Introduction: Diversity of Elite Configurations and Clusters of Power

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This book has been prepared in the framework of the Research Committee on Political Elites, sponsored by the International Political Science Association. Several chapters of this book are revised versions of papers presented at the World Congress of Political Science in Quebec City in July 2000. It follows another book generated by our research group: *Elites, Crises and the Origins of Regimes*.

The notion of configuration which appears in the title of this book has the same meaning as in astronomy: the position of planetary corps in relation to one another. In elite studies, configuration means the relative position and size of various elite circles (political, bureaucratic, capitalist, managerial, cultural, religious, military, etc.) in the constellation of power.

By "apex of power," we are referring to an infinitesimal part of the population; perhaps one person per thousand of the adult population. In countries like Britain, Italy and France, a few thousand individuals would be included in the highest circles of power. Around them gravitate other elites of lesser weight, who may or may not be included in the analysis.

Elite interlock or interpenetration signifies movements from one power summit to another, not movements within the same sphere: for instance, a jump from the summit of the civil service to a political elite position, from the leadership of a State corporation to that of a private corporation, from union to party leadership. The essentially horizontal concept of elite interpenetration is not related to Pareto's vertical concept of elite circulation.

Functional elite diversity refers to the differentiation of elites according to structural functions — political, economic, administrative, military, cultural, etc., as opposed to "elite cohesion" in a strictly political sense,

i.e., common adherence to political game rules and the acceptance of each other's actions and roles as legitimate.

By elite cousinhood is meant common parentage across summits, indicating a narrow social base of recruitment and the phenomenon of elite reproduction, in contrast to recruitment by meritocratic criteria. This is an empirically grounded concept somewhat more neutral than the concept of ruling class. Likewise, a clear distinction should be drawn between "upper class" membership and location at specific decision-making sites.

When we started this project, we expected to find many similarities, which would permit the formulation of some generalisations, but we have ended in a kaleidoscope: moving from one country to another, the elite configuration changes. Idiosyncrasies of each country loom large. This book does not suggest a unique configuration; on the contrary, it emphasises a diversity of national situations. Why such a diversity? Historical developments are obvious explanations, but institutional frameworks and levels of economic development seem equally important.

There is a gap in the literature between the theoretical level, predominantly American, and the empirical knowledge of elite stratification in dozens of countries in the four corners of the world.

Most of the significant books on elite theory are either classical contributions formulated a century ago, before the development of post-industrial societies, by European scholars such as Weber, Pareto, Mosca, Michels, or by contemporary American scholars who devoted their work almost exclusively to the American situation in the 20th century, for instance, C. Wright Mills, Robert Dahl, John Galbraith, E. Digby Baltzell, Kenneth Prewitt and Alan Stone, Donald Matthews, Suzanne Keller, Gabriel Kolko, Arnold Rose, James David Barber, Vance Packard, G. William Domhoff, Thomas R. Dye, Paul Sweezy, David Riesman, Floyd Hunter, Victor Perlo, Grantt McConnell, Charles L. Clapp, Michael Parenti, and many others.

The elite configurations reflect in large part the social, economic, cultural and political structures of the society itself. Because of space constraints, we have not given this relationship the full attention that it merits.

All chapters of this book focus on the interpenetrations at the highest levels between elite categories: politicians, owners of capital, corporate managers, higher civil servants, union leaders, military officers, and outstanding intellectuals.

The documentation presented in these chapters reveals contrasting patterns of recruitment and selection among countries in terms of career paths, elite roles, and the relative influence, visibility, power and prestige of different elite groups. This diversity of national elite configurations

challenges C. Wright Mills' theory of an integrated power elite, which appears from a comparative perspective to be peculiar to the United States during the early post-war period. Nonetheless, even Mills admits implicitly the existence of the notion of national elite configuration, where he emphasizes "the structural position of the high and mighty" and the intermingling between three kinds of elite: the political directorate, the corporate rich and the military establishment. As James Meisel notices, "elites entrench themselves in institutions" (Meisel 1962: 361).

