line of argument, by now a younger and more conservative generation of workers have reached a critical mass within the workforce whilst the older generation have downgraded their aspirations. Job security is the first priority after the years of economic instability and high unemployment during the downswing. Possibly an improving economy also offers the prospect of material improvements without needing to use industrial action.

At the political level these revivals of worker mobilization appear to have little effect. Industrial militancy at this time may benefit the right since it can be portrayed as jeopardising economic recovery, but by now the left has usually adopted a centrist position and may also condemn industrial action. If industrial action is absent or if it is unsuccessful, it is likely to add to the generally centrist and consensual nature of this period.

## **Summary**

This chapter indicates that class struggle theories can be useful in explaining the pattern of change observed in Chapter 2. In general, findings are more limited than was the case with voting behaviour theory, but in particular it is useful for explaining the changing fortunes of the revolutionary left and reactionary right. In addition, in terms of

causation it tends to reinforce the findings of Chapter 3. Socio-psychological arguments are of great importance with levels of confidence and attitudes towards authority being crucial.

In the long-wave upswing, low levels of unemployment improve the bargaining position of employees. Together with a structural expansion of a re-created working class this leads to a belief that progressive change can be effected, whilst a less deferential attitude in the workplace leads to increased support for socialist movements. This all adds to the leftward momentum experienced during the last two-thirds of the upswing. However, the higher levels of union density, strike effectiveness and worker mobilization together with an upsurge of left radicalism and socialist agitation eventually add to the sense of political turmoil and ideological polarisation. In contrast to the pattern elaborated by Marx, this is the most likely time for social revolution.

The deterioration of the economy during the early long-wave downswing brings about more protracted and embittered industrial disputes, adding to the sense of political turmoil and crisis. High levels of unemployment and industrial restructuring fracture the strength of organised labour. Expectations and militancy decline and labour defeats add to the renewed confidence of the right. Employers gain the upper hand and add to the momentum of the right. This period of economic crisis results in a rapid decline for the revolutionary left. Increased insecurity, the search for strong leadership and antagonism towards the revolutionary left lead to increased support for the reactionary right.

The end of the downswing sometimes sees short-lived revivals of worker mobilization. However, successes can easily be reversed and this appears to have little impact on the political process. A generation of workers grown use to the problem of job security helps contribute to the period of consensus and conservatism that dominates the early part of the next upswing.

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<sup>1</sup> The more comprehensive accounts include: **D. Gordon**, Up and Down the Long Roller Coaster, in U.S. Capitalism in Crisis, Economics Education Project of the Union for Radical Political Economics, 1978; **J. Cronin**, Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (eds) Processes of the World-System, pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; **J. Cronin**, Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain, Croom Helm, 1979; **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. **J. Kelly**, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

Other accounts linking long-waves and worker mobilisations include: **M. Salvati**, Political Business Cycles and Long-waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) Butterworths, 1983; **J. Goldstein**, Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age, Yale University Press, 1988; **J.T. Dunlop**, 'The development of labor organization: a theoretical framework' in **R.A. Lester & J. Shister**, (eds) Insights Into Labor Issues, Macmillan, 1948; **O. Jacobi**, 'Trade Unions, industrial relations and structural economic 'ruptures'', in **O. Jacobi, B. Jessop, H. Kastendick, & M. Regini** (eds), Economic Crisis, Trade Unions and the State, Croom Helm, 1986; **O. Jacobi**, 'New technological paradigms, long waves and trade unions' in **R. Hyman & W. Streek**, (eds) New Technology and Industrial Relations, Blackwell, 1988; **J. Lembecke**, 'Why 50 years? Working class formation and long economic cycles', *Science and Society* 55, 4: pp.417-445.

<sup>2</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548.

<sup>3</sup> **J.E. Cronin**, Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein** (eds) Processes of the World System, Beverley Hills, 1980; **J.E. Cronin**, Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain, Croon Helm, 1979. According to Schumpeter, each long-wave upswing was driven by a wave of inventions/innovations and their incorporation into the international economy. This new set of industries drive the economic expansion of each upswing, but begin to lose profitability after around 25 years, causing the downswing to commence. Theorists following this line of thinking

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have usually identified the mid-late downswing as a period when these industries begin to be replaced or overtaken by a new set of inventions/innovations which drive the following upswing expansion. See **J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles Volumes I & II*, McGraw-Hill, 1939;

<sup>4</sup> As the economy enters crisis and is re-made during downswings, so the working class follows a similar trajectory. **D.M. Gordon**, *Up and Down the Long Roller Coaster*, in *U.S. Capitalism in Crisis*, Union for Radical Political Economics, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Labouring Men*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1964.

<sup>6</sup> **J.E. Cronin**, *Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest*, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein** (eds) *Processes of the World System*, Beverley Hills, 1980; p.111.

<sup>7</sup> **J.E. Cronin**, *Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest*, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein** (eds) *Processes of the World System*, Beverley Hills, 1980; p.112.

<sup>8</sup> Much of this was influenced by Kalecki's political business cycle. He believed that upswings would produce low levels of unemployment and aid the working class in pursuing its political agenda. Downswings produced high unemployment and shifted the political advantage to the state and employers. Although Kalecki linked this to the short-term business cycle, others have linked it to long-waves. **M. Kalecki**, 'Political Aspects of Full Employment' *Political Quarterly* Part 4 1943 pp.322-331. Also **M. Salvati**, *Political Business Cycles and Long Waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown*, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, VII, 2, Winter 1984, pp.509-548.

<sup>10</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, p.101.

<sup>12</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, *A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion*, *Three Banks Review*, March 1975, No.105, pp.3-24.

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<sup>13</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, pp.44-45.

<sup>14</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion, *Three Banks Review*, March 1975, No.105, pp.3-24. Phelps Brown considers the possible causes for the two peaks in industrial and political upheaval. He discusses the possibility that they form part of a cyclical trend, though he does not specifically link it to long-waves, or whether “the two phases are manifestations of pressures”, with the absence of these pressures in the meantime. He does not make it clear as to which he believes is true. See Also **M. Salvati**, *Political Business Cycles and Long Waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown*, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983.

<sup>15</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> In general there is very little literature on the subject of how alterations in the performance of the economy impact on employers federations. The literature that does exist indicates it has little impact on large companies and it is these companies that represent the mainstay of the federations and are most important in decision-making. Membership turnover amongst small companies can be as high as 90%, and these often lack influence and even during the best of times the percentage of these companies adhering to employers federations is low. See for instance **T.M. Moe**, *The Organization of Interests*, University of Chicago, 1980; **J.Q. Wilson**, *Political Organizations*, Basic Books, 1973; **H. Zeigler**, *The Politics of Small Business*, Public Affairs Press, 1961.

<sup>18</sup> **E. H. Hunt**, *British Labour History 1815-1914*, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1981. This trend was also noted by Hobsbawm in *Labouring Men*.

<sup>19</sup> The first long-wave is something of an exception, where peaks in revolutionary support came later, in 1830-2 and 1848.

<sup>20</sup> **K. Marx**, *Political Writings: The Revolutions of 1848: Volume 1*, Penguin, 1973; see also **D. Ross Gandy**, *Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future*, University of Texas Press, 1979, pp.55-57.

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<sup>21</sup> **D. Ross Gandy**, *Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future*, University of Texas Press, 1979. Marx also considered the British working class as revolutionary pre-1850, but this was also mistaken. During 1842, the worst year of economic crisis in the nineteenth century, the working class turned to Chartism, a movement devoted to giving working class men the vote and thus a stake in the parliamentary regime, not to revolution.

<sup>22</sup> **E. A. Nordlinger**, The working-class Tory, *New Society*, 13/10/66; Working-Class Tories, MacGibbon & Kee, 1967; **J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, & J. Platt**, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour: The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour; The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge University Press, 1968/69.

<sup>23</sup> See for instance: **E. H. Hunt**, *British Labour History 1815-1914*, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1981; **R.K. Webb**, *Modern England: From the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present*, George Allen & Unwin, 1980; **D.G. Wright**, *Democracy and Reform 1815-1885*, Longman, 1970.

<sup>24</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Labouring Men*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1964.

<sup>25</sup> **J.C. Davies**, Toward a Theory of Revolution, *American Sociological Review*, Feb 1962, Vol. 27, no.1 pp.5-19.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance, **D. Gordon**, Up and Down the Long Roller Coaster, in *U.S. Capitalism in Crisis*, Economics Education Project of the Union for Radical Political Economics, 1978; **J. Cronin**, Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (eds) *Processes of the World-System*, pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>27</sup> **J.E. Cronin**, Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein** (eds) *Processes of the World System*, Beverley Hills, 1980; pp.104-107.



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<sup>28</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, VII, 2, Winter 1984, pp.509-548.

<sup>29</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion, *Three Banks Review*, March 1975, No.105, pp.3-24.

<sup>30</sup> **J. Kelly**, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>31</sup> For an assessment of this trend occurring in the 1970s see **T. Cliff**, 'The Balance of Class Forces in Recent Years' *International Socialism* Series 2 No. 6 1979 pp.1-50

<sup>32</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. **J. Kelly**, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>33</sup> **J. Cronin**, Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain, Croom Helm, 1979.

<sup>34</sup> **G.J. Bamber & R.D. Lansbury**, International and Comparative Industrial Relations, Routledge, 1993.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### PARTY COMPETITION and the DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

#### Introduction

If representative democracy functions correctly, trends in voting behaviour and changes in the class struggle should be reflected at the level of party competition. Parties need the support of voters to be elected, whilst employers and union federations have been amongst the most prominent of pressure groups in the modern political process. This chapter will turn to the question of party competition and how the theories associated with this process may help to explain the changing fortunes of the left and right outlined in Chapter 2.

In so doing it will also introduce the importance of ideology and its pertinence to the process of party competition. The chapter will draw heavily on the discussion in Appendix A, using the concept of the distribution of power within society to define the meaning of the left-right cleavage, and how this relates to the process of party competition over the course of a long-wave.

#### 5.1 Trends in Party Competition Theory

There were two main developments in the theory of party competition during the fourth long-wave of 1948-1998. Initially party competition theory was dominated by a Downsian approach that appeared to successfully explain the existence of a political climate characterized by **consensus** in the early post-war period.<sup>1</sup> Such a consensus was explained by the fact that parties on both the left and right of the political spectrum were converging on a median voter who was positioned somewhere near the centre of the political spectrum. This gave rise to a theory of party competition based on **preference accommodating** strategies – where parties simply tailored their policies towards those held by the median voter. As such, policies on both the left and right appeared similar in nature and were believed to perpetuate the existence of the consensus.

However, by the early 1970s this theory appeared inadequate to some theorists of party competition. Politics within liberal democracies was by now considerably less consensual with an increased level of conflict and major divisions between the left and the right. They considered that the Downsian model of party competition was unable to explain this. Following the publication of Samuel Finer's *Adversary Politics* in 1975 it was increasingly believed that liberal democracy was not shaped by a consensually based polity but by the **adversary politics** of party competition.<sup>2</sup> This became the new orthodoxy and attempts were made to show why Downsian theory appeared to be mistaken and how the theory could be improved.

For the most part, theoreticians turned to the role of political activists and/or the pressure groups and financial interests that backed political parties. It was maintained that these groups were highly motivated, more engaged in the political process and thus more likely to take up ideological positions on the left and right. This was unlike the median voter who tended to be somewhat disengaged from the political process, less interested in politics and thus less ideological and more likely to be somewhere near the political centre.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the activist's position on the political spectrum, the leaders of the parties, who would prefer to be chasing the median voter in the centre, were forced away from the centre in order to accommodate the belief systems of party activists and supporters. This meant that leaders were pulled in two opposite directions, and one possible resolution of this problem for leaders was to adopt **preference-shaping** strategies. In other words, party activists could assume a more influential position than the median voter. Leaders attempted to implement policies that would draw voters away from the centre towards either the left or the right, closer to the position of the activists. The result was adversary politics.

However, both preference-accommodating and preference-shaping theories have their strengths and weaknesses. Downsian theory has established the importance of the median voter and the use of this concept has remained widespread within party competition theory. Downs position on the significance of ideology in the process of party competition is more controversial, though, and is inconsistent and confusing. On the one

hand he plays down the role of ideology in his model. Ideologies, he believes, were adopted by parties as a useful tool once the democratic process was up and running, in an attempt to come to terms with the views of voters. He maintains that 'political parties are interested in gaining office *per se*, not in promoting a better or an ideal society', that ideologies are simply used by political parties as a means to attain power.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, he also saw ideology as emanating from 'the heterogeneity of society, the inevitability of social conflict and uncertainty'.<sup>5</sup> Voters were considered to believe ideology as important; ideologies being used to differentiate between parties with similar policies, or as a short cut which eliminates the cost of being informed about specific issues. He also used ideology to explain the dynamic of party competition, and to determine the position of the median voter, voters were aligned along a left-right ideological axis. In addition, Downs believed that parties could not leapfrog over one another along the left-right axis, that parties needed to demonstrate reliability, integrity and responsibility in order to be elected. Leapfrogging would damage the credibility of the party in the eyes of the electorate, again indicating the importance of ideology to voters.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly this is inconsistent, the left-right dichotomy is at the centre of the voting model, ideology is important to voters, but ideology is also considered as little more than a useful tool for voters and parties. In addition, historically, ideological divisions usually predated the creation of functioning party systems based on election. Ideologies such as Liberalism, Radicalism and Socialism were at the heart of social movements before they became engaged in the electoral process. These divisions were often a key feature in the establishment of modern political parties, not simply a useful tool later adopted by parties looking for votes. Downs' position contrasts with that of preference-shaping theories where ideology is seen as a belief system or a guide to creating a better world, or alternatively to maintaining the present one if it is believed change is undesirable. In addition, ideology is regarded as representing the interests of a particular social group or class within society, that ideology helps to clarify and project the demands of particular interest groups.

It was evident in the 1960s and 1970s that as the electorate polarized, ideology was certainly of prime importance. As the centrist consensus of the immediate post-war era

broke down, some voters moved to the left, and it was those parties traditionally associated with the left that took a more left-wing position. As other voters moved to the right, parties traditionally associated with the right shifted to the right. If ideology were unimportant the direction of the parties would have been more random in nature with some leapfrogging others. Approximately 50% would shift their position on the axis. This was never the case. All parties maintained their respective positions on the left-right spectrum.

The strength of preference-shaping party theory was its identification of ideology as a key determinant in understanding the process of party competition. However, it too was not without its problems. Firstly, it tended to move the politics of liberal democracies away from the orthodox theory of pluralism to one closer to elite theory. Thus the role of the electorate in liberal democracies is undermined, whilst that of political elites grows in importance. As such the importance of the concept of the median voter is brought into question. Secondly, as admitted by Dunleavy,<sup>7</sup> many of the examples used to demonstrate preference-shaping strategies could equally be considered to have a preference-accommodating motivation, notably those concerning the political-business cycle (where the economy is boosted before elections) and manipulation of the housing market (satisfying a demand for owner occupation). These policies could equally be seen as satisfying the demands of sections of the electorate and thus not elite-led.

Thirdly, and more importantly, it fails to engage with the findings on voting behaviour in the 1970s. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this period saw the decline of partisan alignment and the rise of issue voting. It also saw electoral volatility, heightened expectations and an increasingly polarized electorate, sections of which were considering the far right and far left as viable political alternatives. Voters were not necessarily at the centre of the political spectrum. Neither were they necessarily disengaged from the political process, if anything voters were more interested and more likely to participate in political movements than in the period characterized by partisan alignment. In other words, adversary politics could alternatively be explained by the fact that parties were following voters that had moved away from the political centre towards the left and right.<sup>8</sup>

The previous chapters on voting behaviour and class struggle indicated that it was the position of voters moving away from the centre towards the left and the right that was causing consensual politics to give way to adversary politics, not the influence of activists who had always taken a more ideological stance anyway, even during a period of consensual politics.<sup>9</sup> In other words, ideology is always important, it is just that during the consensus period this is not immediately apparent. In addition, the median voter is also always of importance, but it needs to be recognised that the median voter will not always be at the ideological centre.

With this in mind, the rest of this chapter will aim to show how existing theories of party competition can help to explain the pattern of political change described in Chapter 2. In doing so, it will also draw on the discussion in Appendix A in using the struggle over the distribution of power as the key determinant in distinguishing the positions of the left and right.

## **5.2 Long-Waves and Party Competition.**

If the process of party competition in the modern era has been defined around the distribution of power within society, then the fluctuation in the fortunes of the left and right could be explained by changing attitudes within society with regards to this matter. The beneficial economic conditions of the long-wave upswing tend to favour the left, thus the dominant motivation of electorates/citizens could be expected to be one that favours greater distribution of economic, social and political power. In contrast, the difficult economic conditions of the long-wave downswing could be expected to give rise to a different set of motivations that tend to favour the right. Many amongst the electorate/citizenry might seek to either limit further distributions of power through the maintenance of the status quo, or to actively seek a reversal of previous distributions and to concentrate power within a smaller section of society. These differing motivations would alter the fortunes of political movements, and result in the left and right becoming of differing importance under different sets of economic conditions.

## Consensus Politics

Each political long-wave begins with a period of relative consensus, that lasts around a decade, and in which the parties of the right are more likely to be in power. This can be explained by the median voter being close to the centre of the political spectrum with both left and right parties vying for his/her support. Chapter 3 indicated that electorates see little hope or need of significant political change at this point in the long-wave. No significant ideological shifts to the right or left are envisaged whilst a period of centrist politics dominates the political agenda. Preference accommodating strategies are the most likely ones for political parties since it is relatively easy to move a little to the left or right whilst the median voter is in the centre. As such, political parties tend to perpetuate a period of consensus-based politics.

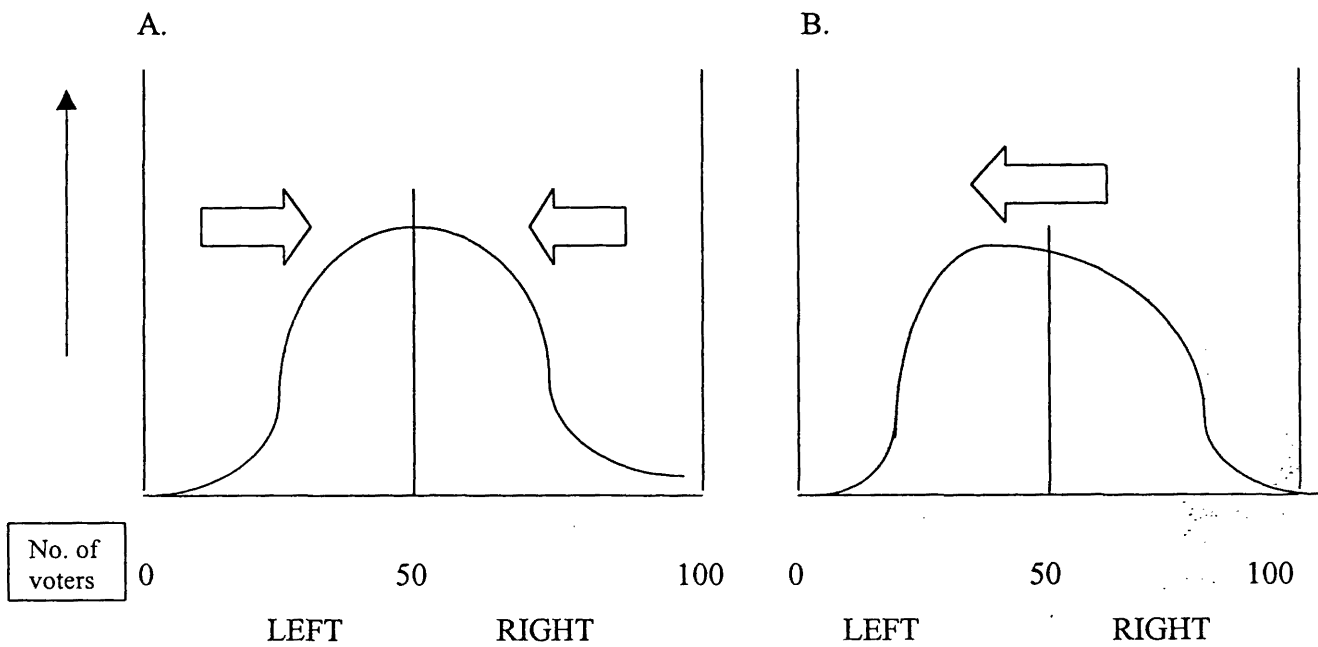


Figure 5: A. Consensus Politics and Preference Accommodation – median voter in the ideological centre.

B. Progressive Politics – median voter moves to the left.

For conservative sections of the right this should pose few problems. Maintenance of the status quo, continuity in policy-making and only minimal levels of reform are characteristics of conservatism. As such they are more at ease with such a political climate and more likely to be in power. Once in power, partisan alignment may keep them in government. Right-wing governments dominated the consensual periods of the 1850s, 1896-1906 and the 1950s.<sup>10</sup> With the electorate not seeking any major redistribution of power within society there is less reason to vote for the left. Thus, for the left this period proves problematic. With its desire for the redistribution of power stunted by public opinion, it may have to accommodate itself with conservatism, thus offering little of an alternative to the right.

### **Progressive Politics**

The long-wave upswing is characterized by prolonged and buoyant economic growth, a phenomenon that Chapter 3 indicates gives rise to a more optimistic and progressive climate of opinion amongst wide sections of the public. Electorates are more likely to be open to change, less deferential, more confident, risk-taking, and with the economy performing well, more interested in social and political matters. Such a climate is conducive to a redistribution of power.

At the economic level, long-wave upswings could be expected to see demands for major redistribution's of wealth, be it through an extension of economic activity, more effective trade-union action or through a system of progressive taxation, and this was often the case in the 1860s, 1910s and 1960s. The prosperity of the long-wave upswing provides governments with the means to effect such change. With high levels of tax revenue or potential tax revenue, the funds are available for effecting progressive political and social change. Indeed, with potential overheating of the economy a constant possibility, higher taxation levels may serve the double purpose of meeting the demands of the electorate and steadying the economy.

At a political level, the redistribution of power would be represented by either moves towards democratization, the implementation of democracy or qualitative improvements in the democratic process, possibly through constitutional changes, extension of the



franchise or a deepening of the democratic process. The first three upswings all saw concerted attempts to extend the electoral franchise, whilst the idea of direct democracy was often raised during the fourth.

At a social level, each long-wave upswing would witness a surge in social movements hoping to implement extensions of civil rights, to bring marginal groups and their activities into the social mainstream, and attempts to broaden cultural perspectives would receive a major boost from the prosperity of the long-wave upswing. In other words, major attempts to reduce social exclusivity will characterize the upswing political climate, to broaden social inclusion and cultural pluralism. Typically these periods have seen movements aimed at ending the exclusion suffered by sections of the working class, women and ethnic minorities.

Political and social change, especially that benefiting poorer sections of society often requires large amounts of government revenue. Instituting political and social change can be expensive, especially if it is done ineffectively and needs correcting and with the economy booming, governing parties are able to devote more time and resources to political and social matters.

As such long-wave upswings are characterized by a desire to see a greater distribution of political, social and economic power. The median voter moves to the left of the political spectrum. Not surprisingly the parties of the left should benefit from this movement, assuming they have not overly accommodated to the conservatism of the previous consensual period.

However, this period is more problematic for parties of the right. In order to attract the median voter, parties of the right will have to shift towards a more progressive position and implement progressive policies to retain that support. This will clearly not be popular with all sections of the right. Nevertheless, the practical goal of achieving power will undoubtedly result in many on the right accepting such a strategy, at least for a limited period of time. A government of the right may be able to limit the more radical distribution of power being advocated by the left.

There are, however, limits to this process. The importance of maintaining its ideological essence is always important for any political party or movement of the left

and right. The membership of political movements share a broadly similar political ideology which they believe should be implemented through either parliamentary or extra-parliamentary processes. If the leadership or a particular section of the party takes the organization too far from the desired ideological viewpoint, the possibility of divisions and damaging splits emerge.

The possibility of new parties or movements emerging to outflank them amongst their traditional supporters, if they stray too far into 'enemy territory', is always present. Downs identified these as 'real', where the new party attempts to replace the established one, or 'intention' parties, where the new party acts more as a pressure group, hoping to pressurize the established party into returning to a more acceptable ideological position.<sup>11</sup> Right-wing parties at this point may also seek to engage in preference-shaping strategies in the hope of drawing the median voter towards the right, and thus reduce the possibility of damaging splits. Overall, though, this period is more likely to see the left, rather than the right, in power.

### **The Radical Left and Adversary Politics**

The end of each long-wave upswing has experienced a rapid increase in support for radical left positions. The median voter is on the left of the political spectrum. The expectations of the electorate, after years of prosperity and an expanding economy, are high, especially amongst the younger generation. To attain power, parties of both the left and right are likely to compete to promise the electorate more than their opposition. This has the effect of raising expectations even further and something of a snowball effect develops.<sup>12</sup>

However, the left's attempts or desire to effect even greater redistribution's of power will almost invariably affect vested interests. This period also experiences an increase in worker militancy and industrial action, a pay explosion and rapidly rising prices, and the left may experience the emergence of radical or extra-parliamentary left movements. For sections of the electorate this proves increasingly unacceptable. In particular the movements and parties of the right and their supporters are likely to seek to stall or reverse these tendencies. Not only is it ideologically unacceptable, but with sections of

the electorate alarmed by the way things are developing, there is increasing support for right-wing ideologies. The 1870s, 1920s and 1970s all witnessed the emergence of new parties, or tendencies within existing parties, adopting a more hard-line right-wing agenda to counter the perceived excesses of the left.

This tendency is exacerbated with the onset of the downswing. The electorate polarizes across the left and right, with the centre being relatively diminished – a bimodal distribution of voters. Together with electoral volatility and the establishment of issue voting, this leads to a period of adversarial politics with the left and right adopting distinctive and often irreconcilable ideological positions. Adversary politics results in the period of political turmoil characteristic of the first decade of each downswing, with an intense battle over the redistribution of power in society.

As a result of this, parties may indulge in preference-shaping strategies, not specifically because of the influence of party activists, but in order to attract voters from the other half of the political spectrum. This does not deny the fact that other policies will be preference-accommodating, simply that both strategies become pertinent in the struggle to attract potential voters at a time of political polarization. The onset of preference-shaping strategies may well result in the persistence of adversarial politics and further polarisation at the party level and intensify the level of political turmoil.

### **Conservative Politics**

Downs maintained that a polarized, or bimodal, electorate would almost certainly lead to revolution. A bimodal electorate, he claimed, ‘means that government policy will be highly unstable, and that democracy is likely to produce chaos’. ‘When the distribution has become so split that one extreme is imposing by force policies abhorred by the other extreme, open warfare breaks out, and a clique of underdogs seizes power’.<sup>13</sup> In reality, with the possible exception of the 1936 Spanish revolution, this has never occurred in a functioning democracy.<sup>14</sup> The effect of the downturn in the economy has usually been to favour the forces of the right and to moderate the position of the left for the reasons given in Chapter 3.

The economic difficulties during the long-wave downswing lead to a more pessimistic, cautious and conservative climate of public opinion. At a time of economic

difficulties, for many, self-interest becomes a greater priority. Altruism, generosity and a progressive redistribution of wealth take a backseat. With periodic crises and recession interspersed with sluggish economic growth, tax revenue for governments will also be lower, and with profits squeezed business will be calling for lower taxation levels, or 'retrenchment' as it was known in the 1870s/80s and 1920s/30s. Indeed regressive taxation policies are typical of downswings. As such, the availability of revenue for public spending is likely to be reduced, whilst governments are more likely to be concentrating on reviving the economy than contemplating radical political and social change.

Following on from this, long-wave downswings will be characterized by attempts and/or implemented policies that seek to stall or reverse distributions of political, social and economic power that were implemented or attempted in the previous upswing. At a political level, this could be represented by either moves towards authoritarian government, or limitations of the democratic process, a typical feature of the 1920s and 1930s and also in evidence in the 1880s. In particular, this would occur during the period of political turmoil that characterizes the early part of the long-wave downswing. Each long-wave downswing could be expected to produce moves towards limiting the distribution of political power.

At a social level, each long-wave downswing would witness an increase in the activity of conservative and reactionary social movements hoping to counteract the extensions of civil and social rights and attempts to bring marginal groups and their activities into the social mainstream that were characteristic of the previous upswing. Racist and anti-Semitic movements were common in the 1870 and 1880s, 1920s and 1930s and more recently in the 1970s and 1980s. Attempts to broaden cultural perspectives would be opposed and further obstructed by the difficult economic conditions of the long-wave downswing. In other words, major attempts to preserve social exclusivity will characterize the downswing political climate, to limit social inclusion and cultural pluralism.

At the economic level, the early period of long-wave downswings would be expected to produce major attempts by the right to limit any attempts towards workers control of the means of distribution. The economic crisis accompanied by high unemployment and

reduced public spending will see reversals in the distribution of wealth, perhaps compounded by regressive taxation policies. These, together with the reduced activity of trade unionism, see the balance of class forces shift towards the employer.

