

## Book Reviews: Comparative Politics

*Principles of Group Solidarity.* By Michael Hechter. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. 219p. \$28.50 cloth, \$10.95 paper.

Hechter is an "old-fashioned" social theorist in the best sense of that term. For him, theories are "causal" explanations that provide "intelligible answers to why-questions about empirical facts" (p. 1, original emphasis). The central question in *Principles of Group Solidarity* is a critical one: "Why do individuals in any group develop solidarity with other members in order to pursue their collective interests?" Group solidarity, when individuals act as if their own interests are served when group interests are advanced (by contributing a high proportion of their own resources to serve collective ends), is one way out of the free rider dilemma. But why should group solidarity occur?

In earlier work on the course of Celtic nationalism, Hechter answered that question "in terms of the existence of a stratification system that gives cultural distinctions political salience by linking them to individual life chances" (p. 5). He argued that "when individuals perceive that their life chances are limited merely by virtue of membership in a particular group, they will either leave that group (if they can) or come to see that they share vital interests with its members, thereby giving them reason to engage in nationalist activity" (p. 5). But in this book Hechter seeks to rethink his earlier structuralist approach by melding it with a more explicit focus on individual motivations and incentives for action derived from rational choice ideas.

Hechter is well aware of the usual critique of the standard rational choice model and sensitive to the defects and limitations of a rational choice approach. He is equally well aware of the severe problems of the standard sociological-structural approach to the problem of social order (e.g., its difficulties in explaining large-scale changes in structures of relationships and in accounting for the fact "that some people in a given structural position free ride, whereas other similarly situated actors do not" [p. 6]). He is highly suspicious of what he calls the "normative approach," which simply talks about internalized norms without accounting for why some groups are more effective socializers than others.

Hechter's claim is that he has devised "a new theory of group solidarity on rational choice foundations" and demonstrated that "far from being immiscible, sociology and rational choice are mutually complementary" (p. 8). If correct, this is a major accomplishment and this is a book to join with Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1971), Albert Hirschman's *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), James Coleman's *The Mathematics of Collective Action* (1973), and Robert Axelrod's *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984) as one of a handful of seminal works that transcend disciplinary boundaries and are major works of social science. The book reviews a tremendous range of literature in sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, and sociobiology (the bibliography includes over five hundred items). Hechter's scholarship is impressive, but even more impressive is his ability to synthesize and clarify the basic streams of research without getting lost in technicalities. *Principles of Group Solidarity* ranks with Russell Hardin's *Collective Action* (1982) as the best overall introduction to recent work on the problem of collective action. If it contained nothing more than this literature review, *Principles* would be an admirable scholarly contribution; but of course, Hechter has new insights of his own to offer, and he skillfully reworks other people's data to provide convincing empirical support for his model.

The key elements of Hechter's own model are *dependence* (how costly it is to leave a group in terms of opportunities forgone), *visibility* (of noncooperative acts) and *sanctioning mechanisms*: "While dependence increases the extensiveness of corporate obligations, it does not insure compliance with these obligations. Compliance requires formal controls. Some agency of the group must have the ability to monitor the members' behavior and to provide sanctions to reward the compliant and punish the noncompliant" (pp. 10-11). For Hechter, solidarity can best be understood as compliance in the absence of compensation. While none of the elements of Hechter's model are new, their integration into a model that purports to give both necessary and sufficient conditions for group solidarity is new.

For political scientists interested in party or legislative politics, perhaps the most interesting chapter is "Dependence and Party Solidarity." Hechter's training is in sociology, but he

draws on data collected by political science students of legislative politics (e.g., Froman, Loewenberg, Polsby, Ripley, Turner) to explain such phenomena as cross-national variations in the aggregate solidarity of major political parties, longitudinal variations in aggregate levels of party solidarity within a given party, and so on. While the data and conclusions are not new, the development of a unified model of the factors accounting for solidarity that is able to accommodate a host of existing findings can be fitted and rich in suggestions for future research is new and exciting.

The last chapters, which deal with other theoretical issues, (e.g., moral hazard and principal-agent relations) and with practical problems of monitoring and control, lack the clean line of argument of the earlier chapters and have a certain potpourri quality. But even this weakest part of this book is rich in suggestive hypotheses, for instance, about the relationship between hierarchy and social order.

In sum, I do not think that Hechter has accounted for the genesis and maintenance of social solidarity, but he has made a major contribution. This is a book that should be read by anyone interested in how groups and organizations (and societies) function. The ideas in it are worth thinking about.

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**The Welfare State in Transition.** By Norman Johnson. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. 243p. \$27.50 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

This is one more in the series of books published over the past decade on the welfare state crisis and in more recent years on the changing nature of the welfare state. Using the term *welfare pluralism*, this book focuses on what is increasingly referred to as the "mixed economy of welfare" and the question of what should be the appropriate roles of government, the voluntary sector, the market, and the family; and, for good social policy, what should be the appropriate balance among these institutions? From another perspective, an alternative title for the book might have been *Privatization*

and the Welfare State, but that title is already in use. Obviously, with this as its focus, the book is very much at the heart of the current social policy debate. Its limitation is that it does not add anything new to the discussion, although it does provide a useful general overview of the current debate and some of the relevant literature.

Written by a British social policy scholar, the book is in fact a comparative analysis of western mixed economy welfare states, with particular attention to Britain and the United States and illustrations drawn from other countries as well. The author begins with a clear statement of his theme: that many welfare state advocates are convinced that a mixed economy of welfare is essential if the welfare state is to remain viable; that this means that the government should remain predominant as funder and regulator of social provision; but that its role as producer or provider-deliverer of social benefits and services should be shared across the other sectors. Johnson agrees that the debate about the allocation of roles across the sectors is an ongoing debate and that the balance will shift over time and across countries. He criticizes the welfare state crisis concept as being a tool of conservatives used to justify cuts in social expenditure. On the basis of extensive and rigorous examination the concept has been rejected already by many social policy analysts as inaccurate.

The author concludes his analysis by stating that "in the short and medium term the future of the welfare state appears to lie in the direction of welfare pluralism; but even with statutory finance and regulation, serious doubts arise as to the willingness and capacity of the voluntary and informal sectors to substitute for the state. If they cannot respond in the ways and to the extent expected of them by welfare pluralists, then welfare pluralism will merely serve to legitimate cuts in public expenditure and the development of market provision" (pp. 199-200). Since he does not believe that there is sufficient political will to support social policy in the long term, he sees socialism as the only viable strategy.

The first three chapters provide a general context for Johnson's analysis. He reviews the history of welfare state developments and concludes that the welfare state phenomenon characterizes all advanced capitalist societies to a greater or lesser degree. He then reviews the