Obviously, the theories based on American patterns cannot be always extrapolated to other countries. Some of these American theories were not validated when tested in other national contexts. This book brings additional evidence of the inadequacy of many American theories for the study of elites in France, Germany, Britain, Mexico, East-Central Europe, Southeast Asia or sub-Saharan Africa. It is not by accident that in this book priority has been given to countries other than the USA.

If it were possible to include in this book studies on other countries, the diversity of elite configurations would have been enhanced. If Thailand had been included, the role of the military behind the scenes would have had to be described. If the Scandinavian countries were included, other elite categories would have received more attention, such as the union officers and the party leaders. If Israel had been included, the role of ex-generals at the summit of the State would have been emphasized, and the army headquarters would have appeared as a greenhouse of civil politicians. Obviously, the historical and social context explains such a diversity.

The elite configuration depends largely on the political systems. The structure of power and the recruitment of elites are not, and cannot be the same in a multi-party system, a two-party system (like the British one) and in a one-party-dominant system (like the Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Irish or Indian system at a certain epoch). Within the category of multi-party systems, they cannot be similar in a presidential system and in a parliamentary system. They function differently in advanced post-industrial societies and in developing societies. These parameters are extremely important. The diversity of elite configurations is related to the typology of political systems.

In the literature on elites, there is an agreement to distinguish two categories of elites: the mono-hierarchical interpretation, called the elitist school, and the polyarchical interpretation, called the pluralist school. According to the monolithical interpretation, the various elite circles overlap; there is a high concentration of power and a strong cohesion among elites. Except for the classical Marxist writers, the best known exponents of this school are all American scholars — C. Wright Mills, C. William Domhoff, Paul Sweezy, among others. According to the

pluralist school, there are different sets of leaders in different sectors who are recruited by different channels; power is divided among many institutions, and there is a limited concentration of corporate power. The best-known representatives of this pluralist school are Robert Dahl, Arnold Rose, David Riesman and many other American sociologists who have focussed their analysis exclusively on the American case. Some of these American studies have, however, worldwide theoretical validity, for instance, the following statement by Robert Dahl: "Neither logically nor empirically does it follow that a group with a high degree of influence over *one scope* will necessarily have a high degree of influence over *another scope* within the same system. This is a matter to be determined empirically" (Dahl 1958). This statement could be rewritten in terms of elite configuration and interlocking.

Thomas R. Dye deals also only with the American elites, but he takes an intermediate position, admitting the pertinence of many contributions of both schools. The elite theory, which was Italian by birth, is today overwhelmingly American.

Robert D. Putnam has adopted in his *Comparative Study of Political Elites* an international framework, but he deals in his book, published a quarter of a century ago, only with the political elites, neglecting the other elite categories. He does not treat the interpenetration of various elites as a crucial feature.

In several books, John Higley, in collaboration with other scholars, has studied various elite categories in different contexts, such as East-Central Europe, Latin America or Australia, but his interpretations of elite structures are contextual, and do not venture into extended international comparisons.

Important books on elites have been published also in Europe during the last decade, particularly in Germany and in Britain. Most of these books are based on solid empirical data, but they did not have the same impact on the theoretical debate as the American authors. (See the bibliography cited by Erwin Scheuch, John Scott, Dennis Kavanagh, David Richards and Andras Bozoki in their respective chapters.)

Interestingly enough, the traditional Marxist theory, according to which power is based on the control of the means of production, and which reflected the XIXth century capitalism is less and less cited, even by neo-Marxists who advocate that in the XXth century, power is rooted in the State bureaucracy which expropriates the surplus value.

The common denominator of all chapters in this book is the linkage between the ruling elites, the interconnections at the summit of power. These interpenetrations suggest the concept of interlocking, which may form, in different contexts, different types of clusters.

Elite interlocking as a basic feature implies much less an "unified elite class," advocated by the elitist school. Elite interlocking takes various forms in time and space. The most famous historical interlocking is the alliance between the throne and the altar in all European countries, and in most Islamic countries (but not in the Buddhist societies). In contemporary Africa, the elite configuration appears as an undifferentiated elite, as the chapter by Jean-Pascal Daloz clearly demonstrates. In Southeast Asia, the leadership represents a fusion of various roles in the same person, as the chapter by William Case attests. In the Mexican presidential system, the structure of elites leaves room and freedom to the sector elites, as suggested by Roderic Camp in his chapter. Even among the Western European countries, the elite configurations mark significant differences.

