

Patterns of Political Issues in European Democracies since 1945*

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Introduction

General theories concerning political systems approach these types of social systems as action systems. The Eastonian systems analysis models the political system as an input – output organization processing demands and support, converting these into the production of decisions and activities (Easton, 1965). In a similar fashion Almond and Powell identify six action aspects: interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule formulation, rule application, rule adjustment and communication – relating demand and support to outputs (Almond and Powell, 1966). A systems approach may be transformed into a communication approach placing the same emphasis on decision-making and the processing of inputs into outputs as the Deutsch model shows (Deutsch, 1963). A political system is typified by the fact that ongoing decision-making processes focus upon so-called issues.

General theories of political behavior and collective choice identify issues as of crucial importance in shaping electoral choice, party outcomes and decision-making processes in legislative assemblies (Tufte, 1978; Whiteley, 1980; Alt & Chrystal, 1983; Budge & Farlie, 1977; Budge & Farlie, 1978). What is referred to as "saliency theory" states that the "issueness" of political problems accounts to a considerable extent for the voting behavior of citizens as well as party strategy and tactics in the Budge and Farlie interpretation (Budge & Farlie, 1983). Roll-call analysis identifies issues as the substance of legislative decision-

making to be handled by means of some decision rule in accordance with actors' preferences in order to arrive at some collective outcome (Riker & Ordeshook, 1973; Riker, 1982; Moulin, 1983; Brams, 1975).

The empirically oriented student of comparative politics finds it interesting to study the appearance of the issue-making process cross-nationally. Firstly, we face a variation in the political relevance of various kinds of problems both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. Secondly, there is the basic problem in political sociology of the extent to which the politicization of certain problems is a function of the environment. Finally, we have an hypothesis which states that the occurrence of certain types of issues may result in political instability. We will analyse issue-making in the context of European democracies during the time period after the Second World War. Thus, we can pose these questions for comparative inquiry:

- (1) What is the cross-sectional variation in political issues?
- (2) What is the relationship between patterns of issues and social structure?
- (3) What is the relationship between patterns of issues and political stability?

It should be emphasized that no attempt is made to provide a general answer to these three questions; our targets are less ambitious as our analysis aims to cover only the cases of European democracies in the Post-war period.

The concept of an issue

The basic problem in relation to the concept of an issue is to specify those properties that out of the raw materials of politics distil a set of problems

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that are politically highly salient. What properties define a problem as politically salient enough for it to be labeled an "issue"? Actually, there is no standard definition of "issue" in the literature. In his analytic study *Party Strategies in a Multiparty System* (1968) Gunnar Sjöblom states:

"... 'issue' in this context refers to a matter of dispute between the parties in the electoral arena. Normally, one also reads into the concept that an 'issue' must not be a too insignificant matter of dispute which only appears sporadically or incidentally in the election debate". (Sjöblom, 1968:123)

Sjöblom singles out three properties: target of conflict, politicization and significance for the political system. In voting studies issues refer to "statements that allege differences between the contending parties or candidates" (Berelson et al., 1954:182) and Easton follows this usage: "Of necessity, these will be the demands that have become the subject of greatest controversy and, following standard usage, I shall call them *issues*" (Easton, 1965:140). Evidently, what is typical of an issue is the fact that it is either an object of different and *conflicting orientations* of some or all of the political parties or a problem of *systemic importance*. Finding operational criteria for these properties is a difficult problem: what is a significant matter? How can one separate issues from non-issues if some types of systemic social problems never become politicized? How can one distinguish between various degrees of "issuiness"? The problem of presenting a definition of the concept of an issue that comprises a set of necessary or sufficient conditions for the application of the concept was debated at length in the famous struggle concerning the concept of power (Dahl, 1961; Bachrach-Baratz, 1963; Polsby, 1963). There is a risk that a non-issue and a non-existent issue will be seen as being identical thus making the distinction between issues and non-issues barren (Wolffinger, 1971).

In order to avoid the problem of separating issues and non-issues Kenneth Janda in his major study *Political Parties. A Cross-National Survey* (1980) starts from the assumption that issues are what politics is all about; the problem then becomes to single out a set of important issues interesting enough to warrant a cross-national study. Janda states:

"We further narrow the universe by also requiring that the issues be pervasive enough to elicit conflicting positions by parties in more than two countries – insisting, in fact, that the issues must either cut across countries in different cultural-geographical areas or that they be common to most of the party systems within a single area . . . The issues that we selected constitute a 'sample' of the universe only to the extent that we have not included all the issues that might be included in a cross-national analysis. We hope that we have selected the important ones, but we certainly have not exhausted the universe of possibilities." (Janda, 1980:53)

The Janda criterion on issue importance – "elicit conflicting positions by parties in more than two countries" – parallels the Sjöblom definition though it introduces a narrower concept because of the cross-national requirement. Again, stating operational criteria is problematic: what criteria could make us confident that the "important ones" have been identified in various countries? No doubt the concept of an issue is widely employed in comparative politics in order to sort out questions that somehow pertain to conflict in a manifest or latent fashion. The following quotation may serve as a typical statement about the function of issues in political systems:

"Dutch politics is a politics of accommodation. That is the secret of its success. The term accommodation is here used in the sense of settlement of divisive issues and conflicts where only a minimal consensus exists." (Lijphart, 1975:103)

The theory of the issue cycle is clear enough as it identifies the various steps in the process of handling political matters in so far as they have "issuiness":

- (1) politicization of a problem
- (2) decision-making finding alternatives and a solution
- (3) depoliticization of the problem

However, how do we identify these phases? When have issues been settled? How much consensus must have prevailed for how long before an issue can be said to be settled? Suffice it here to establish that the operational criteria are as important as the theoretical properties and that the operational criteria must somehow refer to *political conflict* or to problems that are important to the political system as a system, *systemic impact*.