As such the median voter begins to shift to the right and the bi-polar element of the previous period becomes less pronounced. For the parties of the right this is clearly not a problem. The left is usually slow to accept this, and initially will attempt to resist this direction of change. However, just as the right is unlikely to passively accept a period of opposition during the long-wave upswing, neither will the left during the downswing. As the median voter shifts to the right, so the parties of the left will need to do likewise to attain power and to maintain their position. Left parties will have to take up more conservative positions to be elected or remain in power. Economic positions gradually become of more importance than social and political change.

Thus, the left is most likely to adopt a position of defence, attempting to preserve the gains of the long-wave upswing in the face of the reaction of sections of the right. As with the parties of the right in the upswing, this is potentially dangerous for the left with the possibility of damaging splits and divisions, as sections of the left prefer to adopt a more 'purist' ideological position, rather than compete with the right to be more conservative. For example in the 1930s, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) split from the Labour Party as it considered the latter was moving too close to the political centre, whilst the opposite occurred in the 1980s when the Social Democratic Party (SDP) emerged, believing that Labour was too slow in moving towards the centre.

Preference-shaping strategies may appeal to the parties of the left in order to shift the position of the median voter towards the left, for instance Mitterrand's electoral reform in the 1980s aimed at splitting the right-wing vote. Overall, however, as shown in Chapter 2, this period usually sees the right in power.

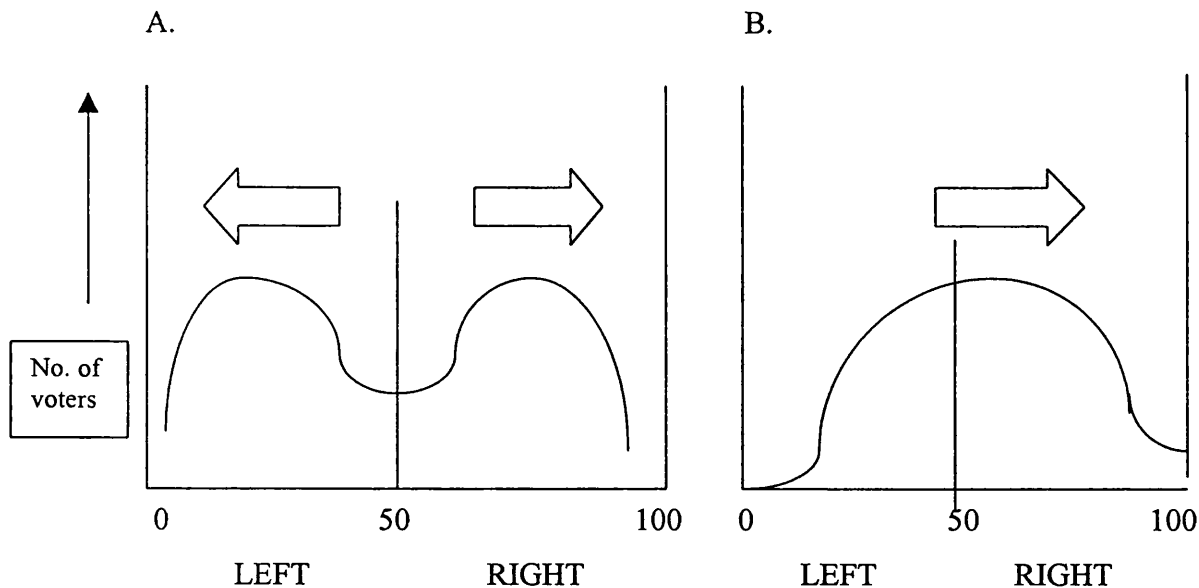


Figure 6: A. Adversary Politics – bipolarised electorate.

B. Conservative Politics – median voter shifting to the right.

### Re-emerging Consensus

The final stages of each long-wave downswing have been characterized by a moderate revival of the centre-left and the re-emergence of consensus. The downswing-to-upswing transition is one of relative calm, with the emerging consensus becoming more fully developed during the first decade of the following long-wave upswing.

With the worst of the economic crisis apparently over and the economy showing signs of sustainable improvement, public opinion is cautiously optimistic. Many of the social and political issues that went unresolved earlier, and that may have been highlighted by the depressions of the early downswing, can now be addressed. However, with memories of recent political and economic instability, remedies to these problems need to involve the minimum of disruption.

This shift in the electorate helps the left experience a revival, but it is a left that has already significantly adjusted its ideological position in pursuit of a median voter that has moved to the right in the previous period. As such, although it remains committed to a redistribution of power in society, it is contemplating a significantly more moderate

redistribution than was the case in the late upswing/early downswing period. With the median voter only accepting limited political and social change, it has to adopt a far less radical position in a changed political climate. It has also taken account of the previously dominant right-wing agenda. With the right having successfully stalled further political change, and with public opinion still leaning towards conservatism, the left has a limited room for manoeuvre. In all the late downswing periods this has occurred, the left adopting a far more moderate agenda than was the case in the previous upswing, for example, social democracy replacing socialism in the 1940s, the third way replacing redistributive social democracy in the 1990s.

In a political climate of conservatism, the right, by now, is primarily concerned with preserving the status quo and the left, needing electoral support for radical change, is not in a position to fundamentally challenge it. The median voter slowly returns towards the centre, and both left and right if they want to be electorally successful need to converge on this position. The long-wave downswing thus ends with a period of emerging political consensus, as the right attempts to consolidate and preserve the status quo. The left meanwhile continues its quest for greater distribution of power on a far more restricted platform and with far more moderate demands. There is a jockeying for position as each seeks to determine the shape of the consensus that follows.

## **Summary**

As such, existing theories of party competition can be very useful for explaining the pattern of political change outlined in Chapter 2, in particular in explaining why the left and right are more likely to be in government during particular periods. However, the importance of left-right ideology and the median voter need to be borne in mind at all times.

Downs maintained that the absence of leapfrogging within the left-right spectrum was a result of a political party's need to demonstrate reliability, integrity and responsibility, whilst at the same time he downplayed the importance of ideology. The above discussion offers an alternative explanation for the absence of leapfrogging. Ideology is indeed central to the process of party competition, in particular the left-right dichotomy and the struggle over the distribution of power. Political parties have not

simply adopted ideologies as a means of attaining office; rather ideology has been central to the political process in the modern era.

Political parties may well need to demonstrate reliability, integrity and responsibility in the eyes of voters (though electorates in recent decades appear to believe they have done otherwise) but, as preference-shaping theories elaborated, they also need to respect the ideological beliefs of their members, activists and the traditions within which they operate. Crucially this has been the left-right divide and the competing attitudes towards a redistribution of power within modern societies.

Most political parties emerged from ideological movements promoting the interests of a particular social class. Attachment to ideology was often a feature of political parties even before the democratic process had become established, not as an afterthought once democracy was up and running. An understanding of this allows a greater understanding of how party competition can reflect the changes occurring in voting behaviour and how these changes can be intensified.

The above discussion also shows a way in which the competing theories of party competition can be reconciled using the dynamic of the political long-wave. Early in the long-wave the voter distribution is unimodal and lends itself towards consensus and preference-accommodating strategies. The focussing on a centrally-placed median voter by both the right and left perpetuates this position. However, as the long-wave progresses, the political spectrum polarizes and a bimodal voter distribution develops. This leads to adversary politics, political turmoil and the adoption of preference-shaping policies alongside preference-accommodating strategies, not so much because of the beliefs of party activists, but to shift voters from one modal position to the other. This tends to exacerbate the political polarisation and can intensify ideological positions held on the left and right.

The shifting position of the median voter over a political long-wave and the desire to attain power also affects the positions of the left and right and their attitude towards the distribution of power. The pressures of these two factors have ensured that the two ideological tendencies have not always been able to strictly adhere to their chosen agenda. Temporary deviations have occasionally been necessary, though in the long-term the two tendencies have always reverted back to their more natural position, when



favourable circumstances emerge. The line between being progressive and conservative, is at the end of the day a fine one. With conservatives opposing all but the most necessary shifts towards a greater distribution of power, whilst progressives seek gradual and incremental increases in the distribution of power, the possibility of the centre-left and centre-right straying into 'enemy territory' is clearly a real one. Such a phenomenon is largely a result of having to take account of the median voter and the changes of the political long-wave.

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<sup>1</sup> **A. Downs**, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, 1957

<sup>2</sup> **S.E. Finer**, *Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform*, Wigram, 1975. Later works were: **S.E. Finer**, *The Changing British Party System 1945-79*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980; **A.M. Gamble & S.A. Walkland**, *The British party System and Economic Policy 1945-83: Studies in Adversary Politics*, Clarendon Press, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance; **D. Robertson**, *A Theory of Party Competition*, John Wiley & sons, 1976; **P. Dunleavy & C.T. Husbands**, *British Democracy at the Crossroads*, George Allen & Unwin, 1985; **P. Dunleavy**, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> **A. Downs**, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, 1957, p.96.

<sup>5</sup> **A. Downs**, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, 1957, p.100.

<sup>6</sup> **A. Downs**, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, 1957, Chapters 7 & 8.

<sup>7</sup> **P. Dunleavy**, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, p.124.

<sup>8</sup> This was thus a repetition of a trend also apparent in the 1870s and 1920s.

<sup>9</sup> See for instance **H. Jones & M. Kandiah**, (eds) *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History 1945-64*, Macmillan, 1996. Several chapters describe the more ideological position taken by party members and activists at a time of consensus in British politics.

<sup>10</sup> An exception to this was the Liberal dominance in Britain of the 1850s, presumably a result of the Corn Law issue having deeply divided the Tories on the right.

<sup>11</sup> **A. Downs**, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, pp.127-132.

<sup>12</sup> **W.C. Mitchell**, *The Popularity of Social Security: a Paradox in Public Choice*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977; 'Government and the Economy' in **C. Weiss & C.A. Barton** (eds) *Making Bureaucracies Work*, Sage, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> **A. Downs**, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, p.120.

<sup>14</sup> Presumably Downs had in mind the ascension to power of the Nazis and other fascist parties in the 1920s and 1930s. However, almost invariably these groups were aided by

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powerful right-wing elites and strictly speaking could not be regarded as underdogs seizing power.

## **CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS and ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

This thesis set out to test the proposition that the fluctuating fortunes of the political and social movements of the left and right could be linked to long-wave economics and to explore possible explanations for this linkage. The chronology in Chapter 2 strongly suggested that such a linkage is in evidence. Although the exact pattern of development over the course of a long-wave was not always in accord with those suggested by other long-wave researchers, there was some common ground. Likewise, possible explanations for this pattern discussed in Chapters 3,4 and 5 were often at odds with existing theoretical causations. Previously, attempts to link the political changes of the long-wave to theories of voting behaviour or party competition have been either non-existent or extremely limited in scope, but this thesis found both to be extremely useful in explaining a causal link. Amongst attempts to link class struggle behaviour to changes in the long-wave, some existing theories were found to be more salient than others.

This chapter will summarize the findings of the previous four chapters, offering a typical trajectory of how and why the fortunes of the left and right alter across the course of a long-wave. It will also analyze this trajectory in comparison with those descriptions and theories discussed in Chapter 1, comparing and contrasting the strengths and weaknesses of this new trajectory with those that already exist. In addition it will highlight the strengths of using party competition, voting behaviour and class struggle theories in reaching these conclusions.

### **Overview**

The political changes involving the movements and parties of the left and right over the course of a long-wave can be divided into six different periods, as suggested by Chapter 2. These periods differ qualitatively from each other in that distinctive alterations in the nature of party competition, voting and class struggle behaviour develop within each. Each period is characterised by a different political climate and has differing impacts on the movements and parties of the left and right.

The struggle between left and right has essentially been one over the distribution of power within society. The industrial and political revolutions of the early modern era considerably enhanced the economic and political collective power within society but no such transformation in the nature of distributive power took place. At the domestic level, the major political struggles of the last two centuries have centred around the question of 'to what extent should power be distributed within society?' Through its many manifestations, numerous ideologies and political movements, this has remained at the heart of the left-right dichotomy.

The rise and fall in political fortunes of the two halves of this dichotomy have, amongst other factors, been shaped by the fluctuations of long-wave economics. With the rising prosperity and sustained growth of a long-wave upswing the left is able to mount a concerted challenge to the existing distribution of power within society - to break with the established routine of political life. The response of the right is to resist or diminish this challenge, but it is only during the economic difficulties of the long-wave downswing that it is able to succeed in bringing this challenge to a gradual halt and once more institute a period of established routine, where the existing distribution of power goes largely unchallenged. The process is thus essentially dialectical in nature.

Class struggle theories indicated that the means by which this process occurs is partly structural, as maintained by Cronin (1979), in that each long-wave upswing brings with it new, or remade, subordinate social classes that slowly develop and attempt to implement their own political agenda.<sup>1</sup> In general, they seek to alter the distribution of power in a more egalitarian direction. However, this in itself is not a sufficient causation for explaining the political shifts that accompany long-waves. These social classes continue to exist throughout the long-wave downswing but their agenda may be rebuffed, discredited or be largely defeated. The redistribution of power within society is largely stalled or even reversed. Structural theories are of limited use, and a further causation is needed to explain this development.

As indicated by Kelly (1998), organizational ability is also an important factor in political and social change in that it affects the effectiveness with which demands for reform can be made and transmitted.<sup>2</sup> In the prosperous period of the long-wave upswing, forces in the labour market favour employees. A lack of damaging recessions together

with low levels of unemployment allow trade-unions to organize more effectively than in downswings, thus aiding demands for a redistribution of power both at state and workplace level. This ability is diminished during the economic stagnation of downswings, often significantly, whilst variations in the organizational ability of employers federations is proportionately much less. However, at the electoral and party level organizational abilities for the left and right do not appear to greatly alter between upswings and downswings. A further causation appears necessary to explain these fluctuating fortunes.

Both voting behaviour and class struggle theories strongly indicated that changes within the political long-wave appear to be, above all, socio-psychological in nature. The changing fortunes of the international economy result in a process in which motivational direction amongst populations is altered and impacts in such a way as to affect the fortunes of the left and right. At different stages of the long-wave, these different motivations result in populations wanting to move in significantly different political directions. Prosperity in the long-wave upswing appears to diminish deference, to enhance risk-taking and to create an optimistic climate in which progress is considered both possible and desirable. This and a greater attention to matters of progressive social and political reform benefit the left.

By contrast, economic crisis and stagnation during the downswing produce increased deference, caution and conservatism and a more pessimistic view of the possibility of creating a more progressive society. This, together with a concentration on reviving the strength of the economy tends to favour the political forces of the right. Most importantly, it appears that it is the changing attitudes, ideas and beliefs amongst populations that result in the different political directions associated with different stages of the long-wave.

Thus using class struggle and voting behaviour theories helped show the importance of motivational behaviour in deriving a causative explanation for the pattern of change described in Chapter 2. Party competition theory, on the other hand, proved more useful in explaining why and how these behavioural changes should affect the chances of left and right parties to form governments, especially once the importance of ideology had been established, in particular concerning the distribution of power in society.

## **Long-wave Upswing**

### **6.1 The Period of Consensus** 1803-1812, 1848-1860, 1896-1906, 1948-1960.

As indicated by Hobsbawm (1975, 1994) and Beckman (1983), the first ten to twelve years of the political long-wave are generally marked by a 'period of political consensus'.<sup>3</sup> The period usually sees the election of centre-right governments, but above all it is a period in which centrist politics dominate the political agenda. The period of consensus sees a marked convergence between the major forces of the left and right in comparison with the last two-thirds of the previous long-wave. The exact nature of the consensus is determined by the final events of the previous long-wave political cycle,<sup>4</sup> and can be of either a centre-right or centre-left nature. However, whether defined by the left or the right, each consensus is marked by certain similarities.

Party competition theory proved particularly useful in understanding the nature of this consensus. First and foremost the consensus is determined by the electorate. The median voter is situated close to the centre of the left-right spectrum and remains there. Hobsbawm (1994) indicated that this resulted from satisfaction with a booming economy.<sup>5</sup> However, from the discussion in Chapter 3, it appears that Beckman (1983) was more accurate in maintaining this resulted from the long years of austerity during the previous downswing.<sup>6</sup> For the most part, the long years of economic uncertainty during the previous downswing have bred caution and conservatism. The electorate becomes uninterested in radical political and social change, thus denying the left the popular backing needed for radical projects; political conditions are not conducive to grandiose left-wing programmes. The previous long-wave downswing thus creates caution and moderation amongst the parties of the left.

Voting behaviour theory indicated, in addition, that partisan alignment is the most important determinant of voting behaviour, the alignment reflecting the major social cleavages in any particular society and these appear to be determined by the events of the previous long-wave, notably the distribution of economic resources. Economic and technological change has seen structural alterations within society.<sup>7</sup> New social groups or

classes emerge, whilst existing ones may change their political priorities. The previous downswing then engenders a climate of political conservatism and centrism in which the mainstream parties dominate. Loyalties begin to crystallize and voters increasingly revert to party identification as to how they decide to vote. Party image and appearance, rather than specific policies, attitudes or ideas, become of increasing importance in gaining votes.

Class struggle theories showed that for the trade unions and organized labour this is a quiet period. As maintained by Kelly (1998), union membership at the beginning of this period is relatively low, having suffered from the high unemployment of the previous downswing.<sup>8</sup> With unemployment levels gradually falling, trade-union leaders are most likely to be concerned with expanding the membership of the trade unions. In terms of industrial relations this is usually a quiet period, any industrial action is likely to be only amongst the most skilled of workers - those most confident of secure employment. As indicated by Screpanti (1984, 1987) this appears to be a result of low expectations brought on by poor economic growth and high unemployment during the previous downswing, but also, as Mandel (1980) maintained, resulting from losing major strikes and political confrontations.<sup>9</sup> In addition, as indicated by Phelps Brown (1975), the workforce is dominated by those who have experienced years of job insecurity, the rank-and-file is quiescent, and there is generally very little industrial action.<sup>10</sup> Above all, damaging periods of high unemployment and economic recession have resulted in low levels of worker mobilisation.

The forces of the left enter the period of consensus aware that ambitious projects for radical political and social change have little backing amongst the electorate. Any attempt to proceed with such projects is fraught with problems, and risks a successful counter-reaction from the right. The forces of the right enter the consensus for different reasons. By nature the right dislikes rapid political and social change, and a period of consensus and political stability offers to preserve the status quo. The right feels more at home with a period of consensus and continuity, and thus is more likely to be in power.

The consensus is, above all, a period of time when no major deviation towards the left or right occurs. Both forces maintain a largely centrist agenda. This is not to say that the policies, practices and aims of the left and right become identical, only that, with the



electorate maintaining a centrist political agenda, neither force is able, or willing, to shift its ideological position significantly. The left and right do not lose their inherent value systems or ideological tendencies; it is just that they are less polarised than at other times.

The consensus tends either towards the centre-left or centre-right, the ideological tendency dominant within the period of consensus depending on the balance of ideological forces at the beginning of the period. Where the left has proved stronger in electoral and ideological terms towards the end of the downswing, it should be able to set a centre-left agenda that will normally continue throughout much of the early upswing. Once the consensus agenda has been set, neither the right nor the left is likely to fundamentally challenge it.

The right, by nature, prefers to preserve the status quo and for the most part centre-right governments are elected during this period, the right adapting more easily to an essentially conservative political climate. In the absence of any popular left-mobilisation the left parties are unable to successfully pursue any protracted programme of radical change. The few attempts by either the right or the left to institute radical change are likely to be quickly rebuffed, prove unsuccessful and have the effect of discouraging further attempts. The years of the consensus are more likely to be marked by a period of political consolidation, building upon the political features that marked the initial stage of the consensus.

For most governments, their first priority is to ensure that the newly buoyant economy continues to expand. Mindful of the difficult economic times of the previous downswing, economic policy tends to be cautious and conservative. Major changes in economic policy are usually discounted, whilst those changes that are instituted are done with the aim of creating the minimum of disturbance to the business climate. Elsewhere governments devote their attention to ameliorating the worst social effects of the previous depression and to overseeing institutional changes that have been made necessary by the social and economic changes of the previous long-wave.

The far right that emerged during the previous downswing may still be active on the fringes of the political scene, but its influence is declining, as the increasing prosperity removes the atmosphere of despair and recrimination in which it thrives. The far left is also notable by its absence, the long years of pessimism, conservatism and the numerous

defeats it has suffered during the previous downswing have seen its confidence and numbers dwindle to unimportance. Both groups remain confined to the fringes and have almost no impact during the consensus period.

## **6.2 Period of Progressive Change.** 1812-1825, 1860-1867, 1906-1914/16, 1960-1967.

Most observers linking long-waves to political and social change maintained that each upswing eventually experienced a generalised shift to the left, and the chronology in Chapter 2 shows this to be the case. Overall, the period of progressive change marks a break with the previous consensus. The consensus begins to suffer its first major cracks, as the mainstream political agenda shifts firmly to the left. This period is marked by a considerably increased level of support for the parties and movements of the left, and often sees the election of left-wing governments.

Hobsbawm (1975, 1987, 1994) offered different explanations for the left-wing surge in each upswing, but there does appear to be a common explanation for this occurrence.<sup>11</sup> During the early upswing, there has been a general improvement in living conditions as the economy expands, creating higher employment rates, increased prosperity and increased consumer demand. As the economy continually improves, and the difficult years of the previous downswing become a distant memory, the popular mood, as maintained by Beckman (1983), slowly becomes more optimistic about the outlook for the future.<sup>12</sup>

From voting behaviour theory, it can be seen that this and the following period are characterised by a belief in progress, that society can be changed for the better through a progressive redistribution of power. Voters are open to new ideas, and voting behaviour begins to shift away from 'party identification' as new ideas capture the support, or opposition, of different sections within society. Increasingly the battle of ideas and ideology begins to dominate voting behaviour.

Sections of the electorate enjoying rising prosperity are optimistic about the future, willing to take risks and encompass political change. Following Inglehart (1977), with the economy performing well, voters, in particular those of the middle-class, can turn their attention to social and political affairs, a move that tends to benefit the left.<sup>13</sup> Much of the

left agenda is constituted by attempts to effect social and political change, and to create a more inclusive and pluralistic society. In times of increased prosperity, governments can afford to expand social services and experiment with political change.

Following class struggle theories, this period also sees an increased level of mobilisation amongst organised labour. As indicated by Screpanti (1984) and Phelps Brown (1975) this results from high employment rates, allowing the labour movement to grow in strength and confidence.<sup>14</sup> Workers increasingly mobilise, seeking to establish better pay and conditions within the workplace, and wider society, as increased levels of growth allow employers to make greater concessions and living standards to rise. Initially, this occurs in the better-organized sections of the labour movement, and notably at the top of the business cycle.<sup>15</sup> In addition, as indicated by Phelps Brown (1975), the balance of power within the unions begins to shift towards the rank-and-file and strikes are increasingly unofficial in nature.<sup>16</sup>

Party competition theory showed that as the median voter shifts leftward, the movements of the left experience a revival in their political fortunes and often come to power during this period, especially if they are able to capture the popular mood for progressive political and social change. Although the foundations of the consensus are still in existence, the left begins to institute, if in power, or agitate for if out of power, a more progressive agenda, notably in political and social affairs. If the consensus is based on a centre-right agenda, the break between the period of consensus and the period of progressive change will be more noticeable than if the consensus was centre-left driven, in which the two periods merge slowly together.

With the electorate shifting leftwards, the right faces a dilemma. If in power they may go on the defensive or adopt preference-shaping strategies to move the median voter rightwards, but this risks electoral alienation. Adopting a hard-line conservative or reactionary stance in the face of a leftward shifting electorate risks electoral defeat. Most likely, a more progressive position may be adopted in order to stay in power or regain power if lost, and this only adds to the progressive nature of the period. However, mindful of their supporters and the possibility of damaging splits or newly emerging parties attempting to preserve a more traditional ideological position, the mainstream

right can only go so far in a progressive direction, although electoral success can do much to diminish this possibility.

### **6.3 The Peak in Left-Wing Radicalism.** 1825-34, 1867-73, 1916/17-1920, 1968-1973.

This is the period most widely studied by long-wave researchers, and class struggle theories proved particularly useful, especially concerning the rise of the extra-parliamentary or revolutionary left. As indicated by long-wave researchers such as Kelly (1998), Screpanti (1984, 1987), Hobsbawm (1975, 1994) and Beckman (1983) the final years of each upswing have seen a dramatic peak in left-wing radicalism both at the political level and the activity of organized labour.<sup>17</sup> It is a time of mass demonstrations, widespread political participation in grassroots movements, and a period when a plethora of new ideas, ideologies and movements arise, some confined to small groups of intellectuals and activists, but others reaching out to the mainstream left. For organised labour, this is a period of rapid union expansion together with a generalised strike movement that produces high levels of success.

Some researchers, such as Kelly (1998) and Mandel (1980), suggested this peak in left-wing radicalism resulted from an increased sense of injustice or from the beginnings of economic problems.<sup>18</sup> From the discussion in the previous three chapters this appears unlikely. The political climate is one of great optimism, of a strong belief in a progress, of the ability to make considerable headway in creating a better world. Following Inglehart (1977), the electorate is less deferential as a result of years of prosperity.<sup>19</sup> Increased wealth and material security have resulted in an electorate that believes it not only should have a greater input into running the country, but also the belief that it is able to do so.

In a climate of material security and political optimism, progressive ideas on political and social change easily make progress amongst the public. Following Cronin's (1979) structural explanation, social and economic changes that accompany the economic expansion of the long-wave upswing may also begin to make the established political order look archaic and anachronistic and thus in need of modernisation.<sup>20</sup> In terms of

electoral behaviour, the partisan alignments of the consensus years have further eroded, and issue voting is increasingly evident. At a time of optimism about the future the electorate is open to new ideas, beliefs and ideologies, usually associated with the left.

Generational theories, from both voting behaviour and class struggle accounts proved particularly useful here. As maintained by Inglehart (1977) and Phelps Brown (1975), receptivity to new and radical ideas is especially strong amongst the younger generation - a generation that has only known increasingly prosperous times, and is unfamiliar with economic depression, unemployment and poverty.<sup>21</sup> For many of this generation, optimism is at a peak. High levels of mass participation at political events, meetings and demonstrations occur, and a feeling that anything is possible pervades this generation. As such, this period is thus one of political and social experimentation, and gives rise to numerous utopian and revolutionary ideas and movements.

As maintained by all long-wave researchers, except Gordon (1978) and Dunlop (1948), this is also a period of intense class struggle with high aspirations for much of organized labour and the wider working class.<sup>22</sup> Following Kelly (1998), union membership rises rapidly at a time of a generalised strike wave, but rather than resulting from a heightened awareness of injustice, it results from a greater level of belief that unions are able to make a significant difference.<sup>23</sup> As indicated by Screpanti (1984, 1987) and Phelps Brown (1975) this has resulted from forces within the labour market favouring employees.<sup>24</sup> For twenty years or more there has been high levels of employment and economic prosperity. At a time of full employment, employers are unable to use the sack or redundancy as a form of worker-discipline. The spectre of unemployment, economic hardship and damaging bouts of economic recession are a distant memory. This has allowed the labour movement to become well organized, confident and militant, and, as maintained by Kelly (1998), strikes and union organization are more likely to be effective, encouraging a generalised strike wave.<sup>25</sup> Typically the strike wave begins with success for a key group of workers.

For the most part, strike activity is largely 'unofficial', driven by the militancy of a confident and militant rank-and-file. In a period of heightened class struggle, it is also the case that economic grievances can easily take on a political dimension. For the most part industrial action revolves around increasing wages and improving working conditions

and is usually successful. But with levels of confidence at a fifty-year high and with labour, through the use of industrial action and militancy, less deferential and increasingly dictating terms to management, the ideas of socialism, workers control and industrial democracy are likely to become part of the political agenda as Phelps Brown (1975) suggested.<sup>26</sup> Beginning to feel confident about their ability to effect concerted change, the wider left-wing climate leads to many workers considering the possibility of taking over, or participating in, the running of their workplace. Socialism is once more seen as a distinct possibility. Contrary to Marx's expectation that economic crisis would lead to revolution, this is the period of the political long-wave when revolution is most likely to occur.

Hobsbawm (1994), Gordon (1978) and Dunlop (1948) all suggested that economic prosperity would lead to political complacency and accommodation with capitalism.<sup>27</sup> However, the result is exactly the opposite. Both voting behaviour and party competition theories showed how high expectations are placed on political parties in government at this time. Government is increasingly expected to pursue a popular left programme of radical political, economic and social change. The political climate is one that expects a radical and progressive redistribution of power, and thus is most likely to be beneficial to the parties of the left. It is most likely to be a period of left-wing government, with radical changes either enacted or pursued, in a political climate dominated by the desire for rapid change.

Party competition theory showed too, that for the right, this period poses a major dilemma. It may attempt to outbid the left in meeting rising expectations. If the right is in power, it may pursue a degree of progressive change to meet electoral demands. However, this might impact upon the vested interests of supporters of the right, and can cause ideological divisions with the more traditional sections of the right and the possibility of political schisms. However, to remain conservative at a time of high electoral expectations also carries risks; electoral defeat is likely. In addition, if the parties of the right in power fail to move with the progressive times, they may face a concerted revolutionary or near-revolutionary situation.