In the dispute between the elitist school and the pluralist school, the concept of interlock seems to be the Gordian nexus. How much is enough? How much concentration of wealth and power would be sufficient to conclude that we are facing a single, high pyramid? How many channels for recruiting the various functional elites are needed in order to admit that, instead, we are facing a chain of high peaks? How much specialisation is required from the various elite categories? A lot of specialisation would imply a plurality of elites. How much cohesion exists among the different elite sectors? In analytical terms, cohesion means interpenetration, overlapping, network. Here appears the concept of interlock as an essential factor of elite configuration. If the convergence and the overlapping between the functional elites are strong, we may perceive the shadow of a monolithic elite. If on the contrary, the osmosis between the various elite categories is relatively weak, if the separation generated by specialisation and expertise is clear and solid, we may lean towards the pluralist interpretation of elite configuration.

The phenomenon of interlock has been studied carefully for the big financial and industrial corporations. In most countries the sequential move is from higher civil service towards high business, and except in the United States, almost never in the opposite direction. This issue is of great importance (see the chapters by John Scott and Michael Ornstein). There could not be a capitalist class without a strong network among capitalists. If big corporations pursue their objectives, each one separately without cooperating or defending common interests, then we are in the presence of capitalists, who may be powerful, but not of a "class." Analytically, an elite interlock is a pre-condition of any ruling class.

A distinction is needed between elite interlocking and elite interchangeability. The two phenomena do not appear in the same kinds of societies. Interlocking is the passage from one elite sphere to another. It implies necessarily the existence of separate elite categories, and a process of pro-

fessionalisation within each category. On the contrary, interchangeability supposes the existence of a common stock of undifferentiated elites, able to move back and forth between various elite sectors: from military to political functions, from administrative to economic positions and back again. The same family may have representatives as landlords, officers in the army, administrative governors and so on. The ruling class in Tsarist Russia during the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries was the perfect example of positional interchangeability.

Elite studies seem to be shut in a conceptual Tower of Babel, where scholars gamble with non-specified words. Athony Giddens formulates his own diagnosis: "...we should be able to recognise ... that there can exist a 'governing class' without it necessarily being a 'ruling class'; there can exist a 'power elite' without there necessarily being either a 'ruling' or a 'governing class', that there can be a system of 'leadership groups' which constitutes neither power 'elite', nor 'governing class' or 'ruling class'; that all of these social formations are compatible with the existence of an 'upper class'; and finally, that *none* of these categories prejudices the question of the relative primacy of the 'political' and 'economic' spheres within the class structure" (Giddens 1974: 2).

It is hopeless to attempt to formulate a universally valid theory for such a diversified world (for the moment, the process of globalisation has succeeded in reducing the diversity among capitalists and the international bureaucrats, but not between political systems). It would be more promising to have recourse to typologies and to configurations.

Comparing countries consists in crossing similarities against diversities. But depending on the scope of the comparison, and on the choice of countries, the differences may outweigh the similarities. On the other hand, the analogies may prevail if other theoretical frameworks are adopted. In the studies of elites, the higher the level of theoretical abstraction adopted, the greater the number of similarities, or at least of their functional equivalencies. When the research is truly empirically grounded, when we use the microscope rather than the macroscope, the chances are greater to discover more differences than analogies. The distance between the observer and the object observed is an element of crucial importance. Such a strategy should not be confounded with the ideographic-ideocratic dimension. All the authors of this book are immersed in the realities of the country or region that they observe directly. All are at the same time *insiders* by the intimate knowledge of "their" country, and *outsiders* by the theoretical framework to which they constantly refer.