The observation of issues

Issues is a subset within the social problems of a nation in contrast to the private problems of the citizens. Operational criteria that are each sufficient for designating a social problem as an issue include:

- (1) Target for *parliamentary* action. An analysis of parliamentary decisions may contribute much to the identification of the set of issues in a nation. One additional advantage is that it simultaneously displays the patterns of conflict surrounding an issue.
- (2) Target for *public opinion* activities. An analysis of the major newspapers may present an overview of the major problems that have become politicized. Such a set may be narrower or wider than the set identified by means of parliamentary analysis. Using public opinion as a source helps one to apprehend problems that the political parties abstain from bringing in to the political arena.

The criteria – parliamentary decision activity and/or public opinion attention – may not be necessary for the identification of issues in general, but they are probably sufficient for describing political issues in Western Europe.

Issues have a few salient properties: intensity of conflict, extension in time, number of participants involved and frequency of occurrence. These properties capture the "issue-ness" of a social problem. If they were easily operationalized a scale measuring issue-ness could be derived by simply adding the scores of an issue on the dimensions. Unfortunately, these properties of issues are difficult to identify empirically. For political sociologists it is a truism that there is a set of major issues in all nations; it is anything but clear how such a set is to be identified and what values on the dimensions of issue-ness constitute necessary or sufficient conditions for singling out an issue as a major one. Below we solve the problem of finding the *major* issues by employing the two techniques discussed above: on the one hand Keesings Contemporary Archives have been used to check what various national newspapers have focussed on, and on the other hand we have identified those decisions in parliament that have been actually or potentially the cause of shifts in government or in coalition patterns according to various nation specialists.

Classification of issues

To be able to observe an issue is not enough; a basic problem in the study of political decision-

making is the categorization of issues once the identification problem has been resolved. Classifying issues requires a typology. In the literature various considerations have been put forward as foundations for a categorization. Janda talks of a variety of orientations with regard to issues; more specifically it is suggested that thirteen categories cover the various types of issues: government ownership of means of production, government role in economic planning, redistribution of wealth, social welfare, secularization of society, support of the military, alignment with East/West blocks, anticolonialism, supranational integration, national integration, electoral participation, protection of civil rights and interference with civil liberties (Janda, 1980:55). A similar list of types of issues has been suggested by Thomas (1975).

It may be argued that the Janda list is too detailed, and in fact a list of broader categories has been proposed by Arend Lijphart, who speaks of a few ideological dimensions typical of the politics of the 1970s: socio-economic, religious, cultural-ethnic, urban-rural, regime support, foreign policy and postmaterialism (Lijphart, 1981:28–29). Of course, as the comprehensiveness of the categories is expanded the risk of losing valuable distinctions increases. Compared to the Lijphart typology Janda may pinpoint important distinctions between types of socio-economic issues like government ownership of the means of production versus government role in economic planning. On the other hand a detailed list such as Janda's may result in double classifications: How is one to distinguish between redistribution of wealth and social welfare? A detailed list of types of issues also runs the risk of being not detailed enough! If electoral participation constitutes an issue type how do environmental issues fit in? If social welfare is an important issue kind are also property rights and workers' participation?

The typology of issues must take into consideration the theoretical problems to be elucidated. Since our focus when surveying the major issues in small democracies is to test the hypothesis that issue occurrence depends on the environment our typology will be based on the distinction between structural and non-structural issues, though the distinction may be questioned theoretically (Sparre Nilson, 1980: 505–506). Diagram 1 shows the classification scheme.

It is hardly to be expected that our classification scheme could cover each and every issue; moreover, some issues can be classified under more

Diagram 1. Types of Issues

Structural Issue-Types

Class: Industrial relations: nationalization, strikes, industrial democracy, participatory democracy;
Income distribution: distributional policies, equality, taxes, unemployment, concentration of wealth.

Religion: State-church relations;
Moral questions: abortion, divorce, alcohol policies.

Regional: Cultural relations: language problems;
Status of minorities: immigration;
Regional economic development;
Agriculture: prices, land reform.

Non-Structural Issue-Types

Foreign policy & Defense: Multi-lateral relations and orientations: EC, OECD, UN, East-West;
Bi-lateral relations and orientations;
3rd world relations and orientations: decolonization;
National forces: nuclear weapons, role of the military, rearmament and disarmament;
Military cooperation: NATO.

Political system: Constitution: institutions (monarchy);
Constitution: levels (regionalisation);
Governmental style: devices, corruption;
Constitutional rules: rights, liberties;
Internal order: war criminals, terrorism.

Public sector: Economic policies, public sector development, inflation;
Social security and health service policies.

Ecology: Nuclear power, pollution, zero-growth politics.

than one issue type. The distinction between class oriented issue types and issues related to economic strategies is a tenuous one, which also applies to the separation between social security issues and class based issues. However, any classification scheme has to struggle with the problem of issue identification – what is to be left out? – and the problem of parsimony – how much to be included in various issue types?