However, some class struggle theories suggested that this period also brings with it problems for the left. The older party leaders of the left are likely to be considerably less militant than the younger generation. Their more moderate agenda is unlikely to satisfy the militant or revolutionary left. The pace of change by the mainstream left may be too slow. At a time of successful industrial action, the militancy of the younger generation may result in a renewed strength for radical or extra-parliamentary movements of the left. Following Hunt (1981), workers might not see the need to support the parliamentary left with change being successfully implemented in the workplace.<sup>28</sup> The mainstream left may be unable to fully benefit from the leftward shift in the political climate. This period can thus see the beginnings of a concerted split in the ranks of the left, between progressive, radical and revolutionary movements.

### **Long-wave Downswing**

#### **The Crisis Phase**

#### **6.4 The Period of Political Turmoil. 1825-1834, 1873-1884/6, 1920-1933/6, 1973-1982/4**

The beginning of the long-wave downswing sees a period of political turmoil as an intense left-right battle becomes entrenched within the political process. Voting behaviour theory showed that this period is characterised by issue voting and electoral volatility, making this period prone to political instability, especially when combined with high expectations and economic difficulties setting in. Party competition theory showed how this could be manifested in political polarisation, as voters stretch across the entire political spectrum, and further enhance the level of instability. Under such circumstances a new phase of party competition occurs, that of adversary politics. Each side attempts to gain ideological supremacy and establish their own preferred political hegemony. In addition class struggle theories showed that although levels of industrial action are declining unevenly, disputes are increasingly protracted and hard fought, further adding to the sense of political turmoil.

Few long-wave researchers considered this period, Beckman (1983) saw it as one of political turmoil but gave no reason for this.<sup>29</sup> However, using voting behaviour theory it can be shown that electoral behaviour is dominated by issue voting and electoral volatility and thus political turmoil is always a possibility. As indicated above, the electorate is open to new ideas, beliefs, attitudes and ideologies and thus may switch to new parties and movements associated with these. Already there are divisions on the left, as radicals expect a rapid and fundamental progressive redistribution of power. Divisions on the left begin to be mirrored on the right.

Party competition theory showed how these divisions together with electoral volatility could result in political polarisation. The leftward drift of society is too much for conservatives used to the old traditions and certainties. The spectre of revolution or radical change looms, and facing the possibility of systemic changes, of socialism and workers control, sections of the right are attracted towards parties, movements and ideologies that aim to halt the leftward direction of society. This position may be strengthened by the continued militancy of organized labour, especially once it becomes evident that the economy is facing protracted problems.

The beginnings of a counter-offensive by the right become evident. Those that wanted to follow a moderately progressive line to counter-act the left's radicalism begin to lose out to more hard-line conservative or reactionary ideologies. They believe that a moderate redistribution of power has only encouraged a belief that more is possible. It has not stemmed the leftward drift and this period sees the germination of a 'new right' agenda in response to militant left activity. The stirrings of a conservative backlash begins to get underway, as sections of the right believe that political change has gone too far. It also has the effect of increasing ideological divisions within the right.

As indicated by party competition theory, the result is that the positions of the left and right become polarized across the entire political spectrum, from the far right to the far left. Ideology has become increasingly important. Driven by the increasingly polarized ideological positions of the electorate, the parties of left and right begin to pursue political policies and agendas that can appear as more a product of an ideological clash than as a response to the demands of the electorate. At this point in time the overriding concern for political movements appears to be that their half of the dichotomy



should determine the prevailing political hegemony, whilst defeating that of their opponents.

This ideological clash is accompanied by the beginnings of the economic downswing. At first it is thought to represent only a dip in the business cycle, rather than the entering of a new phase in the state of the world economy. Initially people do not realize that the boom years of the long-wave upswing are over. The downturn in the business cycle is assumed to be a short-term feature, and the economy will soon return to the 'good old days'.<sup>30</sup>

However, class struggle theories indicated that this downturn in the economy usually has the effect of lessening the strike wave that accompanies the end of the long-wave upswing. As noted by Kelly (1998), Cronin (1979) and Screpanti (1984, 1987), the beginning of the downswing usually sees a decline in worker mobilisation.<sup>31</sup> Screpanti (1984) attributed this to declining economic growth and higher unemployment resulting in declining levels of ambition, and thus frustration.<sup>32</sup> However, following Kelly (1998) and Hunt (1981), the decline is more likely a result of declining strike effectiveness at a time of economic difficulties.<sup>33</sup> Higher levels of unemployment bring a level of caution and weaken the position of organised labour. Strikes are more likely to be lost and thus less readily turned to.

The decline, however, was described by Cronin (1979) and Screpanti (1984) as initially slow and erratic and industrial militancy remains; the unions are still well organized, the rank-and-file still confident and there is a limit to what employers' federations can achieve.<sup>34</sup> Initially left-wing activity remains militant due to the momentum built up during the long-wave upswing, and the radical left remains strong for a number of years into the downswing. Following Hunt's theory, the downturn in the economy may shift support amongst the working class towards the parliamentary left whilst the economy is faltering, since gains in the workplace are becoming more difficult.

As such, initially expectations amongst the electorate remain high. However, in the light of declining economic performance and slower economic growth, governments may be forced to rein back public spending. Typically they are unable to meet the demands of an electorate used to receiving more. This period becomes associated with a crisis of

governance, and governments, continually facing economic and political crisis, often prove to be short-lived. In addition, at a time of political polarization and electoral volatility, government may swing from left to right and back on a number of occasions. Typically neither left nor right dominate this period.

The sense of crisis is added to by the fact that the radical left attempts to maintain a radical agenda, and that industrial action may remain prevalent, disputes often being violent and protracted in nature. Class struggle and party competition theories showed that the result of this is likely to be the emergence of reactionary political movements. These are determined to not only oppose and destroy the forces of the left, but to impose an essentially reactionary political order upon society. Voting behaviour theories indicated that, with the economy worsening, these forces are able to exploit the increasing insecurity within those sectors of the population that appear to face a bleak future, that are facing economic decline, or being pushed to the sidelines of the political mainstream.

The left and right remain locked in a battle that often appears to ignore the considerations of the electorate whilst each attempts to gain ideological supremacy over the other. With a polarized electorate, parties may engage in preference-shaping strategies to draw voters to their half of the dichotomy. With both the far left and right in evidence, they are aware that they cannot be too close to the centre, usually steering a hard left or hard right course. However, prioritising ideological positions through preference-shaping strategies may also deepen the antagonistic ideological battle adding to the sense of political turmoil.

#### **6.5 The Rise of the Right and conservatism.** 1834-1844, 1882/4 -1888/90, 1931/36-1942/3, 1979/83 – 1992/95.

Voting behaviour theory strongly indicated that this period is characterised by a shift towards voting by economic performance and a gradual decline in issue voting. It also sees a decline in the level of worker mobilisation and an employer's offensive, and class struggle theories indicated that this point represented nadir in the fortunes of organized labour. Typically, party competition theory showed the median voter shifts to the right

and thus offers greater opportunities to the parties and movements of the right. In addition, the left becomes increasingly defensive and as a result adversary politics starts to decline. With economic recovery the main priority, interest in social and political change decreases and conservatism comes to dominate the political climate.

The 'period of political turmoil' is usually brought to an end by economic crisis and depression. For most long-wave researchers, the worst and deepest depression of the long-wave downswing arrives after approximately 8-10 years.<sup>35</sup> It becomes increasingly evident that the economy is in crisis and is not about to make a rapid return to the boom years of the upswing. In the face of rising unemployment, and entrenched economic problems, voting behaviour theory showed that, first and foremost voters concerns begin to centre upon the state of the economy, with the priority being the search for a government that can rescue the economy. Increasingly voters are judging parties on economic performance and competence, or potential performance in the case of oppositions. As part of this process, voters become more cautious and pessimistic about their immediate future, and less interested in progressive political and social change. Electorates begin to have doubts about the wisdom of radical change. A more conservative political climate begins to develop, especially amongst those most vulnerable to economic crisis.

With a realisation that the best economic years are now over and that the economy is in crisis, leftwing politicians, previously attached to ideas of political and social reform associated with an expanding economy can look helpless and out of touch. The economic crisis after a decade of political turmoil can lead to a crisis of modernity. A belief in progress may be shattered, and with it a belief in the ideas of the left. Following Inglehart (1977), sections of the electorate may experience an 'authoritarian reflex'.<sup>36</sup> In the face of a deepening economic crisis, voters may feel powerless to improve the situation and the desire for a 'strong leader' becomes evident, especially amongst those worst affected by the economic crisis. For reactionaries this is the most opportune time to become a significant political force.

The economic crisis also sees employers mount a concerted attempt to revive profits and economic growth. With demand and profitability depressed, this usually entails

supply-side reforms, restructuring and shedding large numbers of employees in an attempt to cut costs and boost profits. High unemployment ensues, severely denting the militancy of organized labour. Screpanti (1987) saw this period as one where levels of industrial action reach a fifty-year low.<sup>37</sup> With employers on the offensive, defeats are more likely and the overall strike trend is now downward. In the face of mass unemployment and major restructuring, as noted by Kelly (1998) and Cronin (1979), trade-union membership declines rapidly.<sup>38</sup> Worker mobilisation is now severely in decline and only existent amongst the better organised sections of the workforce. Any industrial action is likely to be defensive, attempting to prevent further erosions in working conditions.

In the face of a protracted economic crisis, and with voter's attention turned towards the economy, governments need to be seen to be doing something dramatic to rectify the situation. The general economic malaise, and in particular, the period of acute crisis has the effect of discrediting the established political economy orthodoxy. This orthodoxy invariably takes the blame for the poor economic climate – agrarian protectionism in the 1830s/40s, Liberal free trade in the 1870s/80s, laissez-faire capitalism in the 1920s/30s and Keynesian social democracy in the 1970s/80s. This offers political opportunities for the half of the left-right dichotomy not associated with the prevailing orthodoxy, and whilst most other factors favour the right at this point in the political long-wave, the left may benefit if the declining economic orthodoxy is associated with the right.

Most long-wave researchers identified this period as one of crisis for the left, but whilst Beckman (1983) and Rosenberg (1943) saw opportunities for the right, none identified this as a period when the right would dominate politically.<sup>39</sup> The chronology in Chapter 2 showed that this is nearly always the case. Using party competition theory, it can be seen that the effect of the economic crisis is to shift the median voter to the right. The electorate becomes more deferential, loses faith in progress and becomes more pessimistic about the future. Working class militancy, and by implication the left, can be blamed for the crisis. The parties of the right respond more quickly to economic crisis; addressing the crisis brings fewer ideological problems than it does for a left attached to the redistribution of wealth and full employment.

Class struggle theory was particularly useful in showing how economic crisis also leads to the dissipation of the revolutionary left; the utopianism of the long-wave upswing being damaged by economic crisis and the rise of reactionary and conservative forces as the right-wing backlash builds momentum. Only small numbers of the left remain committed to radical or revolutionary change. At a time when it may be difficult to find employment, creating a new society is not high on the agenda. The left in general is on the defensive, losing support, and in the face of mounting difficulties, division and disunity become commonplace. The crisis facing the idea of progress is more likely to see a rise in the forces of reaction.

The initial part of this period usually sees government embark on a new political economy strategy in order to revive the economy. Increasingly, the emphasis is on economic and political stability, in order to allow the economy to recover. Parties are judged on their economic competence. Major political and social changes are unlikely to be attempted unless they are seen as reviving the economy; any that are advocated are usually opposed or neutralised by the forces of conservatism as potentially destabilising.

Most of the electorate is no longer seeking radical or progressive political and social change; their priority is to avoid a worsening of the economic crisis and to see a return to better times. Slow economic growth and a poor business climate bring complaints that taxation is too high for current economic conditions, further pressurising government to halt plans for future public spending. Unemployment is now a cause for concern for the left, and a priority becomes engendering an economic climate that will allow a return to full employment.

As such, the left also comes to prioritise economic recovery and begins to reject any policies that might jeopardize this. However, in a poor economic climate, employers, in an attempt to restore profitability continue to shed labour, attack working-conditions or attempt to reduce wages. Solidarity between workers is low as the competition for jobs leads to demarcation disputes and inter-union rivalry. Organised labour continues to be defensive and at a time of high unemployment is unlikely to resort to industrial action. Where it does occur, it may be condemned by sections of the left through fear of jeopardizing economic recovery and of isolating voters. Many see a return to a major left-right confrontation as potentially destabilising the economy.

The overall effect of a period of political turmoil being followed by one of economic crisis is to create a political climate characterised by conservative and traditional values. The halting of economic advance together with political turmoil create uncertainty and disillusionment with the idea of progress. This together with concern for economic recovery creates a conservative political climate allowing the ideological dominance of the right. Typical of this period are governments that seek to impose a new conservatism, to preserve the status quo. Throughout these years the conservative right seeks to set the political agenda in social, political and economic terms and to then preserve that agenda. Usually the right puts an end to any thought of further major political and social change. In attempting to preserve the status quo, it does not necessarily dismantle all the progressive changes of the previous long-wave upswing - only those that are particularly unpopular with the right and those which the left are unable to defend. Those issues or demands raised by the left during the long-wave upswing that proved contentious are either ignored by the right or actively discouraged. Ideological opposition to such progressive changes combined with a greater attention to purely economic issues tends to leave these issues unresolved.

The shift to the right in the political climate usually sees the continued importance of reactionary movements - be they of a secular or religious nature. With conservatives increasingly setting the political agenda, reactionaries achieve a degree of political influence as the political mainstream shifts closer towards their position. At a time of social pessimism it appears as though progress towards a better society has come to an end. As belief in progress, a better future, and rationality decline, a belief in the mystical and irrational increases amongst some sections of society. For many the past looks distinctly more favourable in comparison with the economic and social difficulties and uncertainties of the present period. As sections of society remember the better times of the past, an attachment to tradition becomes stronger.

Where the attachment to the past, to tradition or some mythical golden age when society was more secure and certain, combines with a lack of faith in progress and an increasing belief in the irrational, it combines to form far right religious fundamentalism. Elsewhere, reactionary movements may be more secular in nature. Activity by

reactionary movements is often widespread during this period and they continue to be influential. In the new conservative climate of opinion, such groups do not seem so far from the political mainstream and may make considerable progress with their reactionary agenda. They offer a source of certainty in a changing and uncertain world, in a world that seems beset by economic, political and moral crisis.

In general, the left lacks influence within this period. For the left this is often a period of painful and slow adjustment to new economic and political realities. Numerous divisions and disputes beset the movement, as moderates stress the need for a major readjustment to the new political climate. With the radicals declining in numbers and confidence, the moderates gradually gain the upper hand. If in power, and with a median voter on the right, left parties may engage in preference-shaping policies to retain power. In general though, party competition theory showed that the mood of the electorate and the difficult economic conditions will ensure that even left parties pursue a largely conservative agenda whilst in government. At a time of economic difficulty, support from business or financial circles for radical economic change is not likely to be forthcoming. Whether the government is of the right or the left it will only remain in power by following an increasingly conservative political and social agenda.

Further problems with the economy only enhance these tendencies. The priority for both left and right is to create political stability to allow economic recovery to develop more fully. Under these conditions reactionary movements must now be discouraged for the risk they pose to the new status quo. The radical left is further distanced from the mainstream as the climate of conservatism deepens.

## **The Recovery Phase**

### **6.6 Left Recovery and the Emergence of a New Consensus.** 1840-1848, 1888-1896, 1940-1948, 1992-1998.

Hobsbawm (1975, 1994) described something of a revival for the left towards the end of each long-wave downswing.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Cronin (1979), Screpanti (1984) and Kelly (1998) also recognized something of a revival in worker mobilisation although attached

different levels of importance to this as well as differing explanations.<sup>41</sup> The chronology in Chapter 2 supports these observations, though this revival is often short-lived, not necessarily successful and of a far more moderate nature than that during the long-wave upswing. In addition, and not identified by long-wave researchers, this period gives way to centrist politics, characterised by political consensus.

Voting behaviour theory suggested that electorates are still judging parties on economic performance, or potential performance. However, as the economy begins to recover and the worst of the crisis appears to be over, there is also room for increased interest in social and political issues. It is likely that in concentrating on reviving the economy, previous governments have neglected social and political issues that, previously in the political long-wave were considered of great importance. In addition, those social changes that would ameliorate the worst conditions arising from the difficulties of the previous protracted period of economic crisis are supported. Overall, the median voter moves towards the centre,

As such the conservatism of the previous period partially recedes, allowing greater opportunities for the parties of the left. Following party competition theory, by now, the left has usually developed a more moderate agenda than that developed during the latter part of the long-wave upswing in order to attract the median voter. Although it is still driven by the issues that became important during the previous long-wave upswing, it has had to severely modify them, to take account of a depressed economy and a conservative political climate. Most often it represents a compromise with the demands and expectations of the right and is designed to have a relatively limited impact so as to ensure its adoption.

With the recent political dominance of the right, and an economic climate that has reduced the scope, as well as support, for radical change, the 'revised programme' must respond to a median voter close to the centre. In effect, the recent economic crisis and the only partial economic recovery limit the possibilities that are available to the left. Nonetheless, the 'revised programme' ensures that some of the progressive issues and demands raised during the long-wave upswing now return to the political agenda. If the left is successful, this period sees many of the political tensions and problems of the last



thirty years resolved, though with the intention of minimising the disruption to the climate of compromise and consensus.

For the radical left, this is a period where they are confined to the political fringe. The revolutionary left is very quiet - almost non-existent - and very much isolated from the political mainstream. After years of political and economic crisis, and increased support for conservative and reactionary ideologies few now believe that it is possible to create a more utopian society. For others it is neither desirable, since any attempt to do so may result in a further bout of political reaction.

This period is not so desperate for the reactionary right, who may see a brief revival of fortunes, though overall, with the median voter moving to the centre, the political trend is against them. Sections of the right may become disillusioned with the mainstream right's conservatism and willingness to make compromises to preserve the status quo. This may allow the far right to briefly gain support for a more ideologically driven right agenda. However, with the economy showing general recovery, this is likely to be something of an 'Indian summer' for the far right, as increasing prosperity undermines their recruiting base.

Class struggle theories showed why worker mobilisation reached a low point earlier in the downswing, both in terms of membership and industrial action. At a time of economic crisis, organised labour tends to suffer numerous defeats and adopts a more defensive attitude. However, several long-wave researchers noted something of a revival in the latter part of the downswing as the economy recovers. Cronin (1979) and Kelly (1998) saw this as resulting from structural change within industry as it shifted from the downswing to the upswing.<sup>42</sup> However, Screpanti (1984) saw this revival as often being absent, and where it occurred more a result of local conditions, rather than any structural transformation.<sup>43</sup>

The discussion in Chapter 4 indicated that the revival appears to be the result of the improving economy, with workers hoping to reverse some of the defeats of the previous period, or now confident enough to resist further attacks by employers. As Screpanti indicated though, this revival is not universal and appears confined to the most economically secure groups of workers. In general, the revival in mobilisation proves limited in nature, is usually short-lived and often of limited success, with reversals

always a potential problem. After years of economic crisis, high unemployment, defeats and falling levels of militancy and membership, it is unlikely that any strike action would become generalised and sustained over an extended period of time.

Party competition theory showed that the effect of the median voter moving towards the centre is that the ideological agendas of the parties of the left and right begin to converge. As the left attempts to enter the centre ground of politics, the parties begin to look increasingly similar in their outlook, and another brief period of ideological competition ensues, though this time to see who successfully occupies the centre ground and defines the coming political consensus. The right attempts to rebut the left recovery, though with the increased importance of social issues, the political initiative is more likely to be with the left initially. With the long years of austerity, difficult and uncertain economic times appearing to come to an end, the left can appeal for less constraint and propose at least a moderate amount of change. Unsurprisingly, this is opposed by the right.

The end of this period sees the centre-left and centre-right jockeying for position as they attempt to occupy the centre ground of politics, and to see the success of their own agenda. For the most part, the number of options for each side is limited. The fractious battles of previous years ensure that certain highly controversial issues are no longer on the agenda, whilst the two sides of the dichotomy converge on issues important to the median voter. Increasingly, only the politics of the centre become a realistic option. Differences between centre-left and centre-right are more a case of how and why policies should be implemented, rather than what should be done. The differences are in the detail rather than the bigger picture.

It is unlikely that either side gains a complete ideological victory, the centre-right usually has to make some concessions to greater political and social inclusiveness, whereas the left is unable to transform its revival into a more profound attempt to change society. Electorates are still aware of the possibility of economic crisis and the previous periods have dampened any desire for profound political change. The actual nature of the consensus may be determined by either the centre-left or the centre-right. Where the left revival has effected changes, these are usually accepted by the right as it attempts to

occupy the centre ground. If the right successfully prevents any left reforms, the left, without sustained support from the electorate, has little choice but to accept the status quo.

Thus the period, and the entire long-wave, ends with the emergence of a new consensus, be it largely defined by the centre-right or centre-left. The consensus is significantly different to the one that characterised the beginning of the long-wave. Structural and technological changes within society, and fifty years of political dispute between left and right, ensure that significant changes have been attempted and incorporated within the polity and wider society. Its only similarity is that politics once again is established on the centre ground with no significant deviations made to the left or right.

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<sup>1</sup> **J. Cronin**, 'Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest' in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (eds.) *Processes of the World-System*, pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994; **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975; **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> For countries embarking upon the industrialisation process, the consensus will clearly be determined by the final political events of the agrarian era.

<sup>5</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994.

<sup>6</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance the theories of Carlotta Perez linking new technological styles to social and institutional change within modern societies. **C. Perez**, 'Structural Change and Assimilation of New Technology in the Economic and Social System' in **C. Freeman**, *Design, Innovation and Long Cycles*, Francis Pinter, 1984; **C. Freeman & C. Perez**, 'Structural crises of adjustment: business cycle and investment behaviour', in **G. Dosi et al**, *Technical Change and Economic Theory*, Francis Pinter, 1988; **C. Perez**, "Structural Change and Assimilation of New Technologies in the Economic and Social System", *Futures*, vol. 15 no. 4 October 1983 357-375.

<sup>8</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124; **E. Mandel**, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development (The Marxist Interpretation)*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

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<sup>10</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No. 105 pp.3-24.

<sup>11</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994; **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975; **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983.

<sup>13</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles amongst Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>14</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No. 105 pp.3-24; **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548.

<sup>15</sup> This follows **E.J. Hobsbawm**, *Labouring Men*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968; **M. Salvati**, Political Business Cycles and Long-waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown, in **C. Freeman**, (ed.) *Long-waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983. See also **M. Kalecki**, 'Political Aspects of Full Employment' *Political Quarterly* Part 4, 1943, pp.322-331.

<sup>16</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No. 105 pp.3-24;

<sup>17</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994; **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975; **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983; **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124; **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998; **E. Mandel**, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development (The Marxist Interpretation)*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

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- <sup>19</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles amongst Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.
- <sup>20</sup> **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979.
- <sup>21</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles amongst Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977; **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No.105 pp.3-24.
- <sup>22</sup> **D.M. Gordon**, 'Up and Down the Long Roller Coaster' in *U.S. Capitalism in Crisis, Union for Radical Political Economics*, 1978; **J.T. Dunlop**, 'The Development of Labor Organization: A Theoretical Framework' pp.190-191, in **R.A. Lester & J. Shister**, 'Insights into Labor Issues', Macmillan, 1948.
- <sup>23</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.
- <sup>24</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124; **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No. 105 pp.3-24.
- <sup>25</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.
- <sup>26</sup> **H. Phelps Brown**, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion' *Three Banks Review* March 1975, No. 105 pp.3-24.
- <sup>27</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994; **D.M. Gordon**, 'Up and Down the Long Roller Coaster' in *U.S. Capitalism in Crisis, Union for Radical Political Economics*, 1978; **J.T. Dunlop**, 'The Development of Labor Organization: A Theoretical Framework' pp.190-191, in **R.A. Lester & J. Shister**, 'Insights into Labor Issues', Macmillan, 1948.
- <sup>28</sup> **E.H. Hunt**, *British Labour History 1815-1914*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1981.
- <sup>29</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983.

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<sup>30</sup> Van Duijn elaborated a similar theory in terms of attitudes towards economic policy-making in a long-wave downswing. He described a four stage process: firstly, a denial that there is an economic problem, secondly, a stage of muddling through once economic stagnation becomes persistent, thirdly, the elaboration of new growth strategies and fourthly the implementation of the most favoured strategies. **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>31</sup> **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124; **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548;

<sup>33</sup> **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998; **E.H. Hunt**, *British Labour History 1815-1914*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548; **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979.

<sup>35</sup> An exception to this would be Britain during the first long-wave downswing. The mid-1830s in fact enjoyed a massive factory investment boom in Lancashire accompanied by expansion in iron and coal production and infrastructural investment, particularly in regional transportation. Depression did not arrive until 1837 and the turning point for the economy came in the worst years of 1841-2, sixteen years into the downswing.

<sup>36</sup> **R. Inglehart**, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles amongst Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>37</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124;

<sup>38</sup> **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998.

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<sup>39</sup> **R. Beckman**, *The Downwave: Surviving the Second Great Depression*, Milestone Publications, 1983; **H. Rosenberg**, 'Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe' *Economic History Review*, 1943, Vol. XIII Nos. 1& 2, pp.58-73.

<sup>40</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1994; *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975.

<sup>41</sup> **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE; **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548.

<sup>42</sup> **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE.

<sup>43</sup> **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, 1984, pp.509-548.

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

Chapter 6 analyzed the usefulness of existing political science theories for understanding the pattern of change described in Chapter 2. It also described and explained a typical trajectory for a political long-wave and how this description and explanation compared with existing accounts. This chapter will review how closely this theoretical trajectory corresponds to the historical events over the four long-waves that have occurred, for it is also clear from the analysis that there have been occasions where deviations from the expected trajectory have occurred. With such an exercise comes the benefit of explaining why these deviations occurred, and should give a greater insight as to which are the most important factors in defining and causing the continuation of the political long-wave. In addition, this offers avenues of exploration for continuing research in this field. Finally, this chapter will discuss the implications of the findings of this thesis for long-wave and political science theory.

### **7.1 Historical Review.**

#### **First Political Long-Wave 1803–1825-1848**

Of the four long-waves that have occurred, the first appears to deviate the most strongly from the political long-wave model. Although certain features of the model are in evidence, at times the first long-wave only hesitatingly shows the characteristics of the theoretical model, which in general are more strongly defined in later long-waves. The first political long-wave appears to only really be in evidence in Britain, the only significantly industrialising economy at this time, though glimpses of its trajectory do appear within the other economies of Western Europe and North America.

For instance, the difficulty of finding a dividing point for the upswing and downswing perhaps explains why Hobsbawm simply described the whole period as the *Age of Revolution*.<sup>1</sup> He does, nevertheless, suggest two dividing points, 1815 and 1830 based on the idea that the Napoleonic wars stimulated industrial production in a number of

countries but that this fell away after the wars ended. According to Hobsbawm, a revival in the industrial process did not occur until after 1830, from when on industrialisation became of increasing importance.

This trajectory would seem to fit the USA, France and Germany where their economies remained overwhelmingly agrarian in nature. These countries show only intermittent traces of a political long-wave. Periods of reform and reaction do to some extent coincide with periods of economic growth and stagnation. However, they are often punctuated by short bursts of political and social unrest brought on by poor harvests and which disrupt any established political trajectory that may have been developing. It would appear that the continued importance of agriculture as the mainstay of the economy was preventing any regular political long-wave cycle from developing.

However, in Britain the early industrial stimulus clearly continued throughout the entire period, and the theoretical trajectory expected does, to a large extent, appear to occur in Britain during the **first long-wave upswing**. As could be expected, it began with a conservative Loyalist consensus that gradually gave way to an increasingly militant reformism that reached a peak with the Peterloo massacre of 1819. The origins of the Reformist movement are often attributed to opposition to repressive government introduced because of the exigencies of the Napoleonic Wars. However, following the theoretical discussion of earlier chapters it was the expanding economy of this period and the structural emergence of social classes associated with industrialisation that gave reformers the confidence to mount a challenge to the authorities. The fact that the reformist challenge continued in the years after the Wars ended would indicate that this was also the case.

Between 1810 and 1819, there was a marked increase in radical, militant and revolutionary activity and propaganda, activity that was expressed through the Luddite, Reformist and Radical movements and associated with the structural emergence of the industrial working class and bourgeoisie. For the most part it was characterised by an attempt by both classes to establish civil liberties, constitutional rights and access to the ruling polity through the introduction of democracy and marked by increased industrial action and political agitation. The movement was temporarily brought to an end through the use of troops and the repressive Six Acts.

A major anomaly, however, is the absence of any radical peak in left-wing activity towards the end of the upswing. General economic prosperity appears to have continued within the British economy until 1825. Both working and middle class movements appear to have moved away from direct confrontation and left militancy was largely absent during this period. Nevertheless it did see Owenite ideas on co-operativism and socialism make rapid headway within a growing trade union movement. Middle-class Radicalism appears to have concentrated its efforts on reducing agrarian protectionism and influencing the ruling Tories, resulting in Liberal Toryism.

If Flinn's analysis on price and wage movements is correct (see Appendix B), then a possible explanation for this is that with real wages rising rapidly after the price peak caused by the Napoleonic Wars, workers were experiencing a rising level of living. A pay explosion was occurring without a strike wave - workers did not need to strike to improve their standard of living, this was already happening. Instead workers were able to devote their efforts to improving union and co-operative organization and successfully agitate for trade union legalisation at a time of economic prosperity.

