

1980

Political Order: Rewards, Punishments and Political Stability, by U. Rosenthal

Leon Hurwitz

Cleveland State University, l.hurwitzl@csuohio.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clpolsci_facpub

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Original Citation

Hurwitz, Leon. 1980. "Political Order: Rewards, Punishments and Political Stability, by U. Rosenthal." *American Political Science Review* 74:269-270.

Repository Citation

Hurwitz, Leon, "Political Order: Rewards, Punishments and Political Stability, by U. Rosenthal" (1980). *Political Science Faculty Publications*. 26.
https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clpolsci_facpub/26

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science Department at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

tional variations again became important in the 1970s, the rate of expansion slowed considerably except in the case of Iceland. Each of the essays devotes considerable attention to the organization of political studies within the national university system. The earlier tendency for individual departments to specialize within a subfield has gradually given way to a broader organization as departments expanded. American readers must remember that Scandinavian universities traditionally commence their studies at a more advanced level than North American schools. Even in Sweden, where the traditional university entrance exams have been replaced by a more open system, most of the instruction occurs at the "graduate" level.

The second part of the volume focuses more specifically on the trends of political research in the Nordic countries between 1960 and 1975. Again there are some differences from other national political research systems because of the greater academic heterogeneity of Scandinavian departments. Each department has its own instructors in political science, economics, sociology, and history, and this necessarily reflects on the research products. In the earlier part of the period considered here, it is possible to generalize about both the methodological and substantive focus of Scandinavian political research. The earlier research was highly behavioristic, reflecting the broader Western trend during the early 1960s. Greater methodological variety became evident in the late 1960s with Marxist and critical approaches gaining greater favor. Unfortunately, several of the authors, particularly Peter Nannestad in his review of the Danish experience, note the poor communications and interaction between the Marxist-oriented researchers and the rest of the profession. This observation does not, however, seek to lay blame. It is possible to identify areas where Scandinavian research has been especially intensive and strong. Electoral and voter studies, inspired by American and British examples give a fairly complete picture for the elections held since 1960 (and in some cases earlier). In international relations the security policy and foreign policy concerns of these small states has been highlighted and attempts have been made to develop some theory of small state behavior. A newer trend of the 1970s has been the rise of policy analysis and institutional behavior.

The expansion in the quantity of research is especially impressive. In each case national social science research council have provided funds for individual and collective projects. (Parenthetically one must add that Scandinavian political scientists have striven to maintain close contact with foreign colleagues.) Foreign

study, exchange research and teaching positions, and vigorous participation at international conferences has brought their work to the attention of many. Much of their work has either been published originally in English (or less frequently in French and German), while summarizing articles make much of the remainder accessible to foreign colleagues. The volume demonstrates this in an extensive cumulative bibliography which reproduces many of the items originally noted in earlier volumes of *Scandinavian Political Studies* as well as additional items.

The cumulative bibliography will be of considerable value to two groups: those investigating the Scandinavian countries and those seeking the studies conducted by Scandinavian political scientists. The titles of items appearing in the Scandinavian languages are translated into English. While that may not improve access for those lacking the necessary language skills, it does facilitate foreign research and international contacts. It is hard to generalize about the vast scope of 15 years of Nordic political research. Nearly every conceivable topic has been treated by Scandinavian political scientists. There are, however, some surprising variations in the intensity of the effort. The United States has been touched very lightly by Scandinavian researchers except as part of more general international relations research. Domestic American institutions are rarely treated. Has the size and presumed quality of American political science deterred our Scandinavian colleagues? If so, the record of monumental contributions to the understanding of American politics made by foreign colleagues should encourage our Scandinavian friends to venture forth. The strength of our profession in the Nordic countries is amply demonstrated by this useful concluding volume. The end of the series is more technical than real; in 1978 *Scandinavian Political Studies* became a quarterly journal.

ERIC S. EINHORN

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Political Order: Rewards, Punishments and Political Stability. By Uriel Rosenthal. (Alphen aan den Rijn, The Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978. Pp. xi + 286. Dfl. 57.00; \$27.00.)