The occurrence of various kinds of issues is measured in terms of an ordinal scale which also takes into account the intensity of the issue pro-

cess. It must be admitted that the assignment of issues scores is based on judgements which may not meet with unanimous acceptance. However, a comparison with a similar classification in *Explaining and Predicting Elections* (1983) by Ian Budge and Dennis J. Farlie presents an opportunity to check the reliability of the coding. Budge and Farlie employ a rather detailed classification scheme covering some fourteen issue types in order to measure the occurrence of these issues in twentythree countries. Their scores of issue occurrence only take into account the frequency

distribution crossnationally as well as longitudinally. Though it is not quite clear how the categories that Budge and Farlie employ are to be translated into our issue types it appears that the differences between their scores and our scores are not substantial. However, it seems as if the identification of class based issues or what Budge and Farlie refer to as socio-economic issues differs. According to Budge and Farlie there are few occurrences of these kinds of issues in France during the whole time period studied as well as in Italy during the period 1945–1965 which is not in agreement with our observations. Moreover, Budge and Farlie observe more of public sector related issues in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom during the period 1945–1965. Our classification is more detailed than Lijphart's in his *Democracies* (1984). We also differ from Lijphart's observation of certain issues for certain countries, but the overall agreement is acceptable.

Theories of issues

The concept of an issue is employed to theorize about political problem solving, its nature, conditions and implications. Political systems may be conceived of as a set of decision-mechanisms responding to citizen demands by the making and implementation of policies. Political problem solving is a function of both the nature of the problems encountered and the problem solving capacity of political institutions. The concept of problem solving intended here is in no way a narrow one as the political management of social problems may involve that problems are removed from the arena (depolitized) though there is no solution in the proper sense of the word. Political problem solving may involve the identification of non-issues, the making of pseudo-policies and the employment of delays and re-definition of the problems involved.

Though the impact of issues upon political institutions have been emphasized in political economy and voting studies (the political popularity function), it must be recognized that the "issue-ness" of a social problem depends upon the response of political institutions. Political decision-making is not simply a reflection of social problem generation, but the behavior of institutions in the political system affect which problems become issues (the political business cycle). Thus, how social problems correspond to political issues and how the occurrence of various kinds of issues affect the political system is an open question.

Following a popular theme in political sociology we wish to estimate how issues depend on social cleavages and how issue occurrence relate to political stability.

Political sociology is the approach to the study of politics where political phenomena like voter alignments, party affiliation, party system variables, decision-making patterns and conflict dimensions are regarded as dependent variables and properties of the most general social system – society – are approached as independent variables. In a general sense the idea is to identify the determinants in the social structure for political phenomena. Perhaps Marxist analysis is the most typical representative of this approach but in modern political sociology there is a much broader view of the set of social determinants, which includes more than class variables. Reinhold Bendix and Seymour M. Lipset state:

"Instead of regarding collective actions in some final sense as an inevitable product of common economic interests, political sociology emphasizes the fact that the interaction among individuals occupying the same economic position is also conditioned by cultural social-psychological and situational determinants. These conditions intervene between the economic position of individuals and their collective actions, making the latter less predictable than Marx would have us believe. These intervening conditions modify – though they do not nullify – the impact of economic self-interest on conduct." (Bendix & Lipset, 1957:88)

It has been argued that a reductionist hypothesis approaching politics as an epiphenomenon is implicit in the political sociology approach (Sartori, 1969:93–94). However, a step towards an increased knowledge of how social structure conditions political phenomena is to formulate specific hypotheses to be tested by means of the estimation of relationships in the data. We focus on one type of political phenomenon – issues – and a specific set of social structures – those of European democracies since the Second World War. And we pose the following questions:

- (1) What is the relationships between political issues and social structure in various democratic nations in Europe since 1945?
- (2) What is the relationships between issues and political stability in these various nations?

The data set has to be assembled in a manner that will permit a wide representation of the occur-

ences of various kinds of issues and also include a number of dimensions of social structure and political stability. Starting from the questions above we ask more specifically:

- (3) What is the cross-sectional variation in political issues between European democratic systems?
- (4) What is the longitudinal variation in political issues in each West-European nation?

A cross-sectional analysis offers a method of testing the hypothesis that the politicization of problems is a function of the structure of society; this means that if we find a variation in political issues we must also find a variation in social structure. A cross-sectional analysis also offers insights into how political stability is affected by issue occurrences. The emphasis in our analysis is thus on issue variation, its origin and effects. We begin with an overview of the occurrence of issues in the various West European political systems. The longitudinal analysis alerts one of the presence and significance of mechanisms that govern the definition, the politicization and the resolution of issues. The country descriptions will focus on the occurrence of various kinds of issues, in particular the extent to which political problem solving deals with structural issues and political system issues.

Austria

In Austria the majority of political issues has referred to either internal or external aspects of the political system. The predominance of non-structural issues in a society with such a heterogeneous culture as Austria reflects the peculiar position of Austria at the end of World War II. With it being occupied there was much uncertainty as to the constitutional status of the country, a state of affairs reflected in a number of issues.

One set of such issues focussed upon the basic rules concerning the relation to the occupation powers as well as the settlement with the remnants of the Nazi period. Problems dealing with the overall governing of the nation kept cropping up: in the mid 1960's the Hapsburg affair reminded Austria of its undemocratic past while at the same time the *Grosse Koalition* began to face widespread opposition. The Androsch affair in the early 1980s is less a reflection of the past and more in tune with a general trend in West European societies towards criticism of big government

and bureaucracy. The issue over the status of the Austrian state was resolved in the State Treaty of 1955 in which sovereignty was recognized in exchange for neutrality.