A lack of radical middle-class activity between 1820 and 1825 could also be explained by rising real wages. This would undoubtedly have eroded profitability but rather than drive down wages, Radicals concentrated their attentions on attempting to repeal the Corn Laws in an attempt to reduce food prices, thus making it easier to lower wages. However, although Radical ideas had made significant headway amongst manufacturers by the early 1820s and generated a plethora of liberal economic theories, in practice, the Radicals failed to gain more than a few concessions from Parliament. The initial strategy of responsible lobbying largely failed.

The **first long-wave downswing** arrived with the banking and financial crisis of 1825. The response of employers was to drive down wages and attack union organisation. This initially took the union movement by surprise and they suffered some serious defeats. The following period then saw a period of left-wing radicalism and a period of political turmoil occur, untypically, in conjunction. Despite the generally poor state of the economy between 1825 and 1833 the labour movement had presumably gained a sufficient level of organisation and confidence in the upswing for it to mount its own

offensive from around 1829 onwards in the shape of general unionism. The reform impulse of the upswing also continued at the political level with the Whigs now willing to contemplate electoral reform to end a long period of Tory rule. A peak in left-wing activity did eventually arrive in 1832, though seven years into the downswing.

In general, this agitation resulted in political victory only for the middle-classes. In addition, the general union movement, despite some early successes, was challenged and destroyed, thus producing a double defeat for the working classes. Coming in years of general economic crisis and recession the efforts of the working class ended in almost complete failure. Despite middle-class victories, left reformist activity peaked in the early 1830s as the Tories fought a long campaign, after failing to overturn electoral reform, over the issue of registration to suit the reform to their own electoral purposes. For almost ten years the Whigs and Radicals fought a rearguard battle to save the voting reforms, all parties eventually accepting the new voting system and extension of democracy. This had the effect of stalling the reform impulse and economic crisis returning after 1837 added to an increasingly conservative political climate as would be theoretically expected.

A return to recession and then depression in the early 1840s saw the return of economic concerns and economic restructuring at the political level. Later long-waves would see a major economic reform period typically arrive in the middle part of the downswing. Its late arrival in this downswing was probably a result of the middle-classes only gaining enfranchisement in 1832 and then spending a long period defending this, whilst the ruling aristocracy supported the prevailing economic policy, that of agrarian protectionism. Thus no major economic reform was able to emerge in the late 1820s/early 1830s, whilst preoccupations lay elsewhere and until franchise extension had been secured.

The depression also, untypically for the late downswing period, spurred a re-emergence of left-wing activity in the shape of Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League. This could be seen as part of the left recovery that occurs towards the end of the downswing, though unlike in later downswings it began before the economic recovery began. Why? Both movements rested heavily on the determined activism of a small number of militants and, Chartism in particular found it extremely difficult to sustain itself as a movement - no doubt a result of apathy and a lack of receptivity for radical

ideas, typical features of the middle years of a long-wave downswing. It is also noticeable that organised labour had moderated its demands and this probably helped sustain its existence. The early syndicalism and desire for workers control of the general unionism period was gone; Chartist efforts were now concentrated on gaining acceptance into the existing polity.

The Chartist agitation may, in fact, be a typical example of a 'transition movement' – one that shows features typical of both agrarian and industrial social protest, as indicated by Hobsbawm in *Labouring Men*. In this early period, it could be expected that features of agrarian and industrial protest might overlap and Chartism would be one example of this. The Anti-Corn Law League, on the other hand, appears to be simply a belated economic reform movement. With the extended franchise now secured, agitation for a major economic reform to pull the economy away from depression could be attempted, and with skilled political manoeuvring ultimately proved successful.

The New Model Unionism and improved electoral fortunes of the Liberals in the mid-1840s were more typical of later 'recovery periods'. This, and the failure of Chartism, led working-class activists back into a political alliance with the Liberals/Radicals. This alliance together with landowners who had supported the repeal of the Corn Laws saw a political realignment that was to ensure a Liberal-Whig-Radical progressive alliance that dominated British politics for the next thirty years and formed the basis of the following consensus.

Overall, the period, being characterised by the beginnings of industrialisation whilst agriculture remains important, appears to be of a 'transition' nature. Elsewhere, in the 1840s left movements gained increased levels of support, notably in France and Germany. Rather than this being part of the 'left recovery', typical of the end of downswings, it appears more likely that it was the revival of the process of industrialisation from around 1830 onwards that eventually led to an increased level of opposition to the prevailing ideologies and regimes. The structural rise of the industrial bourgeoisie and working class appears to be the most important factor. The revolutionary intensity of the 1848 events is probably the result of this tendency combining with a period of poor harvests. It thus appears to be a 'transition movement' combining elements

of both agrarian and urban unrest. It is noticeable that revolution only broke out in those countries making the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Those countries that had already industrialised, Britain and Belgium, remained free from revolution. Revolution at the end of a political long-wave would be wholly untypical.

### **Second Political Long-Wave 1848-1873-1896**

The **upswing of the second long-wave** conforms considerably better to the theoretical model than that of the first. The period began with political consensus in the 1850s, whilst during the course of the 1860s a distinct leftwards shift manifested itself in a 'golden age of middle-class Liberalism'. This leftward shift also gave rise to the First International and revolutionary working-class movements. The greater conformity to the theoretical model is probably explained by the fact that industrial capitalism was not only becoming entrenched within the British economy, by now an urban society, but was extending in its geographical scope to include most of the major powers of the day. As such agrarian society was in decline and with it its forms of political expression. Factors arising solely from fluctuations in the success of harvests were having an ever-diminishing effect upon the political process, as the industrial trade-cycle became firmly entrenched within the Western world.

In structural terms, the second political long-wave represents, other than in Britain, the arrival of the industrial bourgeoisie and the middle-classes as a significant political force across the more developed economies. In general, these social classes found themselves seeking to displace the political, economic and social dominance of the traditional landowners/aristocracy alliance. In political terms this struggle found its representation through the emergence of Liberalism, Republicanism and Radicalism on the left, and Conservatism, Monarchism and the U.S. Democrats on the right. At the core of the movements of the left were the aspiring bourgeoisie and the middle-classes, though according to circumstances, sometimes allied with progressive sections of the working class or land-owning class. On the right, were the landowners, aristocracy, and established Church, sometimes in alliance with the peasantry.

In general, the oppositional nature of left-wing politics during the upswing was greater in the lesser developed countries - France, Germany, USA - than in Britain, and one reason for this appears to be the nature of the initial consensus. In Britain, the consensus formed after the repeal of the Corn Laws favoured the progressive Liberal alliance. Elsewhere, the initial consensus benefited the right, thus the left sought to break with the status quo more dramatically than in Britain.

As would be expected, in the latter half of the upswing there is a definite ascendancy of left movements and parties amongst both the middle and working class. With this upsurge of the left a definite trend towards greater democracy, extension of the franchise, and the increasing importance of parliamentary government and republicanism occurred. This represented a distinct move away from the authoritarian, aristocratic and clerical regimes associated with the aristocracy and land-owning class and from their associated ideologies. Conservative movements and ideas are continually on the defensive throughout this period.

In France and the USA, Republicanism and liberal capitalism were largely successful in breaking the power of the established land-owning class. In Germany, the Liberals achieved only a partially parliamentary regime. The gains of the Liberal movement in Germany were not perhaps as extensive as could be expected. Universal male suffrage was achieved and the Liberals were able to dominate parliament until the late 1870s. However, they were unable to break the political power of the aristocracy, the Prussian Junkers and gain parliamentary control over the executive. This is usually attributed to the economic power of the Prussian land-owning class, and the political skills of Bismarck. In addition, the intermittent military adventures of the monarchist regime and its attempts to promote an aggressive German nationalism hampered the ability of the progressive middle-class to pursue a successful strategy to capture the executive.

An indication of the progressive nature of the political climate towards the end of the upswing is the fact that both Disraeli and Bismarck attempted to use extensions of the franchise to deny political power to their Liberal opponents. For conservatives of this era, a significant extension in the distribution of political power was considerably out of character. However, at the height of a long-wave upswing this is very much in keeping with the contemporary political climate. Bismarck's calculation was that the extension of

the vote to the conservative peasantry would shift the balance of party competition towards the Conservatives, and to the disadvantage of the urban-based Liberals. This was also the calculation taken by Disraeli in extending the suffrage in 1868. Attempting to outmanoeuvre a Liberal party already committed to an extension of the franchise to skilled workers, who were generally considered to be potential Liberal supporters, he extended the vote to sections of the lower classes in the hope that their conservative inclinations would deliver votes to the Tories. In the event, neither strategy was successful, the left continued to dominate the electoral process into the 1870s.

For the working class, as would be expected, the long-wave upswing ended with a period of union building, and militant industrial action. The economic prosperity of the upswing was accompanied by increasing trade-union strength, organisation and membership levels. Confidence led to greater industrial action with a wave of strikes as union membership soared between 1866 and 1873. In most countries this was accompanied by an upsurge in radical and revolutionary left activity, notably that of Anarchism and Socialism. This was most marked within France and undoubtedly contributed to the nature of the Paris Commune - the only insurrectionary movement of this period. A partial exception to this was the workers movement in Britain, probably since their alliance with the Liberals was delivering most of the reforms they wanted; though a notable increase in Radicalism was evident amongst organised labour in the 1870s. In the USA, although there was increased levels of worker mobilisation, the tendency towards worker militancy was also less developed. A possible cause for this was the fact that the civil war had impeded the establishment of the union movement whilst intense industrialisation occurred later than in France and Germany allowing less time for a militant worker movement to become established.

In political terms, most of these working-class movements were initially allied to the progressive political movements of the middle-class, be they Liberals, Radicals or Republicans. However, as labour organization and confidence grew in the prosperous years of the late 1860s, sections of the working class began to adopt more radical and class-based politics. In general, as is often the case, the progressive alliances of the early



upswing began to dealign in the period of left radicalism at the end of the upswing, paving the way for the possibility of political realignments.

In general, the **second long-wave downswing** conforms closely to the theoretical model. The onset of the downswing saw a reaction to the increased left radicalism from a more assertive right during the 1870s. A period of political turmoil was followed by an entrenched right-wing conservatism attached to imperialism and protectionism during the 1880s. The left revival at the end of the downswing was a weak and short-lived affair, notably for Liberalism, but did lay the foundations for a more permanent form of industrial unionism amongst the working-class.

In all the major industrial countries the left radicalism of the late upswing period provoked a right reaction, whilst increasing unemployment checked the advance of organised labour. In France, this was also achieved through the repression that followed the break-up of the Paris Commune. In all countries a protracted battle was fought between left and right, often with several changes of government, in a battle for ideological hegemony. During the course of this struggle, significant sections of the bourgeoisie and middle-classes switched from supporting the political forces of the left to becoming supporters of the parties of the right. In Britain, Germany, and the USA this process resulted in a victory for conservatives, as Liberals and Radical Republicans were forced on the defensive.

Only in France were the forces of the left ultimately victorious in the early period, undoubtedly a result of divisions within the forces of the monarchist right. However, once victorious, the Republican camp split into two, with the Opportunists on the right dominating the remainder of the long-wave downswing. Thus although their trajectories were somewhat different, all the major industrial countries experienced a period dominated by the right in the 1880s. For the most part this saw little in the way of legislative innovation, notably in the social and political spheres.

In general it saw a concerted attempt by conservative politicians to halt the tide of progressive or radical reform that had been characteristic of the 1860s and 1870s. In USA, both Republicans in the North and Democrats in the South experienced

conservative domination within their parties, whilst in Britain Conservative rule between 1886 and 1893 saw no new government initiatives other than to forestall more radical reform and to militarily crush the Home Rule movement in Ireland. In general the fortunes of the left were at a low ebb, and any challenge to conservative rule was more likely to come from the extreme-right - Boulangism in France and anti-Semitic Social Christians in Germany. Only Bismarck's attempt to introduce social legislation and the rudimentary beginnings of a welfare state in 1886 were a departure from this trend, though this was done with the specific aim of boosting right-wing nationalism by drawing working-class support away from the Socialists. However, not only was its aim unsuccessful but it also met with concerted resistance from employers, worried about the expense of the scheme.

The period did, however, typically witness numerous strategies for reviving the economy, notably state intervention in the economy, protectionism and imperialism. A long period of depression and deflation ensured that economic reform became paramount and resulted in a shift away from free trade and free competition.

This period was one of extreme difficulty for organised labour. With high unemployment, an employers offensive, declining levels of union membership and government repression in continental Europe aimed at crushing the First International following the defeat of the Paris Commune, the revolutionary optimism of the late upswing period had dissipated almost entirely by the beginning of the 1880s. However, this process exacerbated divisions within the left. Whilst middle-class Liberals and Radicals and working-class Socialists moderated their respective programmes, they grew further apart and previous links between progressive sections of capital and labour gradually broke.

Organised labour in the USA was a partial exception. A strong period of union building associated with the Knights of Labour occurred during the economic recovery of 1879-84. Mandel saw this as a 'delayed upswing peak' since the civil war had earlier prevented the momentum for such a surge to occur in the early 1870s.<sup>2</sup> Once the movement collapsed in the mid-1880s depression that followed, its trajectory was similar to the labour movements in Europe, taking a more moderate line under the aegis of the AFL in the latter half of the downswing.

Eventually, as the international economy entered the recovery period from around 1888 onwards, the left experienced a partial recovery in its fortunes, though in general this was more evident amongst the working class and Socialist parties than amongst the middle-classes. Liberal parties in Britain and Germany experienced only weak and short-lived recoveries in the early 1890s and were unable to displace the dominant Conservative ideological hegemony. Possibly the relatively high level of industrial action and growing support for socialism amongst trade unionists was keeping the middle-classes on the right, worried that the Liberals were unable to keep these movements in check.

The working-class revival in this downswing recovery was considerably stronger than in the other three, notably in the industrial arena. A short-lived surge in union membership and strike activity occurred between 1888 and 1892, though a dip in the business cycle accompanied by an employers counter-offensive eradicated many of the gains made by this movement. In Britain this was known as New Unionism, though other than Socialist activity within certain unions, there was little that was actually new about it - much of it being similar to the union movement created in the early 1870s. In Germany, it saw a strengthened union movement and in France and USA the beginning of syndicalism and the AFL respectively.

The greater surge of organised labour here than in other long-waves during this period may be a result of the structural ascendancy of the industrial working class at this time. The various union movements were still dominated by workers in craft unions, even after 1893, industrial factory workers were largely non-unionised. Union organisation had extended to industrial workers in the 1870s, notably in Britain, but most of this had collapsed by 1879, and thus by the late 1880s there were many industrial sectors where unionisation was non-existent. There was thus a greater possibility of increasing union density than during later downswing recoveries added to which large numbers of workers wanted to reverse the losses of the depression years, the opportunity arriving in the economic revival of 1888-93.

In general, the strength of the industrial recovery of the working class was not reflected at the political level. Although Socialist parties saw an increase in membership

and improved organisation, their ability to find electoral support was extremely limited. Only small numbers of Socialists were able to gain election, even in Germany where the Socialist movement was at its strongest. Continued restrictions of the franchise partially explain this, but after the long years of economic depression and high unemployment it would be unlikely that many workers believed that workers control of industry was an imminent prospect.

The emergence of Populism in the Southern and Western USA amongst independent farmers at this time could be seen as part of a left recovery though it may simply be a coincidence that it occurred at this time. Its occurrence followed on from poor harvests and a particularly bad economic depression in 1893. A radical response to hard times, as Hobsbawm noted,<sup>3</sup> was more typical within agrarian communities than industrial ones. Although it impacted upon the electoral process, eventually to the benefit of the Republicans, it seems likely that it was not a feature of the political long-wave, but a result of agrarian crisis.

The second long-wave ended in a Liberal-Conservative consensus, known in Germany as the 'marriage of Iron and Rye'. In USA, the Republican victory of 1896 ensured the extension of liberal capitalism to the South, and thus the consensus favoured the moderate left, but the weak Liberal revival in Britain and Germany ensured a consensus more acceptable to the right. In France, the picture was more confused, and the period was perhaps more marked by centrism since attempts at consensus were short-lived and often challenged by the left. Possibly this could be explained by the fact that the original Republican left had successfully achieved much of its agenda by 1884 and was replaced by a Radical left that had not been ideologically defeated, unlike elsewhere; this allowing it to pursue new aims since confidence levels were not so low.

In general, the realignment was one of a middle-class and aristocratic conservatism on the right. On the left, Liberalism still gained support, albeit depleted, from sections of the middle-class and working class but sections of the working class were now also aligned with Socialism. In the USA, no realignment had occurred and the major political division remained the regional one of North versus South.

### **Third Political Long-Wave 1896-1920-1948**

With the industrialisation process now entrenched within a dozen or more countries and with these countries dominating world trade, the aspects of political behaviour associated with an industrialised economy are now the most dominant ones. A major exogenous force acting upon the model is, however, the presence of World War I. As such, the **third long-wave upswing** conforms closely to the theoretical model, although a number of anomalies do occur. The initial consensus was one formed by landowners, industrialists and the middle-classes. Although the leftward surge from the mid-1900s onwards was primarily driven by socialists and anarcho-syndicalists, it also saw something of an 'Indian summer' for middle-class liberalism. A revolutionary peak was reached at the end of the upswing during and after WW1.

As would be expected, the early period was defined by consensus, and one that largely favoured the right. However, it excluded the Socialist left since, during the second long-wave, Socialism had been a minor 'third force' with the major political battles being between the Conservative landowners and the Liberal/Republican middle-classes. The situation in the USA and France was slightly different. In the USA, the Republican victory in 1896 represented a victory for liberal capitalism and defeat for the conservative land-owning elites of the South, as such the consensus favoured the left. In France, where the left was stronger, the centrist consensus was broken by the Dreyfuss affair and although this led to electoral victory for the Radicals, centrist politics remained largely in place until 1905.

The third long-wave upswing saw the structural emergence of an expanded industrial working class and its political demands being expressed through both parliamentary and revolutionary movements. These movements were often in competition with the middle-class Liberal parties also on the left, and had often fared poorly in the establishment of the consensus at the beginning of the period. Not surprisingly then, the upswing saw challenges from both the middle and working-class left and explains much of the oppositional nature of the third upswing.

As could be expected, by the middle of the upswing, almost everywhere saw advances for the parties of both the middle and working class left. Socialist parties everywhere gained support, whilst the middle-class parties of the left effected progressive reforms in Britain, France and the USA. In Germany, the Social Democrats became the largest political force, but the monarchy's control of the executive ensured the continued domination of Conservative elites.

However, the political dominance of the left was disrupted by the outbreak of World War One. The conflict created divisions within the British Liberal party, effectively removed the French Radicals from power, whilst Wilson's decision to enter the war resulted in falling levels of support for the Democrats - the party considered to have most effectively captured the progressive vote up to that point. Only in Germany did the conflict ultimately benefit the left, with the Social Democrats coming to power in the revolutionary events of 1919. Effectively the war proved highly damaging for the middle-class parties of the left and brought their revival or period of ascendancy to an end. This allowed the emergence of right-wing government in France, a Republican revival in the USA, and parliamentary gains for the Conservatives in Britain in coalition with Lloyd-George's Liberal

Elsewhere, as would be expected, the working-class socialist and anarcho-syndicalist movements gained strongly during this period in terms of membership, militancy, and influence despite repression during the war years. To some extent the difficulties of Liberalism/Radicalism benefited the working-class left. Typically the end of the upswing saw a pay and price explosion whilst socialist movements reached a peak in militancy, influence, confidence and membership in the years 1918-20. General strikes and revolutionary events were a notable feature of the final years of the upswing.

The following **downswing of the third long-wave** also conforms largely to the model, although with a number of exceptions. The downswing saw the mobilisation of fascists and other elements of the far right against the left revolutionary trend. A period of intense political turmoil in the 1920s and early 30s usually saw fascists and conservatives politically victorious, though everywhere conservatism eventually became prevalent. The

left revival in the 1940s was usually driven by former socialist movements, now reconciled to a more social democratic approach.

Typically, the early period was chaotic. The years from 1920 until the mid-1930s were ones of intense political turmoil, notably in the newer democracies. The new democracies of Eastern and Southern Europe often fell to authoritarian rule, and anti-democratic forces also emerged in France and Germany. In Europe many of the governments were short-lived with power frequently changing hands as politicians sought to deal with protracted political polarisation and economic difficulties.

An exception to the latter trend was the USA, where three conservative Republican presidents were elected in succession, giving the impression of political stability. The huge influx of capital during World War I allowed a greater degree of financial and economic stability through tax and interest rate cutting, and this postponement of underlying economic difficulties probably led to a false sense of political stability. However, the Republican domination of the Presidency disguised the protracted political battles occurring at the grassroots level and this domination also appears to be at least partly a result of major divisions within the Democrats that made the latter difficult to elect.

The political and economic instability of the 1920s did however see trends typical of the political long-wave. The fortunes of the radical and revolutionary left tended to decline whilst the right became more successful. Together, working-class militancy and economic difficulties appear to have further eroded the fortunes of middle-class liberalism as the middle-classes moved over to conservatism, or fascism, in a similar way to that of the 1870s. The reactionary far right, and fascism in particular, were also much in evidence, possibly the extreme nature of the right's response resulting from the revolutionary nature of the left's challenge in the period after WW1.

The slump of 1929-33/6 marked the economic nadir of the third long-wave downswing and had a number of political repercussions. As would be expected, economic revival became the priority of voters everywhere and there was a marked shift by governments towards protectionism and state intervention in the economy. Almost

everywhere the depression removed the ruling party from power, though on a more general level it was the forces of the right, notably the far right, that gained most from the crisis, as would be expected. Almost everywhere the left, and notably the far left, lost ground and were eventually forced to adopt far more moderate ideological agendas. However, parties were judged primarily on economic performance and in some cases this benefited the left.

The countries where the parliamentary left remained strongest appear to be those in which the economy had fared best in the mid-late 1920s. These included the USA and France, though in France the Socialist attempt to deal with the depression, despite a period of progressive reform in 1936, ultimately proved to be short-lived. In the USA, the Democrats were not an established left party though much of the left established itself within the party through the course of the 1920s and 1930s. The Republicans had the misfortune to be in power at the beginning of the Slump and together with laissez-faire capitalism took the blame for the crisis. Such a scenario benefited the left and Roosevelt was able to come to power on a left agenda that emphasized economic recovery through the New Deal. The Democrats ability to buck the electoral trend towards the right was possibly also a result of the party already having an in-built electoral alliance with a section of the right - the Southern Democrats – though, along with other conservative forces, the Southern Democrats effectively halted the New Deal reform process by 1936.

As expected, from the mid-1930s onwards, domestic politics was increasingly dominated by conservatism. Almost everywhere, after the political and economic turmoil of the previous fifteen years, administrations sought to nurture their economies back to full health, whilst being reluctant to engage in social and political changes that might prove disruptive to this project. This was as much the case in the reactionary regimes of Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini as it was in the liberal democracies of Britain, France and USA. Once the political turmoil of the earlier period had petered out and a new economic strategy had been implemented, domestically, conservatism became prevalent.

According to the political long-wave model, the early-mid 1940s should have seen a revival for the left, but in many countries this failed to occur, most notably because of World War II and the Nazi occupation of much of Europe. Only in Britain and the USA did a left revival occur from around 1942/3 onwards, unless the left-led Resistance



movements within Nazi-occupied Europe are considered. The end of the war did, however, witness a burst of left-wing activity almost everywhere. No doubt much of it was a reaction to the fact that military defeat often represented defeat for the political forces of the right, but it was also an attempt to reverse the political and social defeats of the 1930s and early 1940s. In general, it was the more moderate social democratic left agenda that proved most successful.

#### **Fourth Political Long-Wave 1948-1973-1998**

The **fourth long-wave upswing** conforms closely to the model, though again there are a number of exceptions. Economies are fully industrialised by now, whilst on the political level representative democracy and some form of social democracy is evident in most advanced capitalist countries. The period started with the 'middle way' consensus of the 1950s, but by the 1960s was being challenged by the post-materialist forces of the New Left. The end of the period saw these movements joined by a reinvigorated social democracy and a period of intense industrial action by the working class in the strike wave of 1968-74.

The initial consensus was largely social-democratic in nature and thus tended to favour the left. However, the left revival of the 1940s proved short-lived and it was usually centre-right parties that presided over the newly founded social democracies in the consensus years of the 1950s. The predominant alignment in this period was of a social democratic working-class left opposed to a conservative or Christian democrat middle-class right.

After the intensity of the third political long-wave, the fourth was relatively calm in comparison. This was probably the result of two factors. Firstly, the working class had been incorporated into the political and economic mainstream by means of the social democratic compromise - full democracy, the mixed economy and the welfare state. Through this compromise the forces of the left had secured a significant redistribution of power and all the major social classes were represented within the consensual

arrangement. Secondly, the initial consensus, tending to be social democratic in nature was beneficial to the left, and changes to the polity required a less oppositional nature.

When the increase in left activity in the later upswing did occur, in structural terms it was most closely associated with students, youth, the professional middle-classes and white-collar workers of the service-sector economy. This represented the rise of the New Left and its association with post-materialist causes. The more traditional left tended to concentrate on attempts to deepen social democracy.

As would be expected, the 1960s saw an increase in grassroots left activity and movements across the developed world. In general, there was a revival in the fortunes of the left at the parliamentary level. A partial exception to this trend was France where despite support for left parties increasing in this period and ultimately witnessing the social explosion of May 1968, the Gaullists remained in power throughout. Several explanations might be relevant. The Communists were the largest political force on the left and at a time of Cold War and nuclear tensions many voters, fearing a Communist-led coalition and the uncertain international consequences of this, were reluctant to vote left (also the case in Italy). In addition, de Gaulle had altered the constitution of the executive through the direct election of himself as president. Mindful of the executive instability that was typical of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, some voters were reluctant to elect a left-led parliament because this may have led to a period of unstable cohabitation. Dunleavy regarded de Gaulle's constitutional arrangement as a typical example of institutional manipulation preference-shaping behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Finally, de Gaulle's appeal for a *rassemblement* of the French people to cut across party lines after the debacle of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, did succeed in persistently attracting a section of the left vote thus strengthening the right-wing Gaullist movement and weakening the parties of the left.

The end of the upswing also saw right-wing parties elected in Britain, France and the USA, contrary to what might be expected. In the USA, the Vietnam War proved damaging and divisive for the Democrats, with different sections supporting and opposing the war, allowing Nixon to be elected president in 1968. In Britain, Labour's economic record was considered to be poor in office and failed to live up to the expectations of left-wing voters. Possibly, the Cold War was also creating a political climate that made the left less electable, since sections of the left were pro-Soviet or took

a more conciliatory line. However, the governments of Heath, Nixon and Pompidou all found themselves presiding over progressive reform or modernisation programmes once in power. These policies might normally have been expected more from left-wing governments indicating that each found it necessary to move into progressive politics in order to be elected and/or re-elected – an indication of the progressive nature of the period.

More typically, however, the upswing ended with a peak in radical left activity. The strike wave of 1968-74 was accompanied by a pay and price explosion, together with radical student and youth movements, and the emergence of radical anti-war, women's, ethnic minority, gay and environmental groups. In addition, a number of radical left-wing terrorist/urban guerrilla groups emerged across the developed world.

The **fourth long-wave downswing** conforms closely to the model with only a few exceptions. The turmoil of the 1970s saw the demise of the radical left whilst a reinvigorated right attached to neo-liberalism became increasingly influential. The 1980s were dominated by the end of social democracy and the ascendancy of the New Right and hardline conservatism. The left revival at the end of the period was guided by a 'third way' social democratic approach reconciled to free-market capitalism.

As would be expected, the period began with political turmoil and the 1970s were marked by economic instability, political polarisation and the concept of government overload. Together the period was seen as one characterised by a 'crisis of governability' with high electoral expectations coming up against the problem of slower economic growth levels. Although left-wing governments were still being elected, in general, the period marked an advance for the forces of the New Right and increasingly saw Keynesian social democracy on the defensive. By the 1980s the left was in retreat almost everywhere with right-wing governments predominating, the New Right project being most successful where social democratic and corporatist institutions were least entrenched. The economic depression of 1980-82/3 was the worst since the 1930s and typically saw the implementation of a major economic reform programme to aid

recovery, as the free-market neo-liberalism and monetarism of the New Right came to replace Keynesian social democracy.

A partial exception to this trend was France where the Socialists were able to buck the international trend and keep control of the presidency for two seven-year terms, though were less successful at the parliamentary level. There are several possible explanations for this. Initially the Socialists were able to benefit from the unpopular austerity measures introduced by the right in the late 1970s, although after 1983 they too were forced to pursue similar policies. Electoral defeat followed in 1986, but the right were still confronted by economic problems and were often outmanoeuvred by Mitterrand. In addition, the parties of the right were frequently divided both within and without Gaullism, a fact that Mitterrand attempted to exacerbate by switching to a proportional voting system in an attempt to further divide the right-wing vote, again considered by Dunleavy as an example of institutional manipulation preference-shaping behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

However, more typically, in order to remain electable the Socialists found it necessary to abandon the socialist project and adopt economic measures that, ideologically, were more in keeping with the beliefs of the New Right. Eventually, however, the whole project of attempting to block the right from power through institutional manipulation and ideological vacillation in the face of an increasingly conservative political and intellectual climate fell apart, and the parties of the right enjoyed a huge victory in 1993. As in the 1960s, it appears that the constitutional arrangement of a split executive and differential length terms for the presidency and parliament has allowed presidents to partially prevent the popular political mood being represented at government level.