Given the diversity of national elite configurations, an appropriate strategy for scrutinising them is the comparison by pair of countries, called binary comparison (Dogan 2002). For such a dichotomic analysis, I have

chosen the country that I know best (France), and I shall compare its elite with other national elites. But such an approach would be equally pertinent if the country of reference was Germany, Argentina, Russia or India. As a matter of fact, the binary comparison is the most frequent strategy adopted in comparative research in sociology and in political science (but not in social anthropology and economics).

Let's start with a comparison between the French elites and the American elites. One of the most striking differences is the preponderance of extremely wealthy personalities in the American government and Congress, and the small number of their equivalents in contemporary French politics. Another contrast appears when we compare the role of the higher civil servants across the Atlantic: they have a primordial place in France, and in other European countries, but apparently are almost absent in the US national leadership, to such a degree that C. Wright Mills neglects them completely. America has not bred the higher civil servants for political leadership, while quite the opposite is true in France. As D. Stanely, D. Martin and J. Doig suggest in *Men Who Govern* (1967), C. Wright Mills has underestimated the autonomy and the role of the higher civil servants in the US. In France in the 1990s, one of every two deputies and the majority of cabinet ministers come from the civil service: the political elites are "functionarised"; on the contrary, in the US the recruitment of politicians dips deeply into the private sector. The role of parliament in the selection of political leaders is anther contrasting feature.

Some analogies for elite recruitment in the two countries can also be noticed. In France, the selection of the political and of the politico-administrative personnel is made overwhelmingly among the alumni of a few selective schools (Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Ecole Polytechnique and a few others). Similarly, almost half of American top governmental leaders are alumni of just twelve Ivy League universities, particularly of the law schools of these privileged universities.

The American and French political systems are both considered to be presidential systems. In reality, there are more differences than analogies between them. No wonder that there is not in the specialised literature a single major book with the ambition of comparing them systematically.

The comparison between the British and the French ruling elites is full of contrasts. In Britain, there is a complete impermeability between high administration and high politics, while in France there is an overlapping and a heavy interlocking. In Britain cabinet ministers are recruited in parliament by a non-written constitutional rule: all ministers have to belong to parliament. On the contrary, in the Fifth Republic, there is on the contrary a constitutional incompatibility between being member of the government and a member of parliament. In Britain, the collaborators of

cabinet ministers, called "junior ministers" are recruited among the MPs. In France, they are recruited among the *grand corps* (exclusive greenhouses). In both countries, the school fills an elitist function, but in Britain the selection is based mostly on wealth and on the education of teenagers, while in France it is in large part based on meritocratic competition among young adults.

It could be said that French society is more democratic than the French political system, while the British political system is more democratic than the structure of British society.

A comparison between elites in Italy and in France also reveals striking differences, in spite of the fact that these two countries are related from many other points of view. In 1946, Italy adopted a complicated electoral system which has engendered a "partyocracy" and a very fragmented political class. The "partitocrazia" contrasts with the weakness of the political parties in France. With a few exceptions (Bank of Italy, State Council, the prefects and the *carabinieri*), the high administration became of limited efficiency soon after the war. This contrasts with the powerful position of the higher civil servants in France. The regime's centre of gravity was the parliament, as in France during the Fourth Republic. The selection of leaders in Italy, particularly the cabinet ministers, has been accomplished according to ten non-written rules which reveal the fights between factions inside the parties, and the refinement of the rules of the political game. These rules generated a *sui-generis* elite configuration (Dogan 1984). The party leaders played a Byzantine game; no one predicted the "revolution of the judges." From January 1993 to March 1994, Italian citizens witnessed the agony of the old Italian political class, brought about by the blows of the judges, with the massive support of public opinion, and with daily contributions from most journalists. Italian society is, however, in good economic health. Italy has experienced an impressive economic growth in the last five decades, overtaking Britain in terms of GNP per capita. This fact raises an important theoretical question: what is the role of the elites in the economic achievements of a regime? Despite their ministerial instability, Italy and France have both experienced considerable economic growth after World War Two, while in Britain the governmental stability has been accompanied by economic stagnation and relative regression among the European countries.