However, the problem of the province of Tyrol or Alto Adige has presented the Austrian government with a problem that has been politicized at various times. The ÖVP in particular has been sensitive to the position of the German-speaking majority in the northern Italian province, though Austria has never demanded any territorial changes. It seems that the issue was resolved in 1972, when Austria and Italy arrived at an agreement.

Actually, we find few structural conflicts corresponding to the cleavages in the social structure. If political conflict is a reflection of social structure then we could expect a strong predominance of religious and class-based issues in Austrian politics. This is hardly the case as religious problems were only salient in 1945 and 1962. The religious issue has had two aspects, the first concerned with the nature of religious instruction in state schools, and the other with the position of confessional schools. In 1945 it was decided that religious instruction was to be obligatory, and in 1962 the state accepted economic responsibility for the confessional schools. At the same time the Church declared itself content with this kind of relationship to the state, and no longer participates in partisan politics.

In Austrian politics the nationalization decisions taken in 1946 and in 1947 could be regarded as a reflection of the traditional antagonism between the socialist Lager on the one hand and the Catholic and Nationalist Lagers on the other. However, there was unanimity among the major political parties with regard to the nationalization of mostly German-owned enterprises after the War, but the nationalization problems has been politicized to and fro during the whole time period because there has been disagreement on how the nationalized sector was to be governed. Among the SPÖ there has been substantial sympathy for a more planned economy, but there has been no new demand for more nationalization.

While the debate on economic policy has been more or less continuous – the left favoring an increased public sector and the right emphasizing the market economy and the priority of the private sector – there was one new spectacular issue in the late 1970s, the referendum in 1978 on the Zwentendorf nuclear reactor. This issue stirred up a great deal of animosity within the SPÖ. The

issue contained elements not only of environmentalism but also of a general revolt against the established order.

To sum up: Austrian political decision-making has faced a few serious problems which were more the outcome of the political situation of the country as a result of its Anschluss with Nazi-Germany in 1938 than a reflection of its inherited social structure. The general impression is that Austrian politics in the Second Republic is very different from Austrian politics in the First Republic, characterized by sharp political cleavages along the Lager boundaries.

Belgium

Political systems may handle various types of issues; there may even be politicization of both structural and non-structural problems. However, political systems cannot deal with all types of issues at the same time. The distinction between *latent* and *manifest* issues is an instrumental one as it points to the fact that only one or two major problems come up for political decision-making at a time. The development of political problem solving in Belgium is a nice example of this rule.

After the Second World War politics focussed upon the re-establishing of the Belgian state. The political parties had to deal with both the internal problem about what to do with the Royal family (*Question Royale*) and how to handle the external initiatives concerning a rearmament of Western Europe (the NATO question). The constitutional problem was a delicate one focussing upon the person of Leopold III; the socialists and the liberals fiercely opposed his continued reign because of his refusal to join his cabinet in the exile during the Nazi-occupation. An attempt was made to solve the issue by removing it from the parliamentary arena in the 1950 referendum. The Walloon provinces and Brussels voted against Leopold's reign whereas the Flandern provinces voted in favour; there followed a period of undecision about the outcome which implied that Leopold would remain king; finally in 1951 the issue was resolved by Leopold's abdication while securing the throne for his family. The solution to the NATO-question was similarly widely accepted after some time, though the issue of NATO-membership concerned less the major political parties than extra-parliamentary groups, among other the resistance movement.

Belgium inherited a major political problem from its colonial past, the problem of the Belgian

Congo. The rising nationalist movement in the Congo presented Belgian politics with a problem it could not handle; the confrontation between the Eyskens government and the Socialist Party resulted in a cabinet change which opened the way for a Belgian retreat under UN auspices. The Belgian entry into the Common Market in 1957 was a far easier issue, meeting with opposition only from the Communist Party. Though the Congo problem was a severe one it may be stated that the Belgian political parties managed to handle all the problems that concerned its constitutional affairs and its foreign relation affairs; these so-called non-structural issues could be managed, though with difficulty. The Belgian political system was to do much worse when it was faced with a structural problem in the 1960s and the 1970s, the language issue.

It is true that the system managed to cope with the religious problem in the 1958 decision (*pacte scolaire*) concerning the principles governing the funding of the school system. The Catholic group accepted non-denominational schools whereas the socialists accepted public subsidizing of teachers' salaries in Catholic schools. Behind the 1958 decision lay a long history of intense conflict between the forces of religion and secularization in Belgium; it was engineered as a twelve-year truce but it actually removed the issue from the party arena. Class cleavages affect voter alignments in Belgium; the socialist parties mobilize the vote of the working classes in the traditionally industrial areas of Wallonia; yet, class conflict only once became a highly conspicuous issue in 1960-61 when there was a general strike stemming from unrest in the mining areas. The structural issue that has had the most profound effect on all aspects of the Belgian political system is, however, the language problem.

The conflict between the Dutch-speaking group and the French-speaking group became manifest and highly visible in the early 1960s; the language problem had been there all the time, but the attempt to solve it while creating language laws in the late 1930s did not succeed, though they secured the language of the Flemish provinces. In the wake of the revival of the language issue in the 1960s the position of Brussels became a source of contention as it was feared the Dutch language was losing ground to the French language. When politicized the language cleavage had implications for all the political parties; language parties were

resurrected from the past (the CVU) or were created anew (RW, FDF) during the sixties; during the 1970s it proved ever more difficult for the political parties to handle the language issue, and they themselves became the target of this cleavage when the major parties were divided into two separate blocs, one Dutch-speaking and one French-speaking.

The inability of the Belgian political system to handle the language problem is reflected in the growing instability of this political system. In 1980 a major constitutional revision was introduced in order to lessen the tension between the major language regions.