The fourth long-wave downswing ended more typically with the centre-left establishing an electoral revival in all four countries. To do so, in each case the parties of the left had considerably moderated their platforms and accepted much of the New Right's economic and social agenda. The French Socialists perhaps moved the least in this direction, probably due to not having experienced long years of electoral defeat. As such, with the left moving to the centre, via the concept of the 'third way', and the parties of the right advocating the more centrist 'compassionate conservatism', the political scene appeared set for a new period of consensus.

## **7.2 Causations for Deviations from the Theoretical Trajectory**

The above discussion indicates that there are number of factors that have resulted in deviations from the theoretical trajectory established in Chapter 6. To some extent, a number of short-term or contingent factors can be seen to disrupt the typical trajectory. For instance, the changes of public opinion brought about by the long-wave are not always accurately reflected at government level. Representative democracy is not a perfect system of government, a host of factors can limit its representative nature. The exact timing of elections, constitutional manipulation, inadequate leadership or organisation, divisions within parties or within the wider left and right may all impact on the electoral process.

However, the most significant deviations appear to result from three major factors, these showing the ability to have a more concerted or longer lasting effect.

### **1. International Factors/War**

International factors appear to cause more deviations from the model than any other. The existence of war or other international hostilities have had a disruptive impact as witnessed by the effects of the Napoleonic Wars, American Civil War, WW1, WW2 and the Vietnam War. In addition the tensions resulting from the Cold War with a power perceived as left-wing, also impacted upon the political long-wave - the upsurge of the left in the fourth upswing being less successful than might be expected.

It is not difficult to suggest possible reasons for this. Faced with a hostile external enemy, domestic political considerations are often suspended, either partially or fully, whilst the priority of military victory is addressed. Coalition governments are not unusual at such times, whilst elections may be suspended. Military victory or defeat may result in the left or right winning elections at an untypical time of the political long-wave, if electorates use elections to judge particular parties' war record. This appears to be particularly the case in WW1 where middle-class liberal parties suffered damaging electoral consequences at a time when they would have been expected to be electorally successful.

In addition, the Napoleonic Wars, WW1 and possibly the American Civil War appear to have had knock-on effects altering the political climate from what otherwise would have been expected in the following period. In these cases, certain economic factors were altered thus altering the political changes that followed the ending of hostilities. Usually these have somewhat stunted the economic growth of the upswing period and thus had a greater impact on the forces of the left.

The experience of East Germany would suggest that foreign occupation also disrupts the political long-wave. It is likely that domestic policy, at least in part, is determined by the needs and considerations of the occupying power. Matters of both internal and external security will probably be paramount and often override those of the local populace. Even so, some form of legitimacy will need to be established by the occupying power, and where security is not jeopardized, expressions of the popular will may be reflected in government policy. Where an active 'nationalist movement' exists and opposes the occupying power, the left-right dichotomy might be reduced in importance, whilst national considerations take priority.

## 2. The Persistence of Agrarian Influences.

Evidence from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century strongly suggests that the persistence of agrarian influences impacted upon the political long-wave. The theoretical trajectory is partially absent from France, Germany and the USA in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and only poorly expressed in Britain – the only strongly industrialising economy. There appears to be an overlap between the political long-wave and effects more typical of an agrarian economy. Agrarian economies are very much prone to the vagaries of weather and climate. Poor harvests usually result in high prices and high unemployment and political and social unrest are likely at these times. This could happen randomly at any time and thus it is unlikely that any regular and repeating pattern of social and political behaviour could become completely established.

Hobsbawm identified a transition period in industrialising economies with regards to social rebellion.<sup>6</sup> Under such circumstances, the different patterns of rebellion typically associated with agrarian and industrial societies overlapped for a period of time until industrialisation became dominant. It seems likely that this would also be the case with

the political long-wave, the theoretical trajectory being compromised where a country is still in the early period of industrialisation.

As such, where industrialisation is absent, there is unlikely to be a political long-wave trajectory, although an exception might be where an agrarian economy has already been incorporated into the trading systems of advanced countries. The economic booms and recessions of advanced economies would thus impact upon the economy, thus allowing some effects of the political long-wave to be present. However, agrarian economies usually show very low economic growth rates and long-term fluctuations may be too small to have a significant impact at the political level. In addition such economies tend to have poorly developed state, party and democratic systems thus also diminishing the possibility of the political long-wave being present.

In addition, even where economies are industrialising, sections of the population, such as the peasantry, may remain unaffected by the effects of the business cycle and their political behaviour is therefore less predictable and dictated by other factors than those constituting the political long-wave. Where important agrarian classes are still in evidence, for instance the peasantry and aristocracy, deviations from the model appear more likely, since their economic and political interests may be tied to factors outside the industrial economy.

This would suggest that the theoretical trajectory is most closely adhered to in industrial/ post-industrial economies. The economic fortunes of the major social classes - the bourgeoisie, middle-class and working class - are all tied to the fortunes of business cycles. Thus, the further an economy moves away from reliance on agriculture for generating economic growth, the more developed will become the political long-wave, assuming no counter-veiling factor becomes established.

### 3. Authoritarian Regimes

Where authoritarian regimes exist certain features of the political long-wave appear to be suppressed or entirely non-existent and are unlikely to be represented at government level. This appears to be the case in Britain in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Nazi-occupied Europe and possibly in East Germany. Authoritarian regimes are generally poorer at expressing the popular will than where democracy exists. To engage in anti-regime

political activity may run the risk of imprisonment, exile or death, diminishing the level of support for certain political and social movements, usually those on the left challenging the established order.

The presence of the political long-wave may not be entirely absent, since even authoritarian regimes need some form of legitimacy, but its presence is likely to be diminished. For instance, political developments under Louis Napoleon in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century mirrored those of elsewhere, but in a much more restricted manner. The presence of democratic procedures almost certainly allows the trends of the political long-wave to be expressed more clearly. Populations have at hand a more accessible and responsive system of government that allows changing attitudes to be more clearly expressed and acted upon than is the case with authoritarian regimes. Again, assuming no counter-veiling tendencies, with the extension and deepening of democratic procedures, the political long-wave is likely to be increasingly in evidence.

Finally, although all these factors have impacted on the political process over the last two centuries, sometimes together, sometimes independently, the political long-wave has persisted to the present day. In general, it appears that these factors have only resulted in short-term deviations from the model and in the medium-to-long run, the effects of the long-wave have re-imposed themselves, bringing the political situation closer to that which could be expected from the model. The question of the distribution of power within society, together with the impact of economic change on political change, appear to be sufficiently important within modern societies for these to remain paramount even when faced with extraneous factors.

### **7.3 Implications for Long-wave Theory.**

Research into long-waves dates back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the phenomenon is still little known and often at the margins of thinking within the field of economics. Although investigations into long-term economic variations within modern societies, such as those by Maddison, Solomou and Kindleberger, invariably use long-wave literature as their starting point, usually they conclude that the case for long-waves



is not yet proven.<sup>7</sup> Goldstein maintained that, notwithstanding empirical and theoretical problems, long-wave economics had persisted at the margin of the discipline of economics because of a lack of theoretical agreement between long-wave researchers.<sup>8</sup> However, a lack of theoretical agreement is widespread across this and most other academic disciplines and is unlikely to be the main reason.

Commentators sometimes point to a lack of empirical evidence, though the figures for economic growth and unemployment in Appendix B would appear to be fairly conclusive. Typically unemployment in upswings has averaged around 3.4% whilst downswing levels are more than twice this at over 8%. Economic growth in downswings has averaged around 2.5%, whilst upswings have been at 3.25 – 4.75%. As indicated in Appendix B a host of economic factors have shown good correlation with the ups and downs of the long-wave.

An additional problem that has been identified by critics is the theoretical basis for long-waves. Initially, Kondratieff was reluctant to provide such a basis and much of the theoretical literature has followed Schumpeter, concentrating on waves of technological innovation/invention.<sup>9</sup> However, it often proved difficult to connect this trend with the mainstream tenets of economics and to explain why the waves of innovation should follow a temporally regular pattern.

To explain these difficulties, the most recent tendency within long-wave research is to take a more political economy approach. One approach has been to connect features of industrial relations to explanations of how and why long-waves occur. Some, such as Cronin, have linked these to Schumpeter's waves of technological innovation, others such as Screpanti and Salvati, have come closer to explanations based simply on supply and demand within the labour market.<sup>10</sup> Another approach, taken by Lloyd-Jones & Lewis, has connected political and social institutional structures to Schumpeter's cycles of innovation, emphasizing the importance of governments and employers during the structural crisis of the downswing.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear from this thesis that any explanation of the workings of the economy will need to consider the motivations and actions of the people who work within it. Schumpeter did this by linking the behaviour of entrepreneurs to cycles of innovation; recent work has concentrated on the equally important role of labour.<sup>12</sup> The relationship

between capital and labour may also be crucial to an understanding of long-wave economics.

As indicated by Screpanti, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that after each major upsurge of industrial unrest a long-wave downswing comes into existence.<sup>13</sup> Glyn, Hughes, Lipietz & Singh, amongst others, considered that the post-1973 economic stagnation was not a result of higher oil prices but resulted from organised labour eroding productivity levels through the pay explosion of the late 1960s/early 1970s.<sup>14</sup> Phelps Brown considered that this had also been the case during the explosion of industrial unrest between 1910-20. Marxists, such as Brenner, have opposed this explanation, claiming that it was competition between capitalists, not between labour and capital, that drove profits down post-1973.<sup>15</sup> However, the great efforts made by governments, employers, the media and academics to undermine the position of organised labour through the introduction of supply-side economics from the late 1970s through to the 1990s would suggest that the former theory holds much validity.

Mainstream economic thinking maintains that differing levels of unemployment greatly alter the bargaining position of capital and labour. The high unemployment levels of long-wave downswings would allow employers to erode the position of organised labour thus allowing improvements in productivity and a return to a profitable long-wave upswing. This process, together with the economic reconstruction described by those such as Lloyd-Jones & Lewis and van Duijn, would presumably lead to the more profitable state of the following upswing.

Glyn, Hughes, Lipietz & Singh described a virtuous cycle of increased economic growth, high levels of employment, increased demand, higher profitability, levels of investment and government revenue and thus continued high growth as explaining the existence and length of the post-war boom of 1948-73.<sup>16</sup> Only once the position of labour became strong enough to improve working conditions and increase real wages sufficiently to erode levels of productivity, profitability and investment did the boom come to an end. This could indeed be an explanation of why all long-wave upswings have come to an end.

This thesis has shown how the economic change of long-waves is able to impact upon political change and worker mobilisation. In doing so it has also considered the

possibility that these changes are reciprocated. In particular, the lowest point of the downswing sees a concerted effort by electorates and governments to reinvigorate the economy, to induce a return to economic prosperity. Equally, it may be the case that upswings are brought to an end, at least partly by the activities of organised labour and the far left. As such, it follows in the political economy approach to explaining and understanding long-waves and offers further evidence that a political economy approach appears to be the most fruitful line of research in understanding this phenomena.

Additionally, the existence of a political long-wave should help to resolve some of the confusion that exists around the differing dates given for long-waves, since a regular sequence of events allows a more precise dating scheme. In particular, the period 1914-20 shows characteristics more typical of the late upswing, than an early downswing, whilst 1940-48 is more typical of a late downswing than an early upswing. In addition, establishing a 'secondary feature', and, arguably, a more visible manifestation of long-waves, adds to the body of evidence for the existence of long-waves. Evidence of their existence at the political as well as the economic level should be beneficial in establishing the case for the existence of long-waves.

Turning to the literature discussed in Chapter 1, the particular trajectory of the 'political long-wave' outlined in this thesis also helps to clarify a number of points that have developed within the field that has attempted to link political and social behaviour to long-waves.

Firstly, a repeated pattern of political and social behaviour can be linked to long-wave economics, as indicated by many researchers. The use of the 'political long-wave' and its constituent parts provides a comprehensive and concise description of events during the course of a long-wave. Previous accounts have often been incomplete in nature and on occasions erroneous. Periods of the long-wave previously neglected, in particular, the early upswing period and the early downswing period, have now been described to form a more complete picture of events.

The trend towards seeing long-wave upswings as periods that benefit the left, and also socialist movements and agitation, is confirmed, whereas downswings have the inverse effect. The orthodox Marxist idea that economic booms and prosperity give rise to

complacency and support for capitalism amongst the working class is not borne out. A number of Marxist long-wave researchers have moved in this direction but have been reluctant to take this to its logical conclusion. Namely, that Marx's belief that prolonged economic crisis would result in socialist revolution appears to be incorrect. A more accurate picture would be exactly the opposite, with long-wave upswings resulting in a concerted attempt to challenge the established order, whilst downswings erode the position of labour, the left and socialists and reaction rather than revolution is more likely during economic crisis.

Whilst many researchers agreed that downswings were detrimental to the left, few, if any, recognised this period as being dominated by the right. Prolonged periods of economic slowdown or stagnation do, however, appear to be far more beneficial to the political forces of the right than the left. In almost all cases, the political climate has shifted to the right in the 'crisis period' of the downswing, and this has almost always benefited the parties of the right. The trend towards seeing something of a revival for the left at the end of the downswing is confirmed though.

Having covered four countries over four long-waves the evidence for the pattern of development described in this thesis is fairly comprehensive. Conceivably, though unlikely, these countries could be unique and confirmation for these findings could perhaps be established by discovering whether other industrial/post-industrial economies have followed a similar trajectory. In addition, if the long-wave cycle continues, as would be expected, and a fifth long-wave develops from 1998 onwards, further confirmation and a more concise understanding of the phenomena could be developed as the pattern repeats for a fifth time.

Secondly, the repeated pattern of events in each long-wave appears to have a common set of causations and is not the fortuitous product of a random selection of factors. Although structural and organizational factors are relevant, it appears that above all the changing phases of the long-wave produce changing long-term psychological mood swings that affect political behaviour. From the evidence of this thesis, it would appear that to further develop understanding of the link between long-waves and political change this is the most fruitful area of research.

Of crucial importance appear to be the concepts of confidence and deference, optimism and pessimism, risk-taking and caution and economic security and insecurity. Although these are all closely linked concepts and certainly dependent upon one another, a fifth political long-wave would bring greater opportunities to study the relevant importance of each of these concepts, to develop more concise models and linkages, and a more exact understanding of the processes at work. In many ways, this thesis has been heavily exploratory in nature; the limited amount of literature in this field necessitating such an approach. However, with a basic model and pattern of development established, more in-depth approaches to the subject will be possible in the future.

#### **7.4 Implications for Political Science Theory**

Recent accounts of political change have once again raised the possibility of the 'end of ideology' and of 'left and right'. In part this analysis is based upon the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. However, it should be pointed out that the domestic politics in liberal democracies were rarely divided on a pro or anti Soviet position. Even where Communist parties were a significant electoral force, many had adopted Eurocommunism long before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Other accounts stress the fact that much of the left appear to have accepted the rise of neo-liberalism and the importance of market forces. Keynesian social democracy is believed to have had its day. In addition, the decline in the levels of industrial action and support for socialism, industrial democracy and militant trade unionism appear to indicate that the class war is over. Neo-liberalism was the victor, even if the left did attempt to add a dose of egalitarianism to it. With both the left and right supposedly following similar ideological programmes it is now maintained that not only are we witnessing the end of ideology but also of 'left' and 'right' as meaningful political terms.

However, are we witnessing the end of ideology or simply the victory of neo-liberal ideology over social democracy ideology? Is this simply the reverse of what occurred in the 1930s and 40s? At this time too the 'end of ideology' was predicted only to be proved wrong by the rise of the New Left, later to be followed by the New Right. This earlier prediction was also based on a period of centrist politics where the positions of the left

and right had merged in the 1940s in support of Keynesian social democracy. However, subsequently it proved that they had done so for different reasons. The trajectory of the 'political long-wave' would suggest that once again they have converged for different reasons. For the right, support for neo-liberalism and market forces was deemed necessary to revive capitalism and preserve a class-based society. For the left, it was simply a case of adjusting to the new reality and the need to be elected.

For the end of ideology and the left and right to genuinely occur there would presumably need to be some form of systemic change. The conditions which gave rise to competing political ideologies would need to come to an end. Appendix A indicated that these conditions were the presence of different social classes and an unequal distribution of power, together with the rise of the nation-state and a party system through which these differences could be expressed. None of these have disappeared; there has been no systemic political change and thus little reason to believe that the 'end of ideology' has arrived.

The trajectory of the political long-wave would indicate that the present period of emerging consensus is simply a temporary phenomenon. Similar type periods have occurred at this stage in the long-wave before and eventually given way to a shift to the progressive left. It would appear that this is likely to be the case once again. However, the question of the thesis of the 'end of ideology' does highlight two tendencies which have emerged within political science literature and which the political long-wave indicates are unhelpful.

Firstly, the political long-wave model highlights the importance of history. Many of the political science models of human behaviour are often static and abstract in nature, tending to neglect the fact that modern societies are in a constant state of change. This has been the case with theories of party competition, but sometimes too with models of voting behaviour. They are often presented as being universally applicable models. Invariably they are based on 'all other things being equal' but invariably all other things are not equal. Society is in a constant state of change, and in practice these models can only be applied to certain particular periods. Incorporating a historical or dynamic perspective is essential. The trajectory of the political long-wave should be a useful analytical tool in this respect.

Secondly, the readiness with which the idea of ideology ending gained support. Parties of the right have often portrayed themselves as being 'non-ideological' in contrast to the ideologically motivated movements of the left. The implication is that the right is pragmatic and practical in nature, simply following a common sense approach that is in accord with some form of natural order. Ideological change by the left, within this strain of thought, is regarded as either superfluous or as potentially disruptive of the natural order. It is probably no coincidence that a negative view of ideology gained widespread acceptance during a long-wave downswing, at a time of conservatism and right-wing political dominance.

Such a dislike for ideology also entered political science literature during the late 1970s/1980s. Many political science models at this time, driven by rational choice theory, maintained that humans are motivated essentially by self-interest. The presence of ideology suggests a degree of solidarity between political actors on the basis of shared beliefs, which is perceived as being at odds with the concept of self-interest. Models thus indicated that activists and politicians may claim to be ideologically-motivated, to be concerned with the common good, with utopian or altruistic motives, but really this simply hides the motivation of self-interest. Ideology is simply used to promote self-interest in a more socially acceptable manner.

With a pessimistic view of human nature very much in evidence, it is easy to believe that ideologues have ulterior motives. At times of economic difficulty, competition for scarce resources can easily lead to a dog-eat-dog sense of self-interest. At such times it can be difficult to believe that ideologists have genuinely altruistic motives, whilst any ideology, such as socialism, based on the notion of a shared common interest simply appears naïve.

For others, the ideologies of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s can be blamed for the problems of the recent past. Their proponents may have been well meaning, but are considered to have been out of touch with reality. In the 1950s, Bell proclaimed the 'end of ideology' and the need for incremental social change in its place.<sup>17</sup> The ideologies of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had brought economic disaster, war, death camps and concentration camps. Once again this is being heard through the concept of the 'third

way'. Kay proclaimed that 'the big idea is that there are no big ideas'.<sup>18</sup> Again ideology is seen as harmful, that all ideologies have attempted to impose unrealistic blueprints on long-suffering populations. Both the ideologies of socialism and the New Right are flawed, because all utopian visions are flawed. The aim now is 'appropriateness', institutions must adapt to specific social and economic contexts.

As such, in a downswing political climate it is not surprising that the idea of ideology ending should have gained popular approval. The political long-wave model, however, indicates that the distribution of power lies at the heart of the modern political struggle and that the ideologies of left and right flow from this struggle. Whilst an unequal distribution of power exists within society, ideology will remain important. Thus neither ideology nor the left and right are likely to disappear in the near future. The present trend is simply a temporary one, more apparent than real, neither new nor unique and ideology remains of potential importance. As such this thesis reinforces a trend that has become apparent within political science literature during the course of the 1990s. As a response to the perceived failure of rational choice models to explain certain decisions of policy-makers, the importance of ideas, beliefs and ideologies are once again being considered.<sup>19</sup> Although coming from a different direction, this thesis indicates that it is on a left-right basis that they will most clearly be understood.

This thesis has argued that the fluctuating fortunes of the political and social movements of the left and right can be attributed to the presence of long-waves within the international economy. It also maintains that this results in a regular sequence of events that has a common set of causations. Hobsbawm maintained that each long-wave upswing and downswing brings with it a distinctive historical character, with its own particular social, political and cultural scene.<sup>20</sup> Although each long-wave produces a common pattern of events, each one is also unique since its nature is also determined by the previous sequence of events together with a differing social structure and level of technology. The rise of a new upswing after the downswing of 1973-1998 is likely to bring with it new trends in political thinking and political science. If previous history is anything to go by, and this thesis strongly suggests that it is, the present largely conservative period will eventually give way to one that favours the progressive left. At such a time the concept of 'progress' will once again become popular. Presumably, it



will also bring different attitudes, amongst other things, towards the importance of history and to concepts of ideology and of the left and right.

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<sup>1</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1962.

<sup>2</sup> **E. Mandel**, *Late Capitalism*, NLB, 1975.

<sup>3</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> **P. Dunleavy**, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> **P. Dunleavy**, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour*, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1968.

<sup>7</sup> **A. Maddison**, *Dynamic Forces in Capitalist Development: A Long-Run Comparative View*, Oxford University Press, 1991; **C.P. Kindleberger**, *The World Economy and National Finance in Historical Perspective*, University of Michigan Press, 1995; **S. Solomou**, *Economic Cycles: Long cycles and business cycles since 1870*, Manchester University Press, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> **J. Goldstein**, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, Yale University Press, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> **J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles Volumes I & II*, McGraw Hill, 1939; See also, **G. Mensch**, *Stalemate in Technology: Innovations Overcome the Depression*, Ballinger, 1979; 'Changing Capital Values and the Propensity to Innovate', in **C. Freeman** (ed) *Long-Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworth, 1983; *Design, Innovation, and Long Cycles in Economic Development*, St. Martin's Press, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> **J. Cronin**, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979; **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; **M. Salvati**, 'Political Business Cycles and Long-waves in Industrial Relations: Notes on Kalecki and Phelps Brown', in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983.

<sup>11</sup> **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> **J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles Volumes I & II*, McGraw Hill, 1939.

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<sup>13</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548.

<sup>14</sup> **H. Phelps-Brown**, A Non-monetarist View of the Pay Explosion, *Three Banks Review*, 1975, 105, pp.3-24. **A. Glyn, A. Hughes, A. Lipietz, & A. Singh**, 'The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age', in **S. A. Marglin & J. B. Schor** (Eds.), *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, Clarendon Press, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> **R. Brenner**, 'Uneven Development and the Long Downturn' *New Left Review*, 1998, 229: 1-265; See also editions 4 & 5 of *Historical Materialism* (Robert Brenner and the World Crisis) devoted to a series of articles analysing and critiquing Brenner's work.

<sup>16</sup> **A. Glyn, A. Hughes, A. Lipietz, & A. Singh**, 'The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age', in **S. A. Marglin & J. B. Schor** (Eds.), *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, Clarendon Press, 1990.

<sup>17</sup> **D. Bell**, *The End of Ideology*, The Free Press, 1960.

<sup>18</sup> **J. Kay**, 'Evolutionary Politics', *Prospect*, July 1998 pp.31-35.

<sup>19</sup> See for instance; **J.K. Jacobsen**, 'Much Ado About Ideas: The Cognitive Factor in Economic Policy' *World Politics* 1995, 47, 2, pp.283-310; **A.S. Yee**, 'The Causal Effect of Ideas on Policies' *International Organization* 1996, 50, 1, pp.69-108; **J. Goldstein & R.O. Keohane**, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, Cornell University Press, 1993; **M.J. Hinich & M.C. Munger**, *Ideology and the Theory of Political Choice*, University of Michigan, 1994.

<sup>20</sup> **E. Hobsbawm**, *On History*, Abacus, 1997, pp.37, 66-7.

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## **APPENDIX A: DEFINING RIGHT and LEFT**

The terms 'left' and 'right' have been used widely within the parlance of modern political thought and are familiar concepts to most people. In general, it is usually easy to identify which parties and social movements belong to which half of the dichotomy. However, there is some disagreement as to which particular features of these parties and movements it is that determines on which half of the dichotomy they are placed. Further, at certain times in history it has also been popular to discredit both concepts and to claim that they are no longer relevant.

Using both an empirical and theoretical basis, the following discussion is aimed at identifying the essential feature that identifies why a party or social movement should be classed as 'left' or 'right'. At the same time it also shows that not only are the left and right essential terms within the modern politics, but that they form the key ideological division of modern times and remain of continuing importance. The definitions arrived at in this appendix are those that are used to identify the left and right throughout the thesis.

### **A.1 A Brief History of the Left -Right Dichotomy<sup>1</sup>**

The terms 'left' and 'right' date back to the seating arrangement of the French National Assembly during the 1789 Revolution. The original left was the French 'Third Estate' - the middle-classes and the emergent bourgeoisie, classes that, across Europe and North America, in their struggle to end the privileges and traditions of the aristocracy and landowning classes, were attracted to Liberalism, Radicalism and Republicanism throughout much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The struggle engendered a commitment to progress, an optimistic view of human nature, egalitarianism and social reform, to pursue political reform and democracy, and also a commitment to the nation-state. Laissez-faire economics, opposition to protectionism and a commitment to free enterprise were initially the hallmarks of their economic ideology.

Much of the Liberal and Republican agenda was defined by their opposition to their opponents on the right - the 'Second Estate' - the landowners and nobility who defined and practised Conservatism for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Conservative ideology

supported imperial internationalism, privilege, tradition, the autocratic state, elitism, opposition to change and embodied a pessimistic view of human nature. In general, the landowning classes opposed the introduction of democracy and extensions of suffrage whilst seeking to preserve a highly elitist, and largely oligarchic polity, often based on the privilege of aristocratic birth. Power - be it economic, political or social - was to be restricted to small privileged elites, in contrast to Liberals and Republicans seeking its greater distribution and a more pluralistic society.

This ideological battle existed for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In their struggle for political supremacy, however, both sides came to realize the limitations of appealing solely to their own, relatively small, class constituencies. On the left, the Liberalism, Radicalism and Republicanism of the industrial bourgeoisie and middle-class professions sought support from other progressive sections of society, notably sections of the working class, but progressives within the aristocracy and peasantry where possible. Likewise, on the right, the Conservatives and Monarchists sought support from the conservative peasantry and unskilled workers where possible. Left and right became large electoral alliances incorporating all sections of modern society.

However, as the pace of industrialization and democratization accelerated, the political agenda of the aristocratic/landowning class became increasingly defensive, and by the end of the 19th century, with one or two notable exceptions, it had largely been defeated or suffered serious setbacks. Significant concessions were made by the right to the democratic and parliamentary process, the creation of the nation-state, the importance of industry, in addition to civil rights and equality before the law. With these concessions made, the bourgeoisie incorporated itself within ruling politics towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the difficult economic period of the Great Depression, the interests of the bourgeoisie and landowners often merged to form a more modern version of Conservatism. The right remained committed to many of its traditional political features – the importance of elites and leadership, maintenance of tradition and opposition to reform and revolution, but these were increasingly based upon capitalism, the nation-state and parliamentarianism rather than on the old feudal order. Conservative and other right-wing movements transformed their allegiance whilst maintaining certain traditional features.

Thus, a large degree of continuity existed between the Conservative movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Conservative and Christian Democrat parties (and the Republicans in the USA since the 1920s), the movements most closely associated with the right in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Satisfaction with the existing power structures within society, and a commitment to preserving the status quo with regard to the distribution of economic, political and social power have maintained the conservative support for tradition and the retention of established privileges. Support for elites and a stress on the importance of their leadership and opposition to egalitarianism have all been important for these parties, and have thus remained continuities on the right.

However, conservatism has not always been prevalent on the right. On occasions reactionary tendencies have become more marked. Following periods of left-led reform and revolution, rightist attempts to reverse the egalitarian direction have often become more prevalent, though rarely totally eclipsing conservative tendencies. These have become prominent to reestablish a more elitist structure within society. Such tendencies have been typical of movements of the right such as Fascism and right-wing religious fundamentalism, but have also appealed to sections of Conservatism at certain times, notably in the 1920s and 1930s, but also in the 1970s and 1980s.

Despite claims of modernity and other differences, Fascism and other sections of the extreme-right in the 1920s and 30s shared certain similarities with the Conservatives of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century - opposition to democracy, liberalism, parliamentarism and equality before the law, whilst supporting a system of power confined to small oligarchic elites. A commitment to the leading role of the autocratic State-Church-Military alliance was often evident, indicating that it was the maintenance of an elitist-led society and opposition to egalitarianism that was the driving force behind these movements, despite claims to be acting in the national interest.