Uriel Rosenthal's study on political order has joined those within our discipline who have attempted to bring some meaning and coherence to the very nebulous but crucial concept of "political stability." This concept of stabili-

ty—or “political order” in Rosenthal’s terms—has in the past meant all things as various people in the profession (this reviewer included) offered a plethora of theoretical overviews, operational definitions and/or empirical measures. The previous research has presented index after index describing the degree or amount of stability that selected polities evidence as well as analyses of the factors which could possibly explain the observed differences in stability levels.

Employing a reward-punishment theoretical framework of political order, Rosenthal analyzes six of the major and most often used operational definitions of stability. These are then related to the prospects of long-run political stability, stagnation, the threat of destabilization, and to short-run political stability. The six “notions” of political order reviewed are: (1) the absence of structural change or, in a positive sense, the ability of a political system to adapt to a changing environment without undergoing basic or drastic structural alterations—persistence of pattern would be a more descriptive term; (2) rulebound politics or the overwhelming observance of known universalistic regularities; (3) legitimacy—the political system is perceived as right and proper by most of the population and thus, conversely, there is very little anti-system feelings; (4) institutionalized politics, described by Rosenthal to be the slow integration of expectations within an existing pattern of norms and values as well as the conscious act of institution-building; (5) the limitation of violence—the absence of domestic civil conflict, violent behavior and the prevalence of peaceful and eufunctional methods to manage change; and (6) the longevity (some would say stubbornness) of chief executives and specific governments—this involves both the absolute quantity and the qualitative nature of political succession and elite turnover.

The contribution of this monograph is *not* with new empirical analyses or data. Rather, whatever merit or service to the profession it may offer derives from the author’s wide-ranging review and attempted integration of the previous literature on political stability. Rosenthal has obviously read an immense amount in preparing his book and I cannot think of a single scholar involved with “stability” who has not been reviewed. It is no small feat to summarize the views of approximately 90 people and to show the interrelationships, inconsistencies and tensions among them.

I do, however, have some reservations about the overall usefulness of the book. To begin with, the monograph is not written for the

uninitiated or for those unfamiliar with the literature. It is quite difficult for the novice to gain a full understanding of the previous literature since (1) one cannot do justice to scholarly arguments in a few short paragraphs and (2) a single author’s view is too often divided across separate sections of the present book. A full understanding of the rich detail of the literature is only hinted at but not delivered. The book appears to be written for the 90-or-so scholars who have more than a surface knowledge of the literature but Rosenthal really does not tell us much that we don’t already know (or should know).

A second reservation I have about the book—and this concerns both those among us who try to make a living by writing about political stability as well as first-year graduate students—involves the use of language. The book is written in a style of English which has become all-too-frequent from European scholars (Rosenthal is at Erasmus University in Rotterdam): the jargon of the discipline is overwhelming. In an entirely different context, the *Times* of London has called this dialect “techno-English”—it does rule out ambiguity but it is not a book one will wish to read while commuting.

But, for those who are prepared to make the effort, *Political Order* does present in one volume a scholarly overview of political stability. Rosenthal rightly recognizes that political stability is a multifaceted societal attribute and that to have any understanding of the concept, one must shy away from mono-measures and employ a multivariate approach.

LEON HURWITZ

Cleveland State University

Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico. By Peter H. Smith. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp. xvi + 384. \$25.00, cloth; \$9.75, paper.)

Peter Smith has created a pioneering analysis of Mexico’s twentieth-century elite. Using data on 6,302 political leaders, and a computer, he attempts to answer several basic questions about the acquisition and retention of political power in Mexico. Smith asks: “Who governs? Who has access to power, and what are the social conditions of rule?” (p. 3). He also studies the patterns of political careers and attempts to resolve an old debate concerning how members of the post-revolutionary elite may differ from their counterparts prior to 1910. Smith also attempts to ascertain the basis