Denmark

Danish politics is a mixture of structural and non-structural issues. The party system has traditionally comprised parties that have strong social links, and these parties have politicized problems that are crucial to their special groups of adherents. On the other hand there are also parties that attract diffuse social support, and these parties have concentrated on problems that concern a wider group of citizens.

The armistice in 1945 brought the traditional parties back to power; like all nations that had been under Nazi occupation the Danish political system faced problems relating to its external relations, its internal defence and the principles for governing the country. These matters – foreign policy issues, defence issues and political system issues – were dealt with during the years following the armistice. Denmark entered NATO in 1949 and it revised its constitution in 1953. These decisions were much debated, but the opposition stemmed from minor groups. The decision to enter the Western defence alliance was part of a policy to both rearm Denmark and to bring Denmark closer to the Anglo-American way of life. It was fiercely opposed by the resistance groups as well as by the communists. The entrance into NATO was supported by the Social Democratic Party, which, however, also seriously considered the alternative of forming an independent Scandinavian defence alliance with Norway and Sweden. The introduction of the 1953 constitution eliminated some restrictions on democratic procedure by creating a unicameral legislature. The decision was opposed only by some dissenters among the non-socialist parties who went on to form an independent party (Uafhaenige) and the Communists, who feared that the new constitu-

tion opened the way for the transfer of Danish parliamentary rights to supranational bodies.

The left-wing groups became the main opponents to Danish entry into the Common Market when this problem was politicized again in the early 1970s. Though the issue was handled by means of a referendum which caused intense debate and a mobilization of pro- and anti-groups within several of the political parties, it was successfully resolved. Danish governments have been far less successful when it comes to another major type of non-structural issue: problems of economic strategy.

Since the mid-1960s there has been an ongoing debate about how to govern the economy, how to contain inflation as well as how much public sector growth there should be. It appears that none of the major political parties have been able to do anything about the huge budget deficits and the extensive foreign borrowing. The rapid development of the public sector gave rise to a heavy politicization of economic policies in the 1970s, when new parties were founded partly as a reaction to the inability of the traditional parties to change the public expansion policy.

In the late 1970's the economic difficulties have become increasingly salient; we find issues referring to the size of the public sector, to the combination of high inflation and high unemployment as well as to serious problems about the introduction of nuclear power, as the decision-makers hope to make use of the gas resources in the North Sea. In the 1981 election one of the major issues concerned the control of gas utilization, with the Social Democrats favoring nationalization.

There have been a couple of structural issues in the Danish political system that should be mentioned; in fact, we find all four structural issue types represented. The proposal of the Danish trade unions (LO) for economic democracy (ÖD) in the 1970s, the politicization of the abortion problem by the Kristeligt Folkeparti also in the 1970s, and the problematic status of the German-speaking minority in the South of Jutland after the armistice should be mentioned; more enduring is the agricultural issue as it has been on the agenda during the whole period. The question of state subsidies to agriculture and more generally state control of agriculture has been activated to and fro time and again by the agricultural organizations and the non-socialist parties. It seems to be the case that the inability of the Danish political

system to handle the issue of the size and funding of the public sector has increased the visibility of the agricultural issue.

Federal Republic of Germany

The heavy predominance of nonstructural issue-types is typical of the issue-making in West-Germany. Remembering the clear social links of the political parties in the German political system, this is astonishing (Ersson, Janda & Lane, 1985). We find a disproportionate occurrence of political system issues reflecting the precarious status of the new republic. Of course, foreign policy issues as well as defence issues are also numerous. The reconstruction of the German political system after the downfall of the Nazi regime was to characterize the politicization of questions during the 1940s and the 1950s. There were controversies over domestic and external policy between the two main parties in the early years of the Republic and no basic consensus was fully established after 1959. On the whole the major parties appear to have been unanimously behind major decisions like the introduction of the 1949 constitution, the prohibition of extremist parties (in 1952 the Sozialistische Reichspartei and in 1956 the Communist Party), the introduction of the so-called Notstandsgesetze in 1967 broadening state power, the passing of a Länder-resolution about Berufsverbot in 1972 – such issues became visible because these proposals were opposed by various minor groups.

Extra-parliamentary movements have been the source of the politicization of several problems in West Germany. It seems as if the three major parties often have had to react to political initiative from elsewhere; we find that extra-parliamentary movements are a driving force behind several types of issues: rearmament, nuclear weapons, the APO-movement and the energy-ecology movement. Some groups in the extra-parliamentary movement have reacted to the West-orientation of German policy-making. This was particularly true when the extra-parliamentary movement developed into a Marxist guerilla force in the form of the Baader-Meinhof group, the RAF. If there has been consensus between the political parties on the political system issues, then dissensus has characterized foreign policy-making.

There has been a rift between the CDU/CSU on the one hand and the Social Democratic Party on the other, the SPD emphasizing the possibility of

and the need for accommodation with East European and Soviet communism. The main issue was, of course, the Brandt initiative in the late 1960s culminating with the signing of the Moscow and Warsaw agreements in 1970 and the ratification of treaty with the German Democratic Republic in 1973. Concerning defence policy the tension between the CDU/CSU and the SPD became more pronounced in the late 1970s; there seems to have been some agreement as to the rearmament of West Germany within the framework of NATO which the republic entered in 1956 though before 1956 defence policy was a matter of intense argument and linked with the issue of reunification.