Although some Liberal movements persisted into the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and pursued a radical agenda into the early decades of this century, it was the political movements associated with socialism that became prevalent on the left. Whilst their

attitude towards capitalism differed markedly from that of the Liberals, at the same time, many of the features of Liberalism and Republicanism were taken up by Socialist, Anarchist and Communist movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They continued to seek a greater distribution of political and social power, notably extensions of the democratic franchise, though with an increased emphasis on economic equality. This was based largely on a commitment to the working-classes and trade unionism, but also on support for other groups considered subordinate within society. As with the Liberals of the 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries these movements became associated with reform and revolution, opposition to the existing order, and the ending of traditional elite privileges.

Thus a certain continuity existed between the left movements of Liberalism, Radicalism and Republicanism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Socialism and Social Democracy (and the Democrats in the USA since the 1910s) of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> A commitment to a greater egalitarianism and wider distribution of power remained prevalent. In political and social terms, this was characterized by attempts to extend the democratic process, to pursue greater equality, to restrict privilege, and to bring marginalized groups into the mainstream. Their economic ideologies were, in one sense, markedly different, but both also had the aim of placing marginalised groups into a more advantageous position.

Thus, there is good reason to believe that there have been certain continuities, throughout the modern era, as regards the movements of the left and right. In general, the movements of the left have sought a more egalitarian society, be it in the economic, political or social spheres, and have been prepared to engage in reform and/or revolution to achieve their ends. By contrast, the right has preferred a more elitist and unequal view of society, together with the importance of leadership. As such it has usually been conservative in nature, preferring to preserve the status quo and traditional values. At times, however, it has actively reversed the egalitarian changes of the left, in order to preserve its ideological outlook. In addition, the parties of the left and right have also remained the most important movements within the field of political activity throughout the entire period, eclipsing all others that have sought to challenge them.

## A.2 The Left-Right Dichotomy

The theoretical literature, has indeed, recognized the importance of the left and right. The terms left and right are widely used throughout the literature of Political Science, Sociology, Political and Labour History, and are familiar to most members of the public. Since the inception of their use in 1789, the two terms have covered a wide range of political movements and ideologies, but have nearly always believed to have been a central feature of the political process. Cleavages within modern societies have been based on religion, region and a centre-periphery divide, but by far the most common within liberal democracies is that based on left and right, and many of the other cleavages can be seen as expressions of the wider left-right cleavage. Throughout Europe, South America, Japan and Australasia party systems have typically been based on a left-right cleavage. The replacement of a regional party system by one based on left and right in the USA during the 20<sup>th</sup> century has also made it typical in North America.

A number of features have been commonly associated with the terms left and right, giving rise to the two broadly distinguishable tendencies within the modern political process.<sup>3</sup> However, their use is not always based on any consistent theoretical basis, leading to some confusion as to what the terms really mean. The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought lists the following features commonly associated with the two ideological movements:<sup>4</sup>

| <u>LEFT</u>              |    | <u>RIGHT</u>  |
|--------------------------|----|---------------|
| 1) Egalitarian           | v. | Inequality    |
| 2) Reform/Revolution     | v. | Tradition     |
| 3) Radicalism            | v. | Conservatism  |
| 4) Economic Intervention | v. | Laissez-Faire |
| 5) Internationalism      | v. | Patriotism    |

All these features are familiar within the literature dealing with the political process, but on closer inspection of the movements and ideologies associated with the left and right during the last two centuries, some appear to be more salient than others.

1) Historically, a commitment to a more **egalitarian** society has nearly always been a typical feature of the left. For the most part this has been based upon political, social and legal equality, though those doctrines based upon a belief in socialism have also pressed for greater economic equality. Most left movements have shown a commitment to some degree of egalitarianism, a tradition that runs through both Liberal, early Republican and Socialist thought. Early Liberal and Republican ideology emphasized the importance of egalitarianism in their struggles against the ascriptive politics of ruling monarchs and aristocracies. In practice, such equality did not always extend to the working-classes and it was often left to Socialist and Social-Democrat movements to press the case for the political equality of the working class.

A major exception to this trend, is probably only found in the Communist regimes of the Eastern and Soviet bloc, where Communist Parties, whilst prioritizing economic equality for most of their time in power, showed little interest in extending political and social equality. This was particularly so under Stalin from the early-1930's onwards when he actually heightened political and social inequalities within the Soviet Union, though this tendency tended to dissipate following Stalin's death. However, despite the promise of reform under Krushchev, this tendency was reversed under Brezhnev and his successors and it was not until the arrival of Gorbachev that the Communist party became committed to a more egalitarian political order in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Most movements of the right have opposed significant extensions of political, legal, social and economic equality, and remained attached to a concept of elitism and the preservation of societies with widespread **inequality**. From the Conservative aristocrats of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the parties of the right in the present day, significant moves in an egalitarian direction have been seen as opposing God's natural order, as potentially destabilizing or as attempting to overturn 'natural' human behaviour. Either human beings are a naturally hierarchical species, or this is the most appropriate system to preserve law and order.



Although Conservatives such as Bismarck and Disraeli have on occasion extended political equality, such cases tend to be rare, reluctantly taken and largely based on electoral calculation rather than an ideological commitment. A belief that 'some are born to rule, and some are born to follow' is more pervasive throughout much of the right. This gives rise to a belief in the importance of leadership and deference towards it - concepts rarely found within Liberal and Socialist thinking - although leadership has often been considered of great importance within Communist movements, notably with the personality cults of Stalin and Mao.

With regards to the concept of egalitarianism, recent decades have concentrated on the differences between the left and right over the question of social and economic equality, somewhat neglecting the fact that political and legal equalities were once a major battlefield for the two tendencies. Once considered, however, it should not be too difficult to see some form of continuation between the Liberal, Radical and Republican movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Socialist and Social Democrat parties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Clearly egalitarianism in all its guises needs to be considered.

2) Since the days of the French Revolution most left movements have been committed ideologically to **reform** or **revolution**, whilst often showing contempt for tradition. Representing social classes and groups that have usually been excluded from the mainstream, left movements have sought greater social, political and economic inclusion, usually through reform, though occasionally by revolutionary means, and this has often entailed the ending of longstanding traditions. Once in power, parties of the left have attempted to effect major political reforms, though circumstances have often conspired against them leaving a checkered record of success. The major exception to this would again be the Communist Parties of the Soviet bloc. Stalin effected economic and political reforms, but which did little more than centralize state power, whilst Brezhnev eventually proved to be very conservative in power. On the other hand there were reform periods in the late 1950s/1960s and in the period following Gorbachev's rise to power.

On the right, most movements have placed great importance to **tradition** and the preservation of the status quo. A belief in the unchanging nature of human nature has led to an emphasis on political and social continuity and the preservation of established

traditions - ones that are deemed to have worked successfully in the past. Even those that claimed to be effecting radical changes, for instance, the Fascist movements of the 1920s and 30s, they still placed their efforts within an ideological framework that emphasized a desire to return to a former 'golden age' - an age when traditions had been respected and when social order had remained intact. Likewise religious fundamentalists have advocated or imposed a system of social values commonly associated with an ancient past when religion remained of major social importance, and when, supposedly, this led to stability and order.

However, parties of the right have presided over periods of reform, indeed virtually all governments of whatever political persuasion institute at least some changes once in power. Equally governments of the left do not reform everything and often strive to preserve the previous achievements obtained by the left suggesting support for certain traditions. This would suggest that the concepts of reform and tradition are somewhat vague and needs to be more closely defined if they are to be of use in the left-right dichotomy.

3) **Radicalism** has been associated with the movements of the left since the early days of the Jacobin and Radical movements around the time of the French Revolution and continued with the Liberal Radicalism throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Radicalism has been typically associated with a desire for rapid political, economic or social change. Although a radical agenda has often been part of left programmes, left parties have at times also presided over relatively quiescent periods throughout the last two centuries, suggesting the fact that Radicalism may only be intermittently important within the left, though clearly it is more common within the left than the right. Again, the Communist regimes of the Soviet bloc which periodically pursued conservative aims and policies are an exception, and in recent years parties of the left attempting to preserve social democracy have been accused of being essentially conservative and backward looking.

**Conservatism** has been typical of many of the movements and ideologies on the right, attempting to preserve the status quo, prevent major political change, and allowing only gradual and very limited changes, often with the intention of preserving the established

order, as famously advocated by Burke. Where reform has been instituted it has often been with the intention of forestalling more radical change. However, movements of the right have from time to time often claimed to be pursuing radical change, notably those associated with Fascism and the extreme-right. Given that the original Radicalism was devoted to greater democracy, the extension of civil and human rights and greater political equality and economic opportunity for all, it is somewhat doubtful as to whether Fascist movements, which have tended to move in the opposite direction, can be classed as radical.

The use of the word 'radical' is only valid in the sense that their aims and motives are significantly different from the mainstream or established position. Given that there is clearly a sense of direction involved within this concept, the radical-conservative dichotomy may be insufficient and a radical-conservative-reactionary trichotomy would probably be more appropriate - those attempting to move in the opposite direction typically taken by radicals, being reactionaries. Again there seems a need for greater clarification of what is being changed radically and what is being conserved for this concept to prove of use in the left-right dichotomy.

4) In recent decades it is the **economic intervention-laissez-faire** dichotomy that has tended to be used most frequently to distinguish parties of the left and right. On closer examination it proves to be of little use, even within recent decades. Historically, on the left, Liberals, libertarian socialists, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists have all been hostile to economic intervention by the state, whilst on the right, Fascists, Bonapartists, National Conservatives, and Conservative Parties in the nineteenth century have all supported greater economic intervention by the state.

Few governments of either the left or the right did not increase or maintain higher levels of state intervention in the economy between the 1930s and 1970s. Notable examples of those on the right who extended state intervention in the economy were the governments of Mussolini, Hitler, Franco, Baldwin, Adenauer, De Gaulle, Heath and Nixon to name but a few. Typically greater state intervention in the economy was first associated with Bismarck and the German Conservatives. The trend towards

protectionism started with Bismarck in Germany, and ushered in an era of greater state intervention.

It is sometimes claimed that the influence of socialism was instrumental in extending state intervention in the economy between the 1880s and 1970s. However, there are other explanations. The onset of protectionism allowed greater state leverage over economic interest groups and this could be used by both the left and the right once in power to pursue their ideological aims. Equally it has been claimed that it was the arrival of full democracy and the working-class as a major political force that forced governments of both the left and right to pursue moves towards a managed economy in the difficult economic circumstances of the 1920s and 30s.<sup>5</sup> Added to greater levels of protection, the scope for state intervention in the economy increased substantially, pursued equally by left and right until the arrival of neo-liberal economics in the 1980s - a period that saw both parties of the left and right limit and reduce state intervention in the economy.

More importantly, a major problem with this dichotomy is that it tends to be value neutral, the argument has often been carried out in solely quantitative terms - how much state intervention, not why was it being done. Such a tendency tends to limit the usefulness of the concept, veering away from any qualitative evaluation of why the states' role in the economy was extended, and whether parties of the left and right did so for the same or different reasons. It is possible that parties of the right extended state intervention in the economy in order to enhance the overall wealth of the nation, whilst the left sought greater economic intervention to improve the position of subordinate classes and groups within society, thus pursuing a similar trend for very different reasons.

5) The left has traditionally been associated with **Internationalism** - no doubt encouraged by the presence of the First, Second and Third Internationals - whilst the right has often been considered parochial, nationalist and inward looking. **Patriotism** in recent decades has been typically associated with the right, though originally nationalism was associated with the democratic contract between state and society and pursued by the left in opposition to the imperial internationalism of the aristocracy. Equally many nationalist movements have been leftward looking, notably those in the developing world struggling against colonialism and imperialism.

At an economic level, Liberals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century supported a system of international free trade, whilst in recent years it has been the parties of the right that have supported economic globalization, and the left has often supported and defended the national social-democratic state. Whether international attitudes can be strictly applied to the left-right dichotomy, a dichotomy that deals essentially with domestic concerns, is perhaps doubtful, given the differences that exist between nation-states and within them. However, parallels between strong and weak states and the class system have been drawn, with the left supporting greater equality between nation-states, in a similar way to the greater equality desired between social classes. Possibly of more importance is why the left and right are supporting particular national and/or internationalist positions than the issue of nationalism versus internationalism per se.

### **A.3 Ideology and the Distribution of Power**

The above discussion suggests that the issue of egalitarianism versus inequality is perhaps the most pertinent of the features of the left-right dichotomy and one that has been a consistent feature of the political struggle between the two tendencies over the last two centuries.<sup>6</sup> The other features typically associated with the left-right dichotomy appear to be simply an expression of this issue. Attitudes towards reform, revolution, tradition, economic policy etc. all appear to be derived from the question of egalitarianism and the degree to which power is distributed or concentrated within society. Why should this be so, and why is it more important than other features?

The question of the distribution of power in modern societies has been studied by sociologists such as Parsons and Mann. Mann identified four main sources of social power - Ideological, Military, Economic and Political (IMEP model).<sup>7</sup> Their exact configuration and their relative importance in different environments, he believed, have determined human history and the epochs in which it is divided. Thus there are different 'motors of history' in each historical epoch/era/ mode of production, not one universal motor as claimed for instance by Marx and Hegel. In the modern era, for Mann starting around 1760, it was the Military and Economic sources of social power that created the

configuration of modern society. However, during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Political and Economic sources of social power became the dominant forces that defined society up until 1914.<sup>8</sup>

In defining four *sources* of social power, he draws on the work of Talcott Parsons as to what *forms* of social power are crucial in the historical process. Following Parsons, he identifies two forms of power:<sup>9</sup>

- 1) Distributive Power - the power of actor A over actor B. For B to acquire more power, A must lose some.
- 2) Collective Power - the joint power of actors A and B co-operating to exploit nature or another actor, C.

Thus the struggle for distributive power is a zero-sum game, whilst that for collective power is a positive-sum game, though the co-existence of both will clearly lead to a more complex struggle in which both struggles for power overlap. Thus there are two forms of social power, and in order for humans to access or enhance these powers, the four sources of social power - Ideological, Military, Economic and Political - need to be utilized. For Mann, it is this process that drives history forward - the struggle for collective and distributive power.

Mann maintains that the beginnings of the modern era saw a massive increase in the level of collective power. The Industrial Revolution and the modern nation-state helped bring about “an unparalleled, truly exponential transformation in the logistics of collective power” that has vastly increased the collective economic and political powers of the human race.<sup>10</sup> However, he also states that whilst collective power underwent a vast qualitative change, this was not the case for distributive power - “distributive power was transformed less during this period than theoretical tradition suggested. Classes and nation-states did not revolutionize social stratification.”<sup>11</sup>

If, as Mann maintains, there was no fundamental alteration in the distribution of power accompanying the revolution in collective power in the late 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, is it likely that such a scenario would remain for a considerable length of time? With such a mismatch in the changes concerning the two different forms of power it might be expected that they constituted a series imbalance within modern society. With

new forms of collective power creating potentially powerful organizations and social classes it is unlikely that they would settle for a situation where there was an extremely unequal distribution of power. It could be expected that this configuration would sooner or later face serious challenges, as the newly arising social classes and organizations sought access to the collective power created by the political and industrial revolutions at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This has, of course, been the case.

In pursuing this struggle, however, Mann believes that no Ideological social power has significantly contributed to the historical process in the period 1760-1914. In a discussion on the impact of ideology, he considers the differing ideologies that have supported the aims of nations and social classes and concludes that these only had a limited impact in defining the form of social relations between 1760 and 1914.<sup>12</sup> However, he appears to have underestimated the importance of ideology in the modern era.

Mann identifies two manifestations of Ideological power - the 'transcendent' and the 'immanent morale'.<sup>13</sup> The transcendent shapes whole societies, as Christianity and other world religions did in the agrarian era immediately prior to the Industrial Revolution. He sees no transcendent Ideology in the modern era, though he fails to consider the possibility that Enlightenment thought, and the patterns of thinking derived from it, might have served as a transcendent Ideological social power throughout the modern era.

Immanent morale enhances the power of existing organizations, but he believes that neither nations nor classes achieved this to a degree that was significant enough to fundamentally define the early modern era. His evidence for this is largely based on the failure of specific ideological movements to significantly alter society. Firstly, the failure of Chartism in the 1840s and its replacement by an organized labour movement that supported the dominant Liberal cause. Secondly, the failure of Socialist movements to determine the nature of the ruling polity in the period prior to World War One leads him to believe that class-based ideologies have failed as an immanent morale. Equally, he maintains, no specific nationalist ideology was able to define the political direction of any of the major powers throughout the long 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

However, by concentrating on ideologies attached to working class movements, he appears to neglect the importance of bourgeois and aristocratic ideologies - notably those

of Liberalism, Radicalism, Conservatism and Republicanism. Further, this leads to the role of 'ideology' itself being downgraded, whilst, in fact, it clearly had a major impact at the political level, with all the successful political movements of this period being attached to a particular ideological cause.<sup>15</sup>

The economic and political revolutions of the early modern era did indeed transform collective power arrangements without a corresponding qualitative change in the distribution of power. These revolutions created the modern nation-state and gave rise to the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle and working-classes. Without a change in the distribution of power these social classes had little or no control over the political process - still largely in the hands of aristocrats and landowners - whilst the presence of the nation-state offered the means by which this situation could be significantly altered.

History shows that the imbalance between the creation of an enhanced collective power and the lack of a qualitative change in the distribution of this power has led to the struggle for distributive power becoming *the* dominant political struggle of the modern era. In an attempt to alter the imbalance in the two forms of power at a domestic level, politics has been dominated by the question - to what degree should power be distributed within society? In practice, all political movements have found it necessary to address this question, for it has proved impossible to neglect such a salient issue. In addressing the matter of distributive power two major, though diverse, tendencies have resulted - those seeking to restrict the extent of distributive power, and those seeking to diffuse its extent. In an ideological form this has manifested itself in the left-right dichotomy.

It could be considered that the left-right dichotomy, in its various manifestations, has served as an 'immanent morale' for actors A and B as they struggle for control of the forces that determine the distribution of power. Much of the modern political process can be understood with reference to this struggle, although such a struggle has not always been straightforward. Collective Power, in the modern era, has resided chiefly within the nation-state and the modern business company. Power struggles have manifested themselves at the level of international relations and business competition - which are beyond the scope of this thesis - but clearly overlap and complicate the struggle for distributive power - power struggles within nation-states and within the workplace.



Mann appears to have underestimated the salience of the left-right dichotomy. On one level he seems to arrive at this position by attempting to identify ideologies too closely with social classes and nations; on another, the underestimation may well derive from his belief that means, not motivation, is of greatest importance in defining social relations. The nature of the democratic process and of numerical supremacy within the democratic framework has forced class ideologies to broaden out and encompass other social classes. Political movements and parties are often strategic alliances that recognize the importance of numerical supremacy, whilst social groups and classes still retain their own distinct aims within those alliances. The result has been to create the left-right dichotomy.

#### **A.4 Definition of the Left-Right Dichotomy**

From the above theoretical and empirical discussions, it thus appears that there is little reason for dispensing with the left-right dichotomy as some writers have indicated. It is firstly a valid concept, since it can be seen that certain features have remained consistent to both tendencies throughout the last two centuries. But not only this, for secondly, the left-right dichotomy can not only be used coherently, but it is also central to understanding political change in the modern era. Left movements are associated with progressive political, economic and social change. They are characterized by support for, or enactment of changes that lead to a greater distribution of political, social or economic power. Throughout the last two hundred years, this has been the essence of left-wing politics. In contrast, parties and movements of the right have opposed greater distribution of economic, political and social power, wishing to either preserve inequalities in power distribution or to actually intensify them. This has remained the essence of right-wing politics throughout the modern era.

#### **The Three Forms of Distributive Power**

Within the realms of the wider political arena, three forms of distributive power have proved of importance in the struggle between the left and right and in their struggle to gain hegemonic supremacy. Throughout the last two centuries social, political and

economic power have all been contested by the two tendencies. Although, in the highly complex societies of the modern era, the three forms of distributive power clearly interact and overlap, to some extent the typical features of each can be identified separately.

Typically, within the realm of the left-right dichotomy, **economic power** can be seen as containing two important aspects - the distribution of economic wealth within a given society and the control of the means of production and distribution. Moves towards a more equal redistribution of wealth and collective control are associated with movements and parties of the left, in the belief that this will create a fairer society and one with a greater level of collective freedom. In addition there is likely to be less alienation and thus a more inclusive and well-functioning society.

Those on the right prefer to preserve the present inequalities of wealth and control or even further concentrate economic wealth within economic elites. They do so in the belief that such a scenario is either natural and inevitable, that it allows elites to invest greater levels of wealth thus benefiting wider society or that too wide a distribution of wealth removes the incentive to work productively. Distribution of wealth differs from the aim of enhancing the total wealth of a specific society or nation, a process more associated with generating collective power, though clearly this may also have far reaching effects on the nature of society. Only if the extra levels of wealth were divided more equally within the society would the distribution of economic power factor become relevant

Redistribution of wealth through taxation and other forms of state intervention in the economy have been typically associated with social liberalism, social democracy and reformist socialism, although both at times have also advocated some form of industrial democracy. However, often the struggle for the distribution of economic power has centred upon access to the means of production. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Liberals and Republicans sought to challenge the legal and social practices supported by the aristocracy that restricted the means by which wealth could be created. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with control of economic power within the workplace unequally distributed, Socialists, Communists and Anarchists/Syndicalists have periodically sought to achieve greater collective involvement in the running of industry. In general this has been

opposed by the forces of the right, most commonly on the grounds that the preservation of private property is essential for the working of a successful economy and for the preservation of individual freedom.

**Political power** in the modern era has tended to revolve around access to the state, the ruling polity and the process of government. Clearly moves towards greater democratic suffrage, or qualitative improvements in the democratic process increase the distribution of political power, whilst moves towards dictatorship and its maintenance restrict the distribution of political power.

From the days of the French Revolution, the left has sought greater access to the mechanisms of political power - namely the ruling executive. In general, this has resulted in efforts to extend the democratic suffrage, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to achieve civil equalities and pursue wider access to the mechanism of state power. At times this has involved the establishment of constitutional rights as well as the formal process of extending the democratic process. In general, the aim has been to create a wider access to the levers of power.

In general, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the right has sought to keep control of the political process restricted to small, exclusive and privileged minorities. A belief that only these people could be trusted to understand and respect the responsibilities of power, whilst any extension in the distribution of power could lead to chaos and instability was prevalent. Even after the introduction of full democracy, the right has sought to keep this to a formal minimum, simply respecting the electoral process, whilst resisting any deepening of the democratic process, for instance, moves towards direct democracy.

**Social power**, though used in many ways, in this context revolves largely around the legislative process but also through the more ambiguous concept of cultural assimilation. In general, the left has sought to extend the level of social inclusion of once-marginal groups, be it through a process of instituting laws, such as those that legalized the economic activities of the industrial bourgeoisie and the trade-unions in the early modern era, or those attempting to extend equal rights to women, ethnic minorities and homosexuals in recent decades in order to create a more socially-inclusive society.

Although equality before the law is a powerful factor in creating social inclusion, in general this has been accompanied by attempts to create an ideological or cultural climate in which such inclusions become socially acceptable to wider sections of society.

In opposition, the right has usually feared centrifugal social forces, preferring peripheral groups to accept the mainstream culture or existing hegemony. Opposed to egalitarianism, the right has preferred social exclusivity and opposed attempts toward a greater cultural and social pluralism, in the belief that existing traditions should be respected and that too much heterogeneity leads to disorder and instability. Existing institutions should continue to dominate their respective spheres of influence and that increased social diversity may eventually lead to the dissolution of the existing order and an end to respecting the leadership of the present order.

In general, the efforts of the left have been to create a more inclusive and pluralistic society in the three related spheres - the economic, political and social, whilst the right has tended to prefer a greater degree of exclusivity and uniformity within the three forms of power. From this the following definitions of the left and right can be derived and it is these that are used throughout the thesis.

## **Political Spectrum**

### **LEFT**

**Progressive** - those aiming to, or enacting gradual progressive changes in the distribution of social, political and economic power, thus creating a more pluralistic, more inclusive and more equal society.

**Radical** - those aiming to, or enacting significant transformations in the distribution of social, economic and political power through rapid change. Their aim is to create a society that is considerably more inclusive, more pluralistic and more equal.

**Revolutionary** - those aiming to, or enacting a total transformation in the distribution of social, economic and political power through revolutionary means. Their aim is to create a society that is as inclusive and equal as possible.

## **RIGHT**

**Reactionary** - those aiming to, or enacting changes that result in a reversal of previous distributions of power. They destroy progressive measures by means of concentrating power within narrower confines than those previously existing, thus creating a less pluralistic and more unequal and exclusive society.

**Conservative** - those aiming to, or enacting the preservation of the status quo in terms of the distribution of power. No significant changes in power distribution are considered or enacted. Given that the distribution of power is usually uneven within industrial/post-industrial societies, this usually amounts to support for a certain degree of political, economic and social exclusion and inequality.

## **Summary**

The above discussion shows that the distribution of power is central to the modern political process and the most appropriate criterion for drawing a distinction between left and right. The left-right cleavage has become the predominant cleavage in modern party systems since no other concept has concerned the political parties and movements of the modern era more than the distribution of power. Left and right are terms which, contrary to some recent speculation, are absolutely central to the understanding of modern politics, since both main tendencies have defined themselves around this issue.

For the most part, using attitudes towards the distribution of power to define the left and right does not lead to a significant break with the features traditionally associated with both the left and the right, rather it creates a more specific set of criteria.<sup>16</sup> The left is associated with reform, egalitarianism, and radical or revolutionary change, but these all revolve around the distribution of power - to diffuse power through reform or radical change in order to create a more equal society. The right is associated with tradition, conservatism and inequality, all with the aim of restricting the distribution of power - to maintain the existing power structures and defend the status quo and a more elitist view of society.

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<sup>1</sup> This history is based partly on the political trends described in Chapter 2, but also taken from; A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, Tavistock Publications, 1964, pp.382-384; and from D. Caute, The Left in Europe Since 1789, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1966. Caute uses the concept of 'popular sovereignty' to define the left - i.e. those in favour of it - and thus excludes the more moderate Liberal and Republican movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the left, since they were only in favour of limited extensions of 'political popular sovereignty'. He seems to indicate that these movements belonged to the centre, though he offers no definition of the centre, neither of the right - though presumably the latter is constituted by those who oppose 'popular sovereignty'.

He maintains that the left, originally made up of Radical Liberals, Socialists and Republicans, shifted its emphasis from 'political' to 'economic popular sovereignty' towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because the former had largely been achieved, and that the left from 1914 onwards (1905 in France) can only be identified by its commitment to the latter. Presumably this is also because most movements of the right and centre came to accept 'popular political sovereignty', and a dichotomy based on acceptance of popular political sovereignty would be almost meaningless. In making this shift of emphasis he also excludes Keynesians and Social-Democrats from the left, along with the largest sections of the Socialist parties, for they did not make the transition from supporting political sovereignty to supporting economic sovereignty. Only the left wing of the Socialist parties and small Marxist parties constitute the left in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Caute, leaving the vast majority of the political spectrum in the centre or the right.

<sup>2</sup> This was also the case with Communist movements until the late 1920s, when the shift to Stalinism and the later polarisation of the Cold War saw these parties take on many characteristics more typical of the authoritarian regimes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular Communist parties in power were highly conservative and extensions in the distribution of power were often forced upon them. Where Communist parties remained in opposition, as in the developed and developing world, their rhetoric was more typical of that of the left. Whether this would have translated into the typical programme of left governments once in power has been widely questioned, since Communist parties were often under instructions from conservative elites in Moscow.

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<sup>3</sup> The Oxford Companion to the Politics of the World, Oxford University Press, 1993, associates the left with “demands for greater popular sovereignty and democratic control over political, social and economic life” pp.531-532. The right is characterized by its opposition to the left and is made up of parties and movements committed towards advancement of conservative economic, social and political ideas.

A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, Tavistock Publications, 1964, pp.381-384, associates both the left and right with over a dozen typical features, far too many to be of use in defining the two concepts.

<sup>4</sup> Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, **A. Bullock & O. Stallybrass (eds)**, Fontana Press, 1977, pp.470-471, 747-748.

<sup>5</sup> This is the line argued by Booth to explain the transition to managed economies in the 1930s. It was considered electorally damaging for political parties to follow deflationary policies and cut levels of pay. **A. Booth**, ‘Britain in the 1930s: a managed economy?’ *Economic History Review* 2<sup>nd</sup> series XL 4 pp.499-522.

<sup>6</sup> Bobbio arrived at a similar position. After discussing the concepts of equality and liberty he believed that only the former was useful in defining the terms left and right. However, Bobbio saw the left and right’s attitudes to equality as being more relative and antithetical in nature; the position taken by one side of the dichotomy being a response to that taken by the other. **N. Bobbio**, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, Polity Press, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume I, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp.22-32; *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.6-10.

<sup>8</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Taken from **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume I, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp.6-7; *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.2-3; see also **T. Parsons**, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, Free Press, 1960, pp.199-225.

<sup>10</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.12-13.

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<sup>11</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.16.

<sup>12</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, Chapters 7 and 20.

<sup>13</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume I, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp.22-24; *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> **M. Mann**, *Sources of Social Power*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press, 1993, Chapters 7 and 20.