The main contrast between the elite configurations in Germany and in France concerns the role of political parties as agencies of elite recruitment, as channels for promotion, as networks of decision-making, and as patronage for the selection of top State bureaucrats. The parties hold a central position in Germany, and a secondary one in France. In Germany, there are no filtering schools as privileged greenhouses of elites,

in contrast with the French elite schools. The routes to higher positions pass largely through the parties, whereas in France party affiliation is just a strategic choice. In the economic interlockings, the financial sector plays a crucial role as big linkers, whereas in France the map of interlocks is more diversified. In exchange, as Erwin Scheuch reports in his chapter, there is much less elite circulation between the political and the economic sectors. In Germany, most CEOs are recruited and socialised within the companies; they are not detected and "borrowed" from the higher ranks of the State administration as in France. In addition, the selection of the various elite categories is carved out through the Landers, while the French elites are largely Parisian. Nonetheless, in both countries, the role of the parliamentary elite in the power configurations seems to decline in the actual working of the system, except as sources of electoral legitimacy.

An interesting analogy can be observed at the summit of power between the Japanese elite configuration and the French counterpart, in spite of the many contrasts existing between the two countries at other levels of the society and of the State. Japan, although lacking natural resources and cultivable land has become in one generation one of the richest countries in the world. Who should be credited with this achievement? The politicians, the higher bureaucracy, the capitalist entrepreneurs, the engineers in the high technology sectors? Various replies could be given to this question. The most persuasive would be a reply in terms of elite clusters.

In both countries, there is a triad at the apex, which consists of an interpenetration of political leaders, higher civil servants, and capitalist entrepreneurs. In spite of the importance of studies done separately of each one of these two elite pyramids — notwithstanding the many similarities between their configurations — there is not a single comprehensive study attempting to compare them. Only an outline of such a comparison could be presented here, in terms of functional equivalencies. This would be an implicit binary comparison, assuming that the reader is familiar with the French situation, analysed in Chapter 2.

In both countries, the higher civil servants are recruited by competitive examinations. They are selected in both countries among several thousand candidates. Finally, some 400 young bureaucrats in Japan, and 300 in France are recruited each year. The equivalent of the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* is in Japan the faculty of law of the University of Tokyo, but also of Kyoto University and of Hitotsabashi. There is also an equivalent of the *Ecole Polytechnique* called *gikan*. The most striking analogy is the swarming of higher civil servants from the administration to corporations and to high politics. Such a sequential interlocking is called respectively *amakudari* (descent from heaven) and *pantouflage* (jargon suggesting refuge in a comfortable position).

Such a transfer has been interpreted by some observers as a collusion between high administration and big corporations. It could also be interpreted as a rational interlocking. In order to favour the circulation at the highest ranks of the public administration, retirement is almost mandatory at an early age, 50-55. The move to corporations compensates also for the modesty of pensions. The assurance of a second career prevents dysfunctions in the public bureaucracy. The corporations need for their dealings with the State officers who are familiar with the labyrinth of the bureaucracy. According to recent data, some 200 higher civil servants benefit each year from *amakudari*; they are welcome in high positions within big corporations or middle-sized firms. The old networks of the cohorts could theoretically leave room for decisions favouring the corporations, particularly for various authorisations and public subventions, but the rule is that when the administrative vice-minister (equivalent to the German *Staatsekretare*) retires from the ministry, the entire cohort of condisciples are also obliged to retire. Except the important difference between the French *grand corps* and the Japanese "cohort group", the dynamics of the interlocking is very similar in both countries.

Another analogy between the French and Japanese elite configurations appears clearly in the osmosis between high administration and high politics. In both countries an impressive proportion of political rulers were recruited in the last decades from among former high civil servants (in Japan since 1946, in France since 1958). It is significant that in neither country have big businessmen ever become prime minister. In exchange, about half of the Japanese prime ministers and most of the French had been former higher civil servants. In both countries, many of them jump directly from the top of the administrative pyramid to the governmental high sphere, in some cases without needing a long parliamentary experience or an electoral legitimacy. In both countries a high proportion of cabinet ministers were selected among former high State bureaucrats. Because of the basic difference between the presidential system and the one-dominant-party-system, the proportion of former higher civil servants among the parliamentarians is higher in Japan than in France, but the proportion is similar at the level of cabinet ministers. In both countries, the role of top civil servants has been decisive for the preparation of the national budget, for the formulation of long-term priorities, and for the tendency to replace laws by decrees. So the triads of power are very similar in both countries. The most appropriate strategy for comparing their ruling elites is the recourse to the concepts of elite configurations and elite interlocking.