However, there is growing concern in the SPD about the increasing reliance on more and more advanced weapon systems. In the early 1980s the so-called "twin-track" of NATO concerning the deployment of Pershing missiles became a hotly disputed issue both between government and opposition and within the SPD.

The reaction of leftist groups within the SPD against nuclear weapons – in particular the eventual use of the neutron bomb – has also appeared in the energy policy area, where policy makers face both extra-parliamentary movements and a new party – die Grünen – calling for anti-pollution measures as well as an end to the use of nuclear energy, working up pressure on the SPD.

Structural-type issues have not been as visible as issues like the Spiegel-affair or Ost Politik, but nonetheless they have been there all the time. The basic policy division between the CDU/CSU and the SPD appears in issues related to industrial relations and income distribution; the social links of these two parties are to some extent reflected in the conflict between work and capital, the SPD favoring ideas of industrial democracy, participatory democracy and distributional policies. No doubt, the SPD has been more in favor of expanding social security programs and the welfare state in general, though we have to remember that the CDU/CSU has had social commitments inherited from its social Catholicism. We note the occurrence of ethnic issues, on the one hand the problem of the *Vertriebene* after the downfall of the Third Reich (in fact very quickly absorbed into the system), and on the other the recent unrest over the immigration of *Gastarbeiter* from the Mediterranean area. Differences have become much more acute since the advent of the CDU government in 1982. Basic consensus, however, is set by (a)

Soziale Marktwirtschaft of CDU, (b) *Sozialer Rechtsstaat* of Basic Law and (c) SPD Bad Godesberg program of 1959.

Finland

Issue-making in the Finnish political system has tended to be strongly concentrated on two types of non-structural issues: constitutional principles and foreign policy. The orientation towards these types of issues was the outcome of the unfortunate decision on the part of the Finns to join the war effort of the Nazi regime against the USSR. Actually, the consequences of the participation in the so-called Continuation War for the Finnish polity can hardly be exaggerated; it has focussed the lines of political conflict on problems concerned with defining the relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union, which has meant that other social problems have not been politicized to the same extent as in other European democracies.

The relationship to the Soviet Union became acute after the Finnish surrender in 1944 as the Finns agreed to the payment of substantial war damages and the ceding of some ten percent of its territory to the USSR. In 1948 the so-called Finno-Soviet pact of friendship was signed, which was to constitute the basis of Finnish foreign relations and to affect the general features of Finnish post-war politics. The so-called Paasikiivi line – i.e. neutrality towards the West and the maintenance of friendly relations with the East – has now and then been the target of politicization. The main supporters behind the Paasikiivi-Kekkonen line have always been the Agrarian and the Communist Parties, whereas the other parties have raised objections at various times (Anckar, 1982).

The question of Soviet influence on Finnish politics was politicized particularly in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when the Soviet Union influenced the Finnish political system as to which parties could be trusted with government offices. The Social Democratic Party was not acceptable in government from 1959 to 1966 due to Russian pressure. It seems that the expanding Conservative Party – the KOK – now faces some of the same difficulties the Social Democratic Party had to struggle with in the early 1960's. However, it should be emphasized that there is today a consensus among the political parties supporting the Paasikiivi-Kekkonen line.

The dominance of the relationship with the USSR in Finnish politics has created another and more salient issue: the power of the president.

Whether strong presidential power is in accordance with the 1919 constitution is not the issue, but if such a concentration of power could be accepted by the political parties is a problem that have been politicized intermittently. The reaction to the presidential interpretation of the constitution has come from minority groups whereas the major political parties in Finland whether socialist or non-socialist in nature deal with these problems as regards foreign policy and the constitution by means of elite accommodation; the question of whether Finland should join the Common Market was resolved by means of such a technique.

Conflicts between the major political parties have arisen in some areas of domestic policy: economic strategies, income distribution, ethnicity and religion. The questions relating to the Swedish-speaking minority or moral questions have flared up from time to time, though these problems have not been strongly politicized on any occasion. The economic conflicts are the most salient ones in the Finnish political system; they comprise class conflicts between employers and employees as well as between workers and farmers, but there is also a regional dimension: the poor North versus the rich South. In 1956 these class conflicts exploded into a general strike.

France

Political issues in France are of several types; we find both structural and non-structural issue types, and the level of politicization has been very high for issues belonging to each type. As is well known colonial problems brought down the Fourth Republic in 1958. It is not clear how structural and non-structural issues are to be separated in French politics; there seems to be a close association between the two with structural conflicts sometimes resulting in political system problems, sometimes government instability giving rise to structural issues.

There are two main types of non-structural issues, the politicization of the decolonization problem and the politicization of the constitutional problem. The Fourth Republic was inaugurated in 1946 establishing a parliamentary multi-party system. Its first major problem was the development in the French Indo-China which meant a clash between the parties of the right and those of the left as well as within the left. The defeat at Dien Bien Phu led to the formation of a Radical government under Mendès-France who dissolved

the issue by with-drawing from the Indo-China. Hardly had the Indo-China issue been depoliticized before the Algerian problem was politicized. The Algerian question implied a division into several camps, as a socialist government under G. Mollet was conducting the war in Algeria supported by the right but ambiguously opposed by the Communist Party and radical non-socialist groups. The politicization of the Algerian question rose to such a level that the Fourth Republic could not handle it.

In June 1958 the decision was taken to appoint de Gaulle Premier and in September a new constitution was introduced which made de Gaulle president. The Fifth Republic proved much more capable of handling colonial matters; the Algerian problem was solved by French withdrawal – a policy supported by all groups except those on the far right, parts of the Army and the French-Algerians. Faced with problems of decolonization in French Africa there was no major political group in France that would not accept a piecemeal French withdrawal. De Gaulle made a number of foreign policy innovations in addition to the quite new constitution that he framed, but these measures were only slightly politicized.