<sup>15</sup> A similar case could also be made for 'nationalism', for although nationalist movements may have had a limited impact, the concept of nationalism itself clearly had an enormous impact on the social and political relations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>16</sup> *The Oxford Companion to the Politics of the World*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.531, maintains "the Left has been associated with demands for greater popular sovereignty and democratic control over political, social and economic life", a not dissimilar concept to a greater distribution of political, social and economic power.



## **APPENDIX B: DATING LONG-WAVE PERIODS**

### **The Empirical Basis for Long-waves.**

In order to follow any correlation between the political fortunes of the left and right, and long-wave economics it is first necessary to establish the dates to be used. Amongst long-wave researchers there is no universal agreement on the exact dates that each of the four long-waves span, though there is some degree of proximity (see Chapter 1). Some dates are more controversial than others; whilst certain dates, notably those of the second long-wave, appear to be widely accepted. The following discussion will explain the dates used throughout the thesis through the use of the existing theoretical and empirical literature on long-waves, but also by use of an additional empirical account of the four long-waves that have occurred so far.<sup>1</sup>

This is far from easy though, for a number of reasons. Firstly, statistical data for the 19<sup>th</sup> century is widely regarded as limited in accuracy. According to the methodology used, in particular when using weighted indexes, widely varying results can be obtained for levels of economic growth. This is particularly so in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century where an additional problem is also encountered. This period often marks the changeover from an agrarian to an industrial economy for many nations. Given the considerably different productive capacities of agrarian and industrial economies, even a poorly performing industrial economy (in a downswing for instance) should outperform a prosperous agrarian economy (in an upswing) giving the anomalous result of a downswing outperforming an upswing.

In a similar vein, van Duijn considered the problem of identifying long-waves whilst national economies were also experiencing the differing rates of growth typical of the different stages of Rostow's stages of growth sequence, take-off periods supposedly recording faster growth than the maturity phase, also leading to possibly anomalous results. Ultimately, he considered that only the international level could be used to date long-waves, since this would eliminate national peculiarities.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, a problem is the way that much of the economic history data has been presented. Often it is compiled in such a way as to help resolve disputes within the literature of economic history. Much of the economic data for the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been presented to support positions within the debate centring around Rostow's stages and take-off theory, or in Britain on the 'standard of living' debate. In France it is used to compare development with other nations in order to explain France's apparently slow economic development. Much of this data is presented to establish linear data sets, often specifically eliminating cyclical effects and is thus of little use to long-wave research.

Thirdly, there is the usual problem of accounting for political bias, those favouring or opposing capitalism tending to emphasize the tendencies which best highlight their own position. As such, economic crises, for instance, maybe almost completely ignored or downplayed, or alternatively presented as widely present or typical. Whilst there are also more specific problems. The existence of wars in particular makes it difficult to assess economic trends in certain periods given the often hugely disruptive effect of hostile confrontations.

Notwithstanding these problems, this appendix will attempt to establish a set of dates defining each long-wave and which can be used as a basis for the chronological history of Chapter Two. To do so, it will mostly draw on the existing empirical literature and data within the field of economic history, though certain theoretical concepts within the field of long-wave economics will also be used.

### **B.1 First Long-Wave.**

Of the four long-waves, the first is the least well defined. The dates most commonly used by long-wave theorists for the entire first long-wave are 1789/93-1848. Those for the end of the upswing are more diverse. Most accounts use 1813/14 since prices rose before this date and fell in the period afterwards until 1848. Screpanti uses 1820 as this marks the end of a period of proletarian unrest in Britain,<sup>3</sup> whilst Mandel uses 1825 since he maintains the rate of profit in Britain fell from this point onwards until 1848.

Although price series for this early period show marked variations almost all agree that a strong surge in prices began around 1793 and lasted through to 1814. There then

followed a prolonged though erratic decline through to 1848.<sup>4</sup> However, recent theoretical work has shown that price movements are not entirely concomitant with changes in the long-wave,<sup>5</sup> and the price surge may have had little to do with the internal workings of the economy. The years 1793-1814 coincide closely with the years of the Napoleonic Wars. The period of inflation may simply be the result of commodity scarcities brought on by the war at a time of rising demand.

Elsewhere, the first long-wave upswing is associated with the technological innovations that drove the Industrial Revolution, namely those in the textile and iron industries, famously in the work of Schumpeter.<sup>6</sup> These innovations drove an entrepreneurial impulse that is usually seen as marking the beginnings of the industrial era and setting the British, and later world, economy on an industrial footing from which all subsequent developments followed. According to this schema, the initial impulse came to an end around 1815. The period that followed from 1815 to the 1840s has usually been seen as a period,

“characterized first of all by a steep and prolonged fall in prices...and by a fall in interest rates. The fall in prices weighed both on the profit margins of firms and on money wages, which fell notably. ( ) A second characteristic was the violence of short-term cyclical fluctuations, with very pronounced booms, as in 1818, 1825, 1836 and 1845, followed by violent slumps and long depression. These slumps and depressions often combined traditional aspects (i.e. high food prices due to bad harvests) with a modern look (i.e. over-production and unemployment). They plunged the working classes into utter penury and unleashed a wave of business bankruptcies.”<sup>7</sup>

In other words the economy in this period was suffering from wild fluctuations and a boom and bust economy, with declining prices and profits weighing heavily upon both industrial and agricultural sectors. However, the fact that the period also experienced periods of strong economic growth has led to revisionist accounts questioning the original gloomy picture of the 1815–1840s period. A number of accounts indicate that economic growth may have been stronger in the downswing period. Crafts et al. supplied figures for rates of growth of industrial production of 1.58% for 1790-1811 and 3.2% for 1811-31, although Cuenca Esterban using a different weighting index for the cotton industry supplied figures of 2.595% and 3.345% for the same periods.<sup>8</sup> Van Duijn gives growth

figures of 3.2% for 1782-1825 and 3.5% for 1825-45 and concluded there was little evidence for a first long-wave.<sup>9</sup>

After a review of the empirical data, Lloyd-Jones & Lewis commented that “What we can conclude from these various estimates is that the rate of growth during the Industrial Revolution is still an “open question”, and, rather than appealing to aggregate estimates of growth based on fragile empirical evidence, we might do better to develop “a deeper knowledge of what was happening in Britain during the industrial revolution”.”<sup>10</sup>

The early nature of industrial capitalism and the paucity of reliable economic data do make this period especially difficult to evaluate concisely, and much of the evaluation of this early period is based on description rather than empirical data. The business cycle itself was only just beginning to appear within the industrialising regions of Britain, and was far from being a national or international phenomenon. The timing of the business cycle often varied from region to region, and even from town to town. Thus the use of dates for trade-cycles is somewhat haphazard, though those from the most strongly industrialising regions -Lancashire, Yorkshire, West Midlands - are probably the most significant, given the close association of industry and the business cycle.

In Britain during the early period, despite the Napoleonic Wars, the general business climate appears to be good. In terms of business cycles, Gayer et al., identified a series of major and minor cycles between 1793 and 1826, with major troughs in 1793, 1803, 1811, 1819 and 1825, and peaks in 1802, 1810, 1818 and 1825.<sup>11</sup> However, the period between 1793 and 1803, is generally one of economic difficulties, notably between 1793 and 1797 with erratic performance until 1803. After 1803, the effect of harvests is played down with the fortunes of the textile industry increasingly important in defining the business cycles - thus 1803 appears to mark the beginning of the ‘industrial business cycle’.

The fact that the years up to 1818 and from 1820-25 are generally recognised as boom periods for the British economy also questions whether Britain was in a long-wave downswing at this point. Most historical accounts indicate that the British economy continued to boom from 1820-25, with high levels of employment, rising real wages, a booming stock market, low interest rates and much financial speculation – economic conditions more typical of a long-wave upswing.<sup>12</sup>

The early period was also marked by an upsurge in political and industrial action only ending with the Peterloo massacre of 1819 and the passing of the repressive Six Acts. Screpanti marks the end of the upswing as 1820, largely on the basis of the widespread industrial and political unrest that existed from around 1808 until 1820.<sup>13</sup> Even after this though, organised labour, according to labour history accounts enjoyed improving levels of union membership and organisation. In addition, Owen's brand of co-operativism flourished within the artisan and craft union movement, and the agitation for trade-union legalisation gained support and success in 1824, unleashing a wave of strikes. In fact this period appears to be a prosperous one for workers.

According to Flinn,<sup>14</sup> in an analysis of around a dozen price indexes for 1750-1850, prices revived after 1815/16 and again after 1820/22, falling sharply only in 1825. In an analysis of the movement in real wages, Flinn maintains that they just about keep up with price rises in the period up to 1813. From 1813-1825 overall prices declined by 65-80%, and whilst wages also fell, they fell far more slowly, leaving real wages at a level of 25-30% higher than prices (handloom weavers were an exception). From 1825 onwards, real wages either stagnated or rose only marginally. The period from 1813 to 1825 would, according to Flinn's figures, be a prosperous one for the working class.

However, Flinn makes no mention of unemployment other than that the rise in real wages must have been compensated for either by a rise in unemployment or in employers accepting a loss of profits. Feinstein, however, assumes unemployment rates of 5% from 1770 until 1815 and 8% from 1815-1848, and siding with the pessimists in the standard of living debate concludes that real wages progressed only very slowly over the entire period, although 1813/17 until 1833/37 showed a continuous improvement. This finding he believes corresponds with observations that for the working-classes the years from the mid-1820s through to the 1840s were particularly difficult with mortality rates increasing and nutritional standards declining.<sup>15</sup>

The early period ultimately ended with a financial crash and banking crisis in 1825, partly because much of the stock-market speculation had been unwise. Thus despite the underlying decline in profits for manufacturers, if it occurred, it would be difficult to describe the period up to 1825 as an economic downturn, as is the case with most long-wave theorists - Mandel being an exception. The economic and financial crisis in 1825 is

also seen as impacting negatively on Britain's trading partners, inducing recession in a number of countries.

The year 1825 was marked not only by a banking crisis and stock market crash, but also an employers' offensive in Britain, and some evidence for this occurring elsewhere. The employers' offensive would presumably result from the previous rise in real wages and a need to regain profitability. Labour history accounts regard unemployment and underemployment as rising significantly in the following period. The union and co-operative movement did eventually mount resistance to these attacks during the period of 1829-33/4, but the strike wave and general unionism, despite early progress, ended in crushing defeat. Recovery for the union movement only really occurred in the mid-1840s. This period coincides with an observation made by the Webbs that, "The period between 1825 and 1848 was remarkable for the frequency and acuteness of its commercial depressions", that is, "the serious declines of 1826, 1829, 1837, 1842 and 1848".<sup>16</sup>

According to Matthews,<sup>17</sup> the years 1826-33, despite two short-lived recoveries in 1827-8 and 1830-1 that failed to gain momentum, were generally poor years for the economy with recovery from the crisis of 1825/6 only really occurring in 1833. A boom followed in 1835/6, fuelled by lower interest rates but came to an abrupt end in 1837, a short-lived and shallow recovery followed but quickly gave way to what is often considered the worst depression of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in 1841-2. The following years did however, see a general improvement in the economy with the tentative rebuilding of the union movement, and the early development of New Model Unionism from around 1843 onwards. The economic recovery peaked in 1846, followed by the recession of 1848 which was comparatively mild and short-lived.

Elsewhere, economies were still overwhelmingly agrarian in nature. Empirical data is even less in evidence and less reliable than that in Britain, notably for the agrarian sector, and data that does exist tends to concentrate on the industrial sector which only accounted for a very small percentage of the economies of France, Germany and the USA. Overall growth rates were thus low and performance more a result of climatic variations than as a result of business cycles. France and Germany experienced economic crises in 1810/11, 1816-17, 1830-1 1839-40 and 1845-7 as a result of poor harvests.<sup>18</sup>

However, a number of trends have been noted. Evidence in the early period is sketchy, though there is a general consensus that both the French and German economies improved under Napoleon despite the crisis at the end of his reign. From here the trend appears to be downwards. Crouzet showed growth to be above trend in France though declining until 1825. Industrial production declined and then stagnated during the 1820s, rising only from 1830 onwards, slowly at first and then rapidly from 1840. Growth remained well below trend from 1825 to the mid-1840s, but was rising sharply from around 1840, though the events of 1847-50 induced a sharp deterioration.<sup>19</sup> Although growth resumed from the 1830s, Price considers the years of the July Monarchy (1830-48) to be particularly difficult ones, ten of these years being beset by crisis. Crises of overproduction occurred in 1825-6, 1828-32, and 1846-7 with a commercial crisis in 1837-42 added to the agricultural crises mentioned above. Many of these crises resulted from events in Britain.<sup>20</sup> The German economy had also recovered from the slowdown after 1815 by 1830; industry grew in the 1830s, but more rapidly in the 1840s until the poor harvests of 1846-7 and the revolutionary period that followed.<sup>21</sup>

In the USA there is a general consensus that the economy improved until Jefferson's trade embargo in 1807, though growth remained largely above trend through to 1818.<sup>22</sup> The picture is less clear afterwards, David maintains growth accelerated at 1.96% per capita from the mid-1820s through to the mid-1830s, though Weiss has downgraded this to 1.2%, and at 1.6% per capita through to the mid-1840s.<sup>23</sup> Growth was below trend for the 1820s but positive for the mid-1830s boom through to the panic of 1837, performance was then erratic until the latter half of the 1840s.<sup>24</sup>

Thus in terms of dating the upswing/downswing transition, no dates are entirely satisfactory. No country shows clear economic trends in accordance with long-wave theory, and van Duijn rejected the idea of a first long-wave, starting his long-wave sequence in the 1840s.<sup>25</sup> Most economies show the typically slow growth of agrarian societies and variations marked by poor harvests. In the USA, the economic climate is generally good until 1819, depressed in the 1820s, booming between 1830 and 1837 and depressed or erratic until the mid-1840s. In France and Germany, the economy is

improving through to the late 1810s, generally poor in the 1820s and although growing in the 1830s and 1840s, prone to crisis.

In Britain the entire period is one of a boom and bust economy, possibly with the strongest period of growth coming after 1819. In the early period major dips in the business cycle appeared in 1811 and 1819 and the economy expanded strongly through to 1825. This period saw shorter depressions and apparently lower levels of unemployment. In general this period was less prone to crisis. From 1825 onwards the economy experienced a series of severe depressions with troughs appearing in 1825/7, 1831/32, 1837/42. With the exception of the boom of the mid-1830s the period from 1825-42 is one of recurrent crisis. Prices are also falling and the working class experiencing high levels of difficulty. Recovery appears to have occurred after the deep depression of 1842, with the recession of 1848 being relatively mild in nature. In addition, the price trend was falling, damaging profitability and forcing wages down. Of the dates usually used by long-wave researchers 1825 appears the best, but is still problematic.

Given the close link between long-waves, the business cycle and the modern industrial economy and the fact that Britain was the only industrialising economy at this point, it seems appropriate to define the dates of the first long-wave by using the British economy. The dates for the first long-wave upswing are 1803-1825. Industrial business cycles for the early period would appear to be 1803-1811, 1812-1819 and 1820-25. The dates for the first long-wave downswing are thus 1825-1848. Appropriate dates for the business cycles seem to be 1826-32, 1833-1842 and 1843-48, the latter being the recovery period.<sup>26</sup> This accords with Schumpeter's schema of both the upswing and downswing consisting of three business cycles each.<sup>27</sup>

It is doubtful whether any endogenous long-wave trend can be observed elsewhere. The appearance of any long-wave trend in other, still agriculturally-based economies, would probably be a result of Britain's pre-eminent trading position - with booms and depressions being exported through the rise and fall of trade and capital flows, but also existing alongside the rhythms of good and bad harvests. Thus, if long-wave economics appear to be occurring in other economies, this seems to be primarily a result of the long-wave becoming established in Britain.<sup>28</sup>



## **B.2 Second Long-Wave**

The dates usually given for the second long-wave seem to be almost universally accepted amongst long-wave researchers.<sup>29</sup> The date for the start of the second long-wave upswing is usually put around 1848, whilst the end is around 1872/75. The end of the downswing is usually given as 1893/96. Traditionally the two periods have been known as the mid-Victorian boom (1848-73) and the Great Depression (1873-96), although both concepts have been challenged in revisionist accounts.

Hobsbawm has also given the earlier period the name the 'Age of Capital' (1848-1875). For Hobsbawm, "the extraordinary economic transformation and expansion of the years between 1848 and the early 1870s.....was the period when the world became capitalist and a significant minority of 'developed' countries became industrial economies".<sup>30</sup> Most long-wave researchers recognise this period to be one of strong economic growth, generally rising prices and wages, low unemployment and general prosperity. Industrialisation during this period spread to much of Western Europe and parts of North America. Van Duijn shows world industrial production peaking in the years 1850-56 and 1866-72.<sup>31</sup> Dips in the business cycle came in 1857/8 and 1866/7,<sup>32</sup> were felt throughout the industrialised world, but both were relatively mild, short-lived and had only a limited impact on employment and growth levels.<sup>33</sup> In particular, the years 1850-56 and 1867-73 were periods of very rapid growth and economic boom.

In Britain, Kindleberger described growth as very rapid from 1851-66, recession in 1867 and boom until 1873.<sup>34</sup> This picture has been challenged however, largely on the basis that the period may not constitute a coherent period. Most of the growth it is claimed came in the 1850s and after 1866, the period in between being fairly average in nature, though Mitchell shows steady economic growth in the years 1859-1866 inclusive.<sup>35</sup> This in itself would not refute the idea that the period constitutes a long-wave upswing and after a review of the economic literature on this period Lloyd-Jones & Lewis concluded that there was sufficient empirical evidence to consider this period as a long-wave upswing.<sup>36</sup>

In France, Crouzet identified the period from 1840-1860 as showing the strongest period of growth in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the economy slowing after 1860 and

eventually stagnating after 1882.<sup>37</sup> However, his work also showed that despite a slowdown in growth after 1860, growth remained above trend for most of the period through to 1876, apart from a sharp dip during the Franco-Prussian war. Thus growth remained largely buoyant even during a slowing of pace. In Germany the period is generally recognised as one of strong growth and an expanding economy to the point that Rostow used the years 1850-73 as those of the take-off period.<sup>38</sup>

The American economy does, however, appear to be something of an exception. Growth was strong until the panic of 1857, and although recovering, both growth and business activity were severely diminished during the period of the civil war. Although the economy accelerated and business activity improved from the mid-1860s onwards, growth remained below trend and it was not until around 1870 that the USA once again enjoyed a boom economy, though van Duijn shows industrial production peaking in the period 1864-73.<sup>39</sup> This economic boom was enjoyed elsewhere, notably in Britain and Germany, though France suffering the consequences of the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune only partially benefited.

The period from 1866-1873/4 - the third business cycle of the upswing - was marked by a period of prolonged and intense worker unrest across all industrialising countries, notably after 1869. Coinciding with the First International and the Paris Commune of 1871, a militant strike wave struck both the core and periphery regions of the industrialised world.<sup>40</sup> In general the strikes were successful in raising wages, improving working conditions and in reducing the length of the working day. The strike wave came to a halt shortly after the financial and banking crisis of 1873. This crisis began in Austria, but spread rapidly to Germany and USA in particular and saw widespread bankruptcy and rising levels of unemployment follow. Although its effects soon entered the British and French economies, the slowdown here was less dramatic. Thus 1873 is usually considered to mark the end of the second long-wave upswing.

The dates usually used for the second long-wave downswing are those of the Great Depression - 1873-1896<sup>41</sup> - a period of generally falling prices, falling profits, periods of very high unemployment and general economic malaise, all of which followed the financial crash of 1873. Economic growth slowed and Thomson considers the worst years

in Europe to have been 1873-9, 1882-6 and 1892-6.<sup>42</sup> Van Duijn showed world industrial production reaching a trough in the years 1872-1883.<sup>43</sup> However, the severity varied from country to country, and the period, despite its name, was not one of unrelenting depression, at least not economically speaking.

For the USA and Germany, 1873-9 were probably the worst years, as both economies suffered from prolonged depression, falling prices and persistently high unemployment. Van Duijn shows industrial production reaching a trough in Germany in the years 1872-82, though in the USA, in the years 1882-95.<sup>44</sup> Kitchen attributed the longevity of the depression in Germany in the 1870s due to the initial difficulties of employers to break the power of organised labour, reduce costs and thus launch a recovery. An increase in protectionism after 1878 was the chosen method for reviving the economy.<sup>45</sup>

Both countries saw economic revivals from around 1880 onwards. In Germany the revival was short-lived, prompting calls from certain quarters for an imperialist expansion as a means of reviving the economy.<sup>46</sup> The economy did boom for a short period in the mid-1880s but fell back into recession. In the USA, the recovery was particularly strong and this period marked the switch from an agrarian to a mainly industrial economy. Depression returned from 1884 onwards however, and although the economy grew once more, apart from a short-lived revival in the early 1890s, growth remained below trend until around 1898.<sup>47</sup>

In Britain the downswing was less evident initially, though export performance deteriorated as trading partners went into depression. The worst years came from 1878/9 onwards, years that saw a widespread employers offensive to break the power of the unions and unemployment rising to over 10%. Recovery followed though another recession in the years 1884-87 saw unemployment rise over 10% once more.<sup>48</sup> Industrial production reached a trough in the years 1883-90.<sup>49</sup>

In France, the period from 1873-1897 has been described as one of persistent economic stagnation, though certain periods were worse than others.<sup>50</sup> According to Crouzet, stagnation was predominant between 1882 and 1896, whilst growth was below trend in almost the entire period between 1876 and 1896 apart from brief spells in the early 1880s and early 1890s.<sup>51</sup> After the crash of 1873 whilst economic malaise was less

severe in France initially, it did see the launch of the Freycinet plan to stimulate the economy through public infrastructure projects and railway construction.<sup>52</sup> However, the plan had the effect of sucking in imports and damaging exports. In 1882, when the plan was abandoned, economic depression followed until 1886 together with a general trend towards protectionism which culminated in the Méline tariff of 1892.<sup>53</sup>

The rise of the third cycle from around 1888 onwards marked the 'recovery period' - the period marked by a mini-boom that gave rise to the so-called New Unionism in Britain and trade-union revivals came in all countries between 1888-92, falling back in the more depressed times of 1893-6. The USA - whose economy still had a large agricultural sector - probably experienced its sharpest depression of the period in 1893 - following a series of bad harvests at the same time as a downturn in the business cycle. From 1896 onwards, prices began to rise and the European economies showed an immediate and continued improvement in economic growth. This was also the case in the USA though unemployment was somewhat slower in falling from a high level of 18.4% in 1894 to single figures after 1898.<sup>54</sup> The business cycle was highly volatile with relatively severe peaks in unemployment interspersed with periods of economic revival.<sup>55</sup> Moving from trough to trough, the business cycles appear to be 1873-79/80, 1880-84/5, and 1884/5-1895/6 - the troughs being 1873, 1879, 1884-5 and 1893.<sup>56</sup>

One 'side-effect' of the Great Depression, however, was the boost given to economies on the periphery of the world economy - notably those of Sweden, Russia, Argentina and Brazil, but also elsewhere. The failure to raise profitability within the industrialised world led to investors pouring money into periphery economies during the 1880s - a trend that led them to be temporarily counter-cyclical. Investment schemes ran into financial difficulties in the 1890s, however, leading to a series of financial crises, notably in Argentina and Brazil.<sup>57</sup>

### **B.3 Third Long-Wave**

Dates given by long-wave researchers for the third long-wave are probably the most divergent.<sup>58</sup> The third long-wave upswing is usually maintained to have begun between 1893/8, most usually 1896. However, the end date is more controversial - usually given

as either 1913/14 or 1920. Kondratieff originally used 1920 as this marked the peak in the price rise that had started in 1896. From 1920 through to the 1930s the trend was downward. The former figure is often used because of the outbreak of WW1 or because most economic historians use 1913 as the end of the long 19<sup>th</sup> century; data sets being presented using this as a dividing year. In other cases the use of 1913/14 maybe more political in nature. Mandel does so, his grounds for doing so appear to be guided by Marxist theory - the desire to place the Russian Revolution and the following revolutionary episodes within a period of economic crisis. The presence of the First World War (1914-18) clearly confuses the picture, with many researchers using the date's 1914/20 as a compromise.

The presence of conflict makes 1914 the date that marks the end of the long 19<sup>th</sup> century but this is used more for political rather than economic reasons. The conflict did however cause widespread destruction within continental Europe leading to absolute declines in industrial output and poor economic figures in certain countries. Figures supplied by Maddison indicate that it was those countries closest to the theatre of conflict that suffered most, notably France, Germany, Denmark and Finland. Elsewhere, those further from the conflict such as Britain, the USA, Italy, Canada, Norway and Japan continued to experience growth, often rapidly.<sup>59</sup> Maddison also indicated that poor figures for 1914 and 1919 probably resulted from the difficulties of switching to and away from war production. The period through to 1920 was still marked by low unemployment, however, averaging 1.65% in the UK, 3.2% in Germany and 4.8 % in the USA during the years 1914-20 inclusive.<sup>60</sup> The war economies ran on maximum production and most countries experienced a post-war boom in either 1919 or 1920, though collectively Maddison gives low growth figures for 1919-1921.<sup>61</sup> Prices rose dramatically after the war whilst demand was strong. Most countries experienced a concerted period of intense worker mobilisation and a marked pay explosion.

It is thus not surprising that many long-wave researchers have used 1914/20 as a compromise. The economic indicators for the period 1914-20 are mixed. However, the negative factors are clearly a result of an exogenous force, WW1, and away from the conflict many economies continued to boom and unemployment remained very low throughout the period. In addition, following Schumpeter's theoretical model of three

business cycles per upswing and with worker mobilisation and prices peaking around 1920, there appears to be a good, though not entirely satisfactory, case for including the years 1914-20 within the economic expansion of the third long-wave upswing.

The year 1896 saw a rapid turnaround in the fortunes of the world economy.<sup>62</sup> World industrial production rose from the trough of 2.7% in the early years of the Great Depression to average over 4% during 1892-1913.<sup>63</sup> Economic growth until 1913 averaged 3.24% amongst industrialised economies compared with 2.36% in the years 1873-1896 (see Table 2). France, Germany and the USA are all considered to have enjoyed strongly expanding economies in the period through to 1913, though Lloyd-Jones & Lewis consider Britain to have largely missed out on this expansion, with the exception of the financial sector and the export economy.<sup>64</sup> This period not only witnessed a prolonged economic expansion, but also saw the industrial world expand in geographic scope. A number of countries that had commenced industrialisation in the late 1880s - Russia, Sweden, Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Australia were joined by others such as Spain, Italy and Canada. Together with the core economies, those countries untouched by war hostilities experienced a prolonged period of economic expansion until 1914/20.

In general, unemployment remained low in the period up to 1920 (see Table 1) when employment levels fell sharply, unemployment reaching 11.3% in the UK and 11.7% in the USA in 1921, the highest levels since the 1880s/early 1890s. The periods of recession were relatively mild, without unemployment levels reaching the peaks it had in the Great Depression, figures rarely reaching 7 or 8% in Britain, Germany or the USA even in the worst years.<sup>65</sup>

The years 1896-1920 also witnessed a general rise in prices, which peaked sharply in the years 1915-20, notably after 1918. The latter is often attributed to the end of WW1,<sup>66</sup> but the period also coincided with an intense wave of worker militancy, strike waves, insurrectionary general strikes and attempted revolutions. The period of worker militancy varied from country to country, but began around 1910 and though it slackened during the early years of WW1, it renewed from 1917 onwards, reaching a crescendo in the years 1918-1920.<sup>67</sup> It is more likely that the price inflation of the post-war years resulted

from the rapidly rising wages, shorter hours and improved work conditions achieved by organized labour during this period.<sup>68</sup>

The pattern of the business cycle varies somewhat from country to country, and in particular is confused by the financial crisis of 1906 in USA. According to Schumpeter, depression came in the business cycle in 1903/04 with a second appearing in 1914 but which was cut short by WW1. He considers the years 1907-08 to be an 'intermezzo' caused by the financial panic of 1906, a panic that resulted from the faulty functioning of the financial system and that bore no relation to the actual economic situation. In Britain troughs came in 1903/04, 1908/09 and 1913,<sup>69</sup> though the second of these appears to have been induced by the downturn in USA. For the world economy downturns came in 1902/04, 1908, 1914, and 1919-21.

The most appropriate date for the end of the third long-wave downswing would appear to be 1920, rather than 1914, and endogenous economic problems quickly developed during this and the following year. All economies experienced a sharp depression in the early 1920s, for some the first since the period of the Great Depression. Unemployment levels peaked sharply in Britain and the USA in 1921. The years that followed were marked by economic and financial instability, very high unemployment, falling prices, though also a period of hyperinflation in Germany,<sup>70</sup> and slow economic growth notably in Europe, Japan and Latin America.<sup>71</sup> In Germany unemployment reached 13.5% in 1924 and 18% in 1926, whilst it averaged over 7% in the UK in the 1920s,<sup>72</sup> the high levels, according to Broadberry & Ritschl, being a result of real wages outstripping productivity growth.<sup>73</sup>

Recovery followed between 1924-9, notably in USA, France and Scandinavia, though very poorly in Britain, USSR, Italy and Japan, but everywhere the recovery eventually proved unsustainable. In France, although growth expanded strongly from 1924 onwards, financial instability was not removed until 1926, following the implementation of the Dawes plan of war reparations. Germany's recovery was largely financed through borrowing from American banks – a result of the large capital outflows during WW1, whilst French recovery was based on war reparations paid by Germany. In the USA, recovery was initiated through tax cuts and lowering interest rates, though much of the

extra money was used for financial speculation rather than more sound investment. The bubble economy ended with the Wall Street Crash of 1929. 'The Slump' of 1929-34, not only devastated the US economy, its effects were felt throughout the rest of the world economy.