Binary comparison is not the only way for detecting differences between elite configurations. Contrasting types of political systems is another way.

An interesting type is the consociational democracy, which contrasts with other types of democracy. It has been depicted by several scholars, in particular by Arend Lijphart. (We may call it more simply consociative democracy.) This type is characterized by elite accommodation in spite of the fact that the society is fragmented (Lijphart 1975; McRae 1974). In a vertically segmented society, where a well-organised elite necessarily exists within each societal segment, in each camp the followers show deference to their leaders. A consociative democracy is more elitist than a competitive democracy. Leaders of communities would not have sufficient authority in negotiation processes if their leadership was contested in their own camp. Within each camp, the articulation of interests is performed in an effective manner. But since no camp is in a position to win a majority, the aggregation of interests must be performed by accommodation between elites. The more important and controversial the issue, the higher the level at which a compromise has to be reached. Contrary to competitive democracies, which rest on the principle of majority rule, consociative democracies retain the principle of proportionality. Each camp is represented in institutions proportionally to its electoral strength. But this principle turns ineffective as soon as the decisions to be reached are of a dichotomous nature. To overcome such a risk, several rules and strategies are adopted. Decisions have to be made in small committees in secrecy as often as possible; the leadership is insulated from the knowledge of the rank and file. Membership in government is not compatible with membership in parliament. All positions and resources are allocated proportionally to the strengths of the blocs. The result is a proliferation of *intra* bloc elite connections for interlocking directorates of various bloc organisations, with overarching contact among the blocs limited to the elite level. The terminology adopted by various scholars is very suggestive: *consociatio* for Nigeria (D. Apter); *Verzuiling* for the Netherlands (A. Lijphart); *Konkordanzdemokratie* and *Proportzdemokratie* for Austria and Switzerland (G. Lembruch); *Entscheidungsstructuren* for Switzerland (H.P. Kriesi); amicable agreement for Austria (J. Steiner); *Junktim* and *Koalitionsanschluss* for Austria.

The elite network, particularly the inner circle, has different features in the political systems characterizes by high governmental turnover and in the systems where governments are relatively stable. The literature on cabinet stability/instability has neglected the notion of ministerial core. In regimes with governmental instability, a change of government does not, most of the time, mean the replacement of all outgoing ministers by newcomers (Dogan 1989). One can observe two types of ministers in these regimes: a core of quasi-irremovable leaders, and a much larger number of politicians who hold a fraction of power for a short period of time. The core of irremovable leaders can be called the "governmental nucleus"

and the ministers of a day "ephemeral personages." The governmental nucleus includes ministers who hold the most important positions and who remain in power most of the time. Without such a notion of governmental nucleus, it would be difficult to explain why, in spite of the ministerial dance, the French Third Republic lasted for 70 years, and how, in spite of an equivalent ministerial instability, democracy has flourished in Finland since 1917, and in Italy has functioned for half a century.

Power is implicit in the notion of ministerial core because survivors are more prestigious than those eliminated in the process. Reappointment reflects a strengthening of political influence. It also supposes, in most cases, advancement to a higher rank — based on acquired experience — from a technical ministry to a more important one (from Transportation to Finance, for instance). There is, within the cabinet, a hierarchy, generated in large part by seniority. In most cases, the key members of the ministerial core are simultaneously becoming more powerful at the summit of their political party.

The existence of a ministerial core can be explained by the fact that political parties tend to delegate their leaders to government. This is particularly true in regimes with proportional representation and rigid lists of candidates, which favour well-organized and centralized parties controlled by leaders who tend to perpetuate themselves at the summit of their party.