The difficulty for the de Gaulle regime came with the renewal of structural issues in the late 1960s together with a growing dissatisfaction with de Gaulle himself. Various kinds of structural problems – class conflicts, moral problems about abortion, autonomist movements among the ethnic minorities, demands for higher agricultural prices – had remained latent during the 1950's with the exception of the sudden outburst of the phenomenon of Poujadism. In 1968 some of these forces were manifested and they revolted against de Gaulle and the traditionally centralized form of French policy-making. Though the May events were followed by the defeat of the left in the June elections in 1968 some of the forces of the spring upheaval carried over into the 1970s.

The demand for autonomy did not fade away nor did the ongoing class conflict between left and right, now expressed in demands for worker participation (autogestion) and nationalization. In the 1970s we also find the ecology conflict, ecologists trying to mobilize support for their resistance to nuclear power plants. In 1982 the effort at a regionalization of the political system culminated in a far-reaching reform abolishing the prefect institution and opening up the possibility of more of départemental autonomy.

Greece

Some political systems concentrate on the politicization and resolving of social problems; these systems produce decisions that change social life creating new opportunities and new patterns of behavior. Other political systems are preoccupied with the principles of the system itself. They face continuous debate or conflict about how the country is to be ruled. In such systems political conflict is not concerned with how society is to be changed, providing the state with an active role in relation to social forces; these systems are concerned with the very existence of the political system itself. In such systems where survival of the system itself is the main issue we will find a preponderance of non-structural issue types. Greece belongs to this category of political systems.

In Greece political conflict has not only resulted in political instability but also in the disruption of the political system. The basic issue in Greek politics has for long been the political system itself as the conflict over how the country is to be governed was inherited from the period before the Second World War (the Metaxas regime) and resulted in a civil war between 1946 and 1949. There are several aspects to the political system issue; actually, the political system problem comprises several issues.

One issue is the position of the Greek monarchy, its power in the political system as well as its mere existence. The Greek political system has hovered between a republic and a monarchy for many years, as it has proved impossible to both have a monarchy and arrive at a consensus as to the constitutional limitations of the monarchy. The contest between monarchism or republicanism coincides with three different lines of division: conservative groups versus liberal groups, socialist parties versus non-socialist parties and secular thought versus the church. The system has resorted to referenda as a technique for arriving at a solution to the problem republic versus monarchy. In 1935 the monarchy was restored after the 1924 introduction of a republic; after the Second World War a referendum in 1946 confirmed the restoration of the monarchy, a decision overruled in 1973 and 1974, when a referendum decided for a republic.

Besides the issue of a constitutional monarchy in Greece there is the systemic problem of how to handle groups at the limits of the left-right spectrum. The status of the communist movement has been a never-ending source of conflict in Greek politics. The movement was prohibited in 1946 in

the wake of the civil war between the resistance movement and the traditional blocs in Greece and the communists had to operate either within the leftist movement (EDA) or in exile. Actually, there is as yet no decision about whether to repatriate communist participants in the civil war living in exile in Eastern Europe, though the communist movement has been permitted in 1974. It has been equally difficult to accommodate the extreme right into the political system and the threat of a military coup d'état was prominent during the 1950s and the 1960s. The military have been such a strong force in Greek politics that the main course of events in the country has been affected by the shifting relations of power within the military. Whereas the higher echelons of the military have supported monarchism, the lower echelons have looked for autocratic alternatives to parliamentary democracy. The military junta which seized power in April 1967 represented a reaction among middle and lower ranking officers to the weakness of the monarchy in the parliamentary system.

A third aspect of the political system issue is the problem of the frontiers of Greece; conservative groups of various kinds have nurtured the idea of a Greek empire covering not only Greece but also traditional Greek settlements in Asia Minor and the island of Cyprus (Enosis). These ambitions have been activated now and then, from the 1922 defeat in Asia Minor to the 1974 debacle in Cyprus, each causing the downfall of a Greek regime. The external relations of the Greek political system have been politicized in general. Just as the internal set-up of the political system is fragile the external relations are beset by conflict between the left and the right or between the socialist parties and the non-socialist parties. Membership of NATO and the entry into the EEC have been politicized by forces that are opposed to Western influence.

It seems as if the introduction of a new constitution in 1974 under the auspices of Karamanlis and the development of a major socialist party (PASOK) accepted in government have been conducive to some kind of solution to the difficult political system issue in Greece; it also appears that foreign policy issues have been depoliticized.

Ireland

Some issues are confined to limited periods of time; they go through a process of politicization,

conflict and depoliticization, a process which ends in some sort of issue resolution. Other political issues are less *instrumental* and more *symbolic* in nature, and they acquire a life of their own sustaining a political tradition. Issues may be created and may die, but issues may also enter into the political tradition being reflected in political system properties like the party system. Irish politics is a mixture of instrumental issues and symbolic ones. The latter type used to dominate Irish political life after the creation of the Irish Free State in 1921, but the development of the Irish polity since the Second World War has implied that more political tension has focussed on instrumental issues.