In terms of industrial production the 1930s were the worst peacetime decade on record with world industrial production reaching a trough of 1.6% between 1929-37.<sup>74</sup> In general, those countries that had suffered the least in the 1920s suffered the most in the 1930s. France remained mired in depression between 1932-38 whilst unemployment averaged 18% between 1931-41 in the USA.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere unemployment remained in double figures almost everywhere until the outbreak of WW2, though in Germany only until 1936. In Britain, USSR, Germany and Japan economic performance was somewhat better than elsewhere, though recovery was relative rather than absolute. The introduction of managed economies throughout most of the developed world in the 1930s, allowed governments to engineer a 'recovery' through price rises and increased demand.<sup>76</sup> The generally hitherto straightforward correlation between prices and long-waves was thus broken.

The dates given for the end of the third downswing are usually 1940 or 1948. The different dates are usually a result of researchers viewing the differing experience of the European and North American economies during the Second World War (1939-1945). Whilst WW2 clearly gave a concerted boost to the USA economy around 1941/3, the military devastation of the war badly damaged the European and Japanese economies, with the result that their economies were not able to expand until after the conflict, usually from 1948 onwards. As a result some researchers have used 1945 as a compromise, also, conveniently, the end of WW2.

However, in the light of long-wave theory and the tentative nature of the economic recovery from the dip of 1937/8 until the outbreak of war, the period from 1938 until 1948 is better seen as the 'recovery phase' of the downswing. Despite this recovery phase being strengthened in USA by war production, the US economy fell sharply from 1945-7, largely a result of shifting to a peacetime economy and trend growth fell back sharply during 1945-50.<sup>77</sup> Given the international nature of long-waves and taking the world



economy as a whole, prosperity and the long post-war economic boom did not really begin to occur until 1948 onwards.<sup>78</sup>

The dips in the third long-wave downswing are those of 1919/21, 1930-34, 1937/8 and 1945-47.<sup>79</sup> The first two were particularly protracted, the second being by far the worst, witnessed slow recoveries, saw very high levels of unemployment - a key feature of the whole period - and low levels of economic activity, and slow economic growth. Above all, the period between 1920 and 1948 is marked by economic instability and high levels of unemployment and these appear to be the best dates for the third long-wave downswing.

#### **B.4 Fourth Long-Wave**

The fourth long-wave upswing is commonly known as the *post-war boom* or *Golden Age of Capitalism*.<sup>80</sup> Hobsbawm describes the years from 1945-1973 as the 'Golden Years', to be followed by 'The Landslide' after 1973. Most long-wave researchers agree that the long post-war boom of 1940/8 to 1970/3 marks the fourth long-wave upswing, though the price peak of 1979/80 has led some to use a later date.<sup>81</sup> The period was marked by sustained economic growth across the international economy, increased industrial production and gradually rising international trade; rapidly from the late 1960s onwards, van Duijn shows world industrial production peaking at 5.9% between 1948-66. Employment and growth rates remained high throughout the entire period (see Tables 1 & 2), whilst interest rates and inflation rose slowly until the late 1960s when they rose more rapidly.

To some extent the correlation of three business cycles per upswing broke down during the fourth upswing. At the time there was much speculation that the use of Keynesian demand management techniques and other features of social democracy had eliminated the business cycle from the capitalist economy. Dips in world economic growth came in 1954 and 1958, but with no real slowdown until 1970-1 though even here growth averaged 3.7%. The world economy finally fell badly in the years 1974-5, averaging - 0.45% growth.<sup>82</sup>

The period ended with a wave of worker militancy that most long-wave researchers date from 1968 until 1974.<sup>83</sup> Although anti-capitalist tendencies occurred within the new industrial militancy, much of the strike activity was aimed at improving working conditions and raising wages. The latter were certainly successful, major economies seeing sharp increases in real wages.<sup>84</sup>

Most long-wave researchers use 1973 as the beginning of the fourth downswing. The end of the post-war boom was perhaps triggered by the oil crisis of 1973, and compounded by the collapse of the Bretton-Woods system, but others have considered that it was the wage-push of the previous years that constituted the greater problem.<sup>85</sup> However, in contrast to previous upswing-downswing transitions, the situation in 1973 was somewhat different to before, with prices rising rather than falling at the beginning of a downswing. Attempts were made to pass on wage rises in the guise of price increases. When unemployment started to rise with the dip in the business cycle and the oil crisis in 1973, the result was stagflation, a period of rising unemployment, rising inflation and declining economic growth which characterised much of the 1970s.

Exacerbated by the collapse of the Bretton-Woods scheme, massive rises in the price of oil and a prolonged decline in the early 1970s of the stock-markets, the world economy entered the prolonged economic crisis of the fourth long-wave downswing. Since the decline of the world economy in 1973, economic growth has been markedly lower than during the previous 25 years (see Table 2). Although economies recovered somewhat in the mid-1970s, the worst of the downswing came with the depression of 1980-3 - unemployment levels reaching their highest levels since the 1930s. Unemployment remained high throughout the 1980s, (7% in the USA, 9% in the UK, 8.2% in Germany and 9.3% in France) despite a boom fuelled by low interest rates in the latter part of the decade. With a further recession from 1990-3, the period, in economic terms, was probably the worst since the 1930s.

The only region of the world economy to, temporarily, buck this trend was the peripheral economies of Southeast Asia. Boosted by foreign investment, these economies were able to grow counter-cyclically, in much the same way as the economic periphery did during the second long-wave downswing of 1873-1896. However, these economies

eventually met the same fate as those of Argentina and Brazil in the 1890s, when they entered the economic and financial crises of 1997/98.

Dates for the end of the fourth long-wave downswing have not, in general, been forthcoming, from long-wave theorists, sometimes for theoretical reasons. Mandel, calling the period from 1948 onwards 'Late Capitalism' <sup>86</sup> and, believing that long-wave upswings are exogenously-inspired and a non-cyclical phenomena, clearly believed that this downswing represents the death throes of international capitalism, and thus there will be no following upswing. <sup>87</sup>

Hobsbawm believes that the downswing probably came to an end in the mid-1990s and suggested that the economic crisis of 1997-8 might mark the end point. <sup>88</sup> This would be borne out by using the guide of three business cycles per downswing, the fourth long-wave downswing has had downturns in 1974-5, 1980-82, 1990-92 and 1998. Thus the fifth long-wave upswing should appear from around the year 1999 onwards. Such a prediction is concomitant with the idea that the third business cycle of the long-wave downswing is a recovery period. Many of the major economic problems of the fourth long-wave downswing - inflation, unemployment, high interest rates, - appear to have receded during the period of 1992-1998, notably in North America and parts of Western Europe. <sup>89</sup> This then appears to be the 'recovery phase' of the fourth long-wave downswing - the fifth long-wave, thus being due to start very late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus the dates that appear most suitable for the four long-waves that have so far occurred are and that will be used throughout this thesis are:

| Long-Wave | Upswing   | Downswing | (Recovery)  |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| First     | 1803-1825 | 1825-1848 | (1843-1848) |
| Second    | 1848-1873 | 1873-1896 | (1888-1896) |
| Third     | 1896-1920 | 1920-1948 | (1938-1948) |
| Fourth    | 1948-1973 | 1973-1998 | (1992-1998) |

**Table 1. Unemployment rates (%) 1855-1998**

|           | Britain | France | Germany | USA  |
|-----------|---------|--------|---------|------|
| 1855-1873 | 3.6     | n.a.   | n.a.    | n.a. |
| 1874-1895 | 5.3     | n.a.   | n.a.    | n.a. |
| 1896-1920 | 3.37    | n.a.   | 2.43    | 5.9  |
| 1921-1948 | 7       | n.a.   | 12.16   | 9.6  |
| 1949-1973 | 2       | 1.6    | 3.36    | 4.8  |
| 1974-1998 | 7.36    | 9.53   | 7.6     | 6.67 |

Source: 1855-1993, B.R. Mitchell (1998, 1998); 1994-1998, Datastream.

**Table 2. Economic Growth rates (%) 1840-1998**

|                   | Europe    |                |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
|                   | Total GNP | per capita GNP |
| 1842/44 – 1867/69 | 2         | 1.2            |
| 1867/69 – 1889/91 | 1         | 0              |
| 1889/91 – 1913    | 2.4       | 1.5            |
| 1913 - 1950       | 0.57      | 0              |
| 1950 – 1973       | 4.5       | n.a.           |

Source: Bairoch (1976) (1913-1950 excludes USSR).

|             | Per capita national product (% change) |        |         |     |
|-------------|----------------------------------------|--------|---------|-----|
|             | USA                                    | France | Germany | UK  |
| 1840 – 1860 | 1.5                                    | 1.1    | 1.4     | 1.7 |
| 1860 – 1875 | 1                                      | 1.1    | 2.1     | 1.5 |
| 1875 – 1890 | 2.4                                    | 0.5    | 0.8     | 0.8 |
| 1890 –      | 1.9                                    | 1.2    | 1.6     |     |

Figures for 1920-1939 and 1946-48.

Figures for West Germany.

Figures for West Germany until 1990.

Figures are for 1859-79.

| Year to year Percentage Change in Aggregate GDP<br>of 16 Advanced Capitalist Countries. <sup>5</sup> |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1873-1896                                                                                            | 2.36  |
| 1897-1913                                                                                            | 3.24  |
| (1914-1920                                                                                           | 0.54) |
| 1921-1947                                                                                            | 2.36  |
| 1948-1973                                                                                            | 4.73  |
| 1974-1989                                                                                            | 2.76  |

Source. Maddison (1991)

| Annual average compound growth rates |      |        |         |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------|---------|------|
|                                      | USA  | France | Germany | UK   |
| 1913-1950                            | 2.84 | 1.15   | 1.06    | 1.19 |
| 1950-1973                            | 3.92 | 5.02   | 5.99    | 2.96 |
| 1973-1992                            | 2.39 | 2.26   | 2.3     | 1.59 |

Source: Maddison (1995).

| Gross Domestic Product (% change) |      |        |         |      |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------|---------|------|
|                                   | USA  | France | Germany | UK   |
| 1950-1973                         | 3.97 | 5.24   | 7.33    | 3    |
| 1974-1998                         | 2.62 | 2.2    | 1.87    | 1.95 |

Source: 1950-73 The Economist (1982); 1974-1998 OECD (1992), United Nations (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan after 1885, Netherlands after 1900, Norway, Switzerland after 1899, United Kingdom, USA.

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<sup>1</sup> Existing empirical literature includes: **M.N. Cleary & G.D. Hobbs**, *The Fifty Year Cycle: A Look at the Empirical Evidence*, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983. The authors find strong empirical evidence for the existence of long-waves in price series, long-term interest rates, world energy production and technological innovation. **H.H. Glismann, H. Rodemer, & F. Wolter**, *Long Waves in Economic Development: Causes and empirical evidence*, in **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983. The authors found empirical evidence for the existence of long waves in fluctuations in the development of national product, investment, and employment. **E. Mandel**, *Late Capitalism*, NLB, 1975, the author found empirical evidence for the existence of long-waves in fluctuations in growth of industrial output, volume of world trade, and long-term rate of interest.

<sup>2</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Screpanti considered that each long-wave came to an end because of a period of widespread and generalised militant industrial unrest, which was responsible for the following economic downturn. **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548.

<sup>4</sup> **M.W. Flinn**, 'Trends in Real Wages, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 27/3 August 1974, pp.395-411.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance; **E. Mandel**, *Late Capitalism*, NLB, 1975; **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998; **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983; **C. Freeman**, (ed) *Long Waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> **J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles*, Volume I, McGraw-Hill, 1939.

<sup>7</sup> **F. Crouzet**, *The Victorian Economy*, Methuen & Co. 1982. Crouzet then goes on to challenge this description.

<sup>8</sup> Figures cited in **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998, p.20.

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<sup>11</sup> **A.D. Gayer et al.**, *The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy 1790-1850* Volume II, Clarendon Press, 1953, pp.531-550.

<sup>12</sup> For example, **E.P. Thompson**, *The Making of the English Working-Class*, Penguin 1968; **R.K. Webb**, *Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present*, George Allen & Unwin, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124.

<sup>14</sup> **M.W. Flinn**, 'Trends in Real Wages, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 27/3 August 1974, pp.395-411.

<sup>15</sup> **C.H. Feinstein**, 'Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain during and after the Industrial Revolution' *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 58 No.3 Sept. 1998 pp.625-658.

<sup>16</sup> **S. & B. Webb**, *The History of Trade Unionism*, (2nd. Edition), Longmans Green & Co. 1920, p.180.

<sup>17</sup> **R.C.O. Matthews**, *A Study in Trade-Cycle History: Economic Fluctuations in Great Britain 1833 -1842*, Cambridge University Press, 1954, pp.202-224.

<sup>18</sup> **C.M. Cipolla**, *The Fontana Economic History of Europe: The Emergence of Industrial Societies Part One*, Collins/Fontana, 1973; **J. Bouvier**, *Le Mouvement de profit en France au XIX siècle*, Mouton & Co., 1965; **J-P. Daviet**, *Nouvelle histoire économique de la France contemporaine: L'économie préindustrielle 1750-1840*, Editions La Découverte, 1993; **C. Heywood**, *The Development of the French Economy 1750-1914*, Macmillan, 1992; **B.W. Poulson**, *Economic History of the United States*, Macmillan, 1981; **G.M. Walton & R.M. Robertson**, *History of the American Economy* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition), HBJ, 1983; **G.M. Walton & H.Rockoff**, *History of the American Economy*, HBJ, 1990.

<sup>19</sup> **F. Crouzet**, 'Un indice de la production industrielle française au XIX siècle.' *Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations*, 1970, No. 1 pp.56-99; also **M. Lévy-Leboyer**, 'Croissance économique en France au XIX siècle' *Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations*, 1968, No. 4 pp.788-807.

<sup>20</sup> **R. Price**, *An Economic History of Modern France 1730-1914*, Macmillan, 1981.

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<sup>21</sup> **P. Mathias & M.M. Postan**, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe Volume VII*, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> **J. Atack & P. Pasell**, *A New View of American History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Norton & Co. 1994.

<sup>23</sup> **T. Weiss**, 'Economic Growth Before 1860: Revised Conjectures' in **T. Weiss & D. Schafer** (Eds.) *American Economic Development in Historical Perspective*, Stanford University Press, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> **J. Atack & P. Pasell**, *A New View of American History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Norton & Co. 1994.

<sup>25</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Schumpeter arrived at the position that long-waves could, in certain respects, be seen as long-term business cycles. As such, they contained a periodisation of prosperity-recession-depression-recovery, with the recovery period coming late in the long-wave downswing. **J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles*, Volume I, McGraw-Hill, 1939. This schema was also followed by van Duijn, though the dates used for his recovery periods were not always identical to those of Schumpeter, **J.J. van Duijn**, 'Fluctuations in innovations over time', in **C. Freeman**, *Long-waves in the World Economy*, Butterworths, 1983.

<sup>27</sup> Schumpeter maintained that each long-wave consisted of six short-term business cycles, three in each of the two phases. Presumably this helps to give a degree of temporal regularity and structure to long-waves. His dates for the First Kondratieff of 1786-1842 are; 1787-1793, (depression in 1794), 1795-1805, 1805-1814, 1814-1823, 1823-1833 and 1833-42; **J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles*, Volume I, McGraw-Hill, 1939, pp.220-302. Most long-wave researchers have, however, used 1848 as an ending date for the first long-wave, and as such a different set of business cycle dates would be necessary.

<sup>28</sup> A possible alternative explanation is that an 'agrarian long-wave' was in existence and coincided with the industrial long-wave being established in Britain.

<sup>29</sup> Goldstein, averaging data from 33 long-wave theorists arrives at the dates 1848-1872 for the upswing and 1872 to 1893 for the downswing. **J. Goldstein**, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, Yale University Press, 1988, p.67. Schumpeter



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used 1843 as his starting date in order to fit the period of railway building in the 1840s into his schema, but his use of this date has not been widely followed.

<sup>30</sup> **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Abacus, 1975, p.43.

<sup>31</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>32</sup> **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Abacus, 1975, pp.46-47, Hobsbawm considers the trough of 1856/7 to be the first truly international economic slump, p.85; **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998, p.66. The authors consider the years 1857 and 1866 to be one of financial crisis and economic stress within the British economy.

<sup>33</sup> **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Abacus, 1975, pp.46-47.

<sup>34</sup> **C.P. Kindleberger**, *Economic Growth in France and Britain 1851-1950*, Harvard University Press, 1964.

<sup>35</sup> **B.R. Mitchell**, *British Historical Statistics*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

<sup>36</sup> **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998.

<sup>37</sup> **F. Crouzet**, 'Un indice de la production industrielle française au XIX siècle.' *Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations*, 1970, No. 1 pp.56-99.

<sup>38</sup> **W.W. Rostow**, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-Communist Manifesto* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Cambridge University Press, 1990.

<sup>39</sup> **J. Atack & P. Pasell**, *A New View of American History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Norton & Co. 1994; **A.W. Niemi Jr.**, *U.S. Economic History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Rand McNally, 1980; **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>40</sup> **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, Abacus, 1975, pp.138-141. Kelly and Screpanti date the strike wave from 1869-1875, **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, p.89. **E. Screpanti**, Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. Cronin dates the crucial strike wave to 1871-1873, **J. Cronin**, Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (Eds.) *Processes of the World-System*,

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pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979

<sup>41</sup> The fact that industrial production continued to expand, often rapidly, throughout this period has led to revisionist accounts amongst historians claiming that the Great Depression is little more than an illusion. For a detailed and convincing refutation of this claim, see **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1987, pp.34-46.

<sup>42</sup> **D. Thomson**, *Europe Since Napoleon*, Penguin, 1966, p.390.

<sup>43</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>44</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>45</sup> **M. Kitchen**, *The Political Economy of Germany 1815-1914*, Croom Helm, 1978.

<sup>46</sup> **M. Kitchen**, *The Political Economy of Germany 1815-1914*, Croom Helm, 1978.

<sup>47</sup> **J. Atack & P. Pasell**, *A New View of American History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Norton & Co. 1994.

<sup>48</sup> **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998.

<sup>49</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>50</sup> **Y. Breton, A. Broder, & M.Lutfalla**, *La Longue Stagnation en France: L'Autre Grande Dépression 1873-1897*, Economica, 1997; **M. Levy-Leboyer**, *La Décélération de L'Economie Française dans la second moitié du XIXe siècle*, *Revue D'Histoire Economique et Sociale* 49 pp.485-507, 1971.

<sup>51</sup> **F. Crouzet**, 'Un indice de la production industrielle française au XIX siècle.' *Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations*, 1970, No. 1 pp.56-99.

<sup>52</sup> **Y. Gonjo**, Le "Plan Freycinet", 1878-1882: un aspect de la 'grande dépression' économique en France. *Revue Historique*, 248, July-Dec 1972.

<sup>53</sup> **J.-J. Carré, P. Dubois & E. Malinvaud**, *French Economic Growth*, Stanford University Press, 1975.

<sup>54</sup> **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: The Americas 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998.

<sup>55</sup> For the British economy, Sayers gives the following dates for troughs in the trade cycle, 1879, 1886, and 1893, and for crests, 1882-3, 1889. **R.S. Sayers**, *A History of Economic Change, 1880-1939*, Oxford University Press, 1967, p.32.

<sup>56</sup> Schumpeter dates the Second Kondratieff as 1843-1897, though his followers have tended to revert to the more usual dates of 1848-1895/7. He dates the Juglar cycles (moving from prosperity - revival) as 1843-51, 1852-60, 1861-1869 (though these years he maintains are blurred by political crises and difficult to discern), 1870-1879, 1879-1888 and 1889-97.

|    | Prosperity | Recession                         | Depression | Revival |
|----|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|---------|
| 1. | 1843-5     | 1845-7                            | 1848       | 1849-51 |
| 2. | 1852-56    | 1856/7                            | 1858       | 1859/60 |
| 3. | 1861       | Too blurred to discern distinctly |            | 1869    |
| 4  | 1870-72    | 1872                              | 1873-77    | 1879    |
| 5. | 1879-81    | 1881/3                            | 1883-85    | 1886-8  |
| 6. | 1889-91    | 1891/3                            | 1893-5     | 1896/7  |

**J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles*, Volume I, McGraw-Hill, 1939, pp.303-397.

<sup>57</sup> **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1987, pp.46-55.

<sup>58</sup> Goldstein gives the average dates of 1893-1917 for the upswing and 1917-1940 for the downswing. **J. Goldstein**, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, Yale University Press, 1988, p.67.

<sup>59</sup> **A. Maddison**, *Phases of Capitalist Development*, *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review*, No. 121, June 1977, pp.103-137.

<sup>60</sup> **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: The Americas 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998; **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998.

<sup>61</sup> **A. Maddison**, *Phases of Capitalist Development*, *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review*, No. 121, June 1977, pp.103-137.

<sup>62</sup> Hobsbawm discusses the differing explanations and implications of this rapid change in the rhythm of the world economy. **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, 1987, pp.46-55.

<sup>63</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>64</sup> **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British Industrial Capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998; **J.-J. Carré, P. Dubois & E. Malinvaud**, *French Economic Growth*, Stanford University Press, 1975; **M. Kitchen**, *The Political Economy*

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of Germany 1815-1914, Croom Helm, 1978; **J. Atack & P. Pasell**, *A New View of American History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Norton & Co. 1994.

<sup>65</sup> **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: The Americas 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998; **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998.

<sup>66</sup> The tendency amongst writer's to blame war on the events that follow it seems to be widespread but often contradictory. The fact that the end of the Napoleonic Wars brought price deflation, whilst the end of WW1 brought price inflation and the end of WW2 made little impact either way suggests that these may be greatly exaggerated.

<sup>67</sup> Kelly and Screpanti date the strike wave from 1910-1920, **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, p.89; **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; *Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation*, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. Cronin dates the crucial strike wave as 1919-1920, **J. Cronin**, *Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest*, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (Eds.) *Processes of the World-System*, pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979.

<sup>68</sup> The period 1919-20 in Britain is surveyed by Dowie who indicates that the traditional demand-pull explanation for the inflationary peak is somewhat doubtful. A large decrease in hours in 1919 and a rise in real wages was unlikely to have been met by corresponding improvements in productivity in Britain's ageing industries. He believes, cost-push explanations may prove more accurate. **J.A. Dowie**, '1919-20 is in Need of Attention', *Economic History Review*, Vol.28 No.3 pp.429-450.

<sup>69</sup> Sayers gives troughs as 1903-4, 1908-9 and 1913. **R.S. Sayers**, *A History of Economic Change, 1880-1939*, Oxford University Press, 1967, p.32.

<sup>70</sup> Feldman wrote the definitive analysis of this event. In his investigation into the factors that led to this period of inflation he concluded that hyperinflation was not a result of war reparations. The inflation was caused by the improved position of the working-class, the ability of employers to pass on these costs in price rises and a refusal of any of the vested interests within Germany to contemplate financial sacrifices in order to deflate the

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economy. **G. D. Feldman**, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics and Society in the German Inflation, 1914-1924*, Oxford University Press, 1993. His position is largely supported by **C. P. Kindleberger**, in a review of the book, Chapter 15, *The World Economy and National Finance in Historical Perspective*, University of Michigan Press, 1995; see also, **K. Laursen & J. Pedersen**, *The German Inflation 1919-1923*, North Holland, 1964.

<sup>71</sup> The 'Roaring Twenties' appear to better describe the social decadence that was carried over from the upswing years, combined with a relief amongst the bourgeoisie that they had survived a period of war and revolution, rather than a serious appraisal of the economy.

<sup>72</sup> **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998.

<sup>73</sup> **S.N. Broadberry & A. Ritschl**, "Real Wages, Productivity, and Unemployment in Britain and Germany during the 1920s" in **J. Komlos & S.Eddie**, *Selected Cliometric Studies on German Economic History*, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997.

<sup>74</sup> **J.J. van Duijn**, *The Long-wave in Economic Life*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

<sup>75</sup> **J-C. Asselain**, *Histoire économique de la France: de 1919 à la fin des Années 1970*, Editions du Seuil, 1984; **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: The Americas 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998. **B.R. Mitchell**, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1993* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Macmillan Reference, 1998.

<sup>76</sup> The general response of governments at this time has led to a degree of confusion amongst a small number of long-wave researchers. Failure to account for this has left some long-wave theorists with cycles that bear little resemblance to most other long-wave accounts and to other economic realities. This, to a large extent, has shown that price changes are not entirely reliable as a guide to dating long-waves, as was previously supposed. See for instance, **W. W. Rostow**, *The World Economy: History and Prospect*, University of Texas Press, 1978, using only price data, Rostow calls 1935-51 an upswing and 1951-72 a downswing and 1972 onwards another upswing; and **B.J.L. Berry**, *Long-Wave Rhythms in Economic Development and Political Behaviour*, John Hopkins University Press, 1991.

<sup>77</sup> **J. Atack & P. Pasell**, *A New View of American History* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Norton & Co. 1994.

<sup>78</sup> **A. Maddison**, *Phases of Capitalist Development*, *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review*, No. 121, June 1977, pp.103-137.

<sup>79</sup> Schumpeter, writing in 1939, gives the following dates for the Third Kondratieff;

|    | Prosperity           | Recession | Depression | Revival |
|----|----------------------|-----------|------------|---------|
| 1. | 1898-1900            | 1901-03   | 1903/4     | 1904-6  |
|    | 1907-1908 Intermezzo |           |            |         |
| 2. | 1909-11              | 1912/13   | 1914       |         |

Interrupted by World War One

|       |       |         |       |
|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| ..... | ..... | 1929-34 | ..... |
|-------|-------|---------|-------|

**J. Schumpeter**, *Business Cycles*, Volumes I and II, McGraw-Hill, 1939, pp.397-448 and

<sup>80</sup> See for instance, **A.Glyn, A. Hughes, A. Lipietz, & A. Singh**, *The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age* in **S. A. Marglin & J. B. Schor** (Eds.), *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, Clarendon Press, 1990.

<sup>81</sup> See **J. Goldstein** in *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age*, Yale University Press 1988, Chapter 10.

<sup>82</sup> **A. Maddison**, *Phases of Capitalist Development*, *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review*, No. 121, June 1977, pp.103-137.

<sup>83</sup> Kelly and Screpanti date the strike wave from 1968-1974, **J. Kelly**, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long-Waves*, Routledge/LSE, 1998, p.89; **E. Screpanti**, *Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies*, *Review*, 7, no.2, pp.509-548; *Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation*, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1987, 25, No.1, pp.99-124. Cronin dates the crucial period as 1968-1972, **J. Cronin**, *Stages, Cycles and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest*, in **T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein**, (Eds.) *Processes of the World-System*, pp.101-118, Sage Publications, 1980; *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, Croom Helm, 1979.

<sup>84</sup> The pay explosion saw earnings rise by around 47% in the UK and Australia, over 50% in Austria, Belgium, France, Netherlands and New Zealand, over 60% in Finland and Greece and over 70% in Italy and Spain between 1970 and the first quarter of 1974. **H.**

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**Phelps Brown**, A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion, *Three Banks Review*, March 1975, No. 105, pp.3-24.

<sup>85</sup> See for instance, **A. Glyn, A. Hughes, A. Lipietz, & A. Singh**, The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age in **S. A. Marglin & J. B. Schor** (Eds.), *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, Clarendon Press, 1990; **R. Lloyd-Jones & M.J. Lewis**, *British industrial capitalism since the Industrial Revolution*, UCL Press, 1998 pp.187-193.

<sup>86</sup> Mandel believed that the Russian Revolution and the construction of the Soviet Union represented the first stage in the dissolution of international capitalism, the second stage arriving during the fourth long-wave downswing. Presumably the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has severely disrupted this timetable.

<sup>87</sup> Mager uses the dates 1949-1973-2003 for the fourth long-wave, though gives no reason for the latter date. **N.H. Mager**, *The Kondratieff Waves*, Praeger, 1987.

<sup>88</sup> **E.H. Hobsbawm**, *The New Century*, Little, Brown & Co. 2000.

<sup>89</sup> Faux and Mishel believe that the improving world economy in the 1990s, especially in the USA, has been achieved at the expense of income growth. Workers are now expected to work longer hours, and together with increased levels of productivity and declining income growth this has resulted in a return to high levels of corporate profitability. Per capita income growth in the G7 economies has been steadily declining since the 1970s resulting in only Germany and Japan recording per capita income growth rates of more than 1% per annum in the period 1989-96. **J. Faux & L. Mishel**, 'Inequality and the Global Economy' in **W. Hutton & A. Giddens**, (eds) *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, Jonathon Cape, 2000.

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