The ministerial core fulfils a function different from that of the interlocking directorates in consociational democracies. In the Netherlands of yesteryear, the "intrabloc overlapping membership in the governing bodies of the bloc institutions [were] clear symptoms of the cohesiveness of each of the four elites" (Lijphart 1968: 60). There are interlocking directorates in most multiparty systems. In Italy, for instance, there was a Catholic interlocking directorate (which included the Episcopacy, Catholic Action, Coltivatori Diretti), a Communist one (including strong labour unions), a Socialist one, a Liberal one. A ministerial core is an "intimate" locus of power where delegates of the interlocking directorates face each other as peers behind closed doors. A few of the most important cabinet ministers, who meet in a kind of supercabinet to choose among crucial options, all belong to the ministerial core.

It is time to revise the old views about ministerial instability and revolving ministerial cabinets, because ministerial instability was accompanied by the maintenance in power of a core of political leaders who ensured the continuity of State leadership. The elite configuration in these regimes has its own logic and dynamic, which contrasts with the British or American two-party systems.

Nowadays, power is personalised in the majority of independent nations in spite of the institutional framework adopted everywhere. A large variety of elite configurations can be observed, resulting from the combination of regime types and of the idiosyncrasies of the leaders. The diversity is such that the Weberian classical typology of legitimacy, with its three "boxes" seems obsolete for the study of contemporary leadership, since the "boxes" concerning the charismatic and the traditional authorities are today almost empty, and the third box — rational legal authority — paradoxically amalgamates several dozen varieties, combining personalised power and institutional scaffoldings (Dogan 1994). The approach in terms of elite configurations facilitates a better understanding of the diversity of personalised political leaderships.

We may distinguish different forms of personalisation of power according to the types of regimes. Obviously the degree of personalisation is not the same in a civilian authoritarian regime as in a military dictatorship, it does not have the same features in Southeast Asia (see the chapter by William Case) and in sub-Saharan Africa (see the chapter by Jean-Pascal Daloz), or in some Arab countries. Distinctions are needed between political idolatry, engineering charisma, the cult of personality, the plebicitarian ruler and the genuine heroic leader. Founding fathers of new nations are a privileged sub-type. Within the category of presidential regimes we can perceive a dozen sub types of personalisation, reflecting institutional contexts (Riggs 1994: 72-152). The same kind of varieties of personalisation of power and elite configurations can be detected among the prime-ministerial regimes such as those in Britain, Germany, Japan, India, Sweden and Ireland. Personal rule (see Jackson and Rosberg), caudillismo, camarilla, party oligarchy, and armed prophets are other forms of personalisation of power. Some types of regimes are resisting strong personalisation of power, particularly the consociative democracies and the new-corporatist regimes, for instance, Switzerland, the Netherlands or Belgium.

In case of abrupt regime changes, an analogy has been noticed across countries: the economic and administrative elites resist better the upheaval than the political and military elites (Dogan and Higley 1999). The phenomenon is confirmed in this book by Erwin Scheuch for Germany and Andras Bozoki for East-Central Europe.

Given this diversity of elite configurations, generated by the diversity of social structures and of political systems, the formulation of theoretical generalisations is more difficult in elite studies than in other domains of the social sciences. But precisely because of this diversity, the specificity of a national elite configuration appears clearly only in a comparative perspective.

We can learn a lot by comparing separately each elite category: the political leaders, the capitalists and managers of corporations, the higher State bureaucrats, the cultural elites. There is a valuable literature on each of these categories, encompassing many countries and continents. But where the comparative perspective is combined with the cross-sector approach in order to investigate the elite configurations, imbrications, interminglings, interlocks and clusters, all difficulties are accumulated because of the diversity of the nations, social systems, structures and levels of development. It is for this reason that an agreement between scholars about "who rules" and "who is running" has not yet been reached. The only point on which a consensus seems to emerge is that in sociological terms in the contemporary world, the rulers do not constitute a "class", except in Saudi Arabia, not even in dictatorial regimes. They represent something else today. By adopting the notion of elite configurations, we may make a further step.

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