The all-important problem in Irish politics used to be the relationship to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. This issue was politicized into the party system on a permanent basis by the development of the contest between the Fianna Fail – the anti-treaty party – and the Fine Gael – the pro-treaty party. In 1949 nationalist ambitions were realised with the creation of an Irish Republic independent of the British Commonwealth, which is as far as the problem of united Ireland separate from the United Kingdom has got. The idea of uniting Ireland is more a matter of symbolism than realpolitik, though Irish politicians now and then express some sympathy for Catholic political organizations in Northern Ireland. Maybe the Irish Republic has shown more sympathy and understanding for nationalist movements in the Ulster provinces than in the Republic itself, particularly when the Fianna Fail has been in government.

Since the Second World War issue making has tended to concentrate more on instrumental issues, though there are a number of structural issues that have been handled by the political system. The question of the Irish language relates to the problem of Irish identity, and programs for the support of the Gaelic language are supported more strongly by the nationalists in the Fianna Fail, though no major group actively opposes this policy. There is the problem of the relationship between the state and the church, which was settled in the 1972 referendum abolishing a special clause about the unique position of the Catholic church in the Irish constitution. In 1983 a referendum on the Abortion issue was held which reflects the slow process of secularization in Ireland. It was decided that the state is not allowed to offer its citizens the possibility of a free abortion. Finally, we find an issue concerning regional development and the status of agriculture.

Among the non-structural issues the problems emerging from the development of the welfare state have grown in saliency. The addition of the Labor Party to the party system has meant that more instrumentalism has been inserted into public policy-making. It seems that the political parties are aligned as regards modern non-structural issues more on the basis of power considerations than on ideological reflections. Decision-making by means of referenda has been resorted to in rather non-controversial issues, for example the 1972 referendum on entrance into the Common Market and the 1968 referendum on the peculiar election system (STV).

Italy

Some nations focus on structural issues, whereas other nations concentrate upon non-structural issues. In the case of Italy we find a mixture of the two fundamental types of issues, though such a mixture may not be conducive to political stability because it may present too many problems for the political system to handle.

After the fall of Italian fascism the political system faced a serious constitutional problem that constituted a potential threat to civil order: republic or monarchy. This issue divided Italy into two camps, but the republicans won the issue in a referendum in 1946 (54.3% versus 45.7%). The outcome was accepted by an overwhelming majority of the Italian people, though monarchism has attracted minor groups during the post-war period.

The threat to the continued existence of the Italy republic has, however, stemmed from extremist groups, which began to resort to violent measures in the middle of the 1960s. On one side there are the *Brigate Rossi* which developed out of left-wing extremism in the 1960s; on the other we find neo-fascist groups that linger on from the past and which are not averse to the employment of violent techniques. At times the threats have been substantial, aggravated by the political instability of the Italian republic, the continuous succession of numerous governments, a high level of unemployment and inflation, and the occurrence of political scandals testifying to the influence of groups like the mafia. Civil disorder, however, has not pushed the system to the point of breakdown; the two major parties though in fundamental conflict appear to safeguard the Italian Republic (*compromesso storico*).

The two basic conflict dimensions in the Italian

policy concern the contest between work and capital on the one hand and religion versus secularization on the other. These two conflict dimensions are partly expressed in the struggle between the Catholic Party and the Communist Party. It must be emphasized, however, that these two conflict dimensions are far broader than the contest between the DCI and the PCI. Not only are there other political parties that align themselves in terms of these two conflict dimensions, but the distinction between work and capital cuts across the Catholic camp as there are strong elements of social Catholicism, for example in the form of the Catholic trade union movement. In the conflict dimension of religion versus secularization there have been two spectacular issues, divorce and abortion. The parliamentary decisions to introduce these new measures aroused a ferment of feeling among Catholic and conservative groups, who tried to have the legislation repealed by referenda. However, the referenda decisions confirmed the parliamentary acts (the 1974 divorce referendum and the 1980 abortion referendum). It seems as if the referendum may be employed as a decision-making mechanism to achieve a confirmation of parliamentary decisions in a society with sharp cleavages.

Besides the class conflict and the religious contest we also find ethnic and regional issues. Ethnicity as a source of conflict is to be found in the very north of Italy, in the Alto Adige (South Tyrolia) and the Aosta Valley where German-speaking and French-speaking groups have demanded autonomy because they constitute either a majority (Alto Adige) or a significant minority (Aosta Valley) of the population. The more general regional conflict dimension includes the tension between urban and rural areas as well as the contrast between northern and southern Italy. Italian governments have responded to these demands, ethnic, rural and the *Mezzogiorno* with the same measure, regionalization. Five of the regions have been granted a wider form of autonomy based on constitutional legislation specially adapted to their regional characteristics: Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Val d'Aosta. The politics of regionalization has been successful as regards the ethnic minorities in the North, but according to political opinion in Italy too little has been achieved in terms of the problem of *Mezzogiorno*.

The Italian political system has not been in existence for long and it is often considered to be highly

in stable, but when one examines the decision-making in relation to the major issues it is not a total failure. We find some capacity on the part of the system to handle issues that are tied to deep-seated conflicts between various social groups.

The Netherlands

Issues vary in terms of their life span; some issues are short, being politicized almost overnight and resolved in the political process or dismissed by the political process. Other issues stay on after having been introduced into the political system and they may have a force of their own making it possible for the issue to remain salient for generations of policy makers. These long-term issues need not always be the most salient ones as short-term issues may be explosive in character. Issue-making in the Netherlands used to be characterized by the predominance of issues with long life span and low or high saliency, which were handled by means of the classical decision-making mechanism, the politics of accommodation. We find, however, that when we take a broader look at issue-making since the Second World War the consociational model has lost much of its applicability, because a change seems to have occurred in the pattern of issue-making since the 1960s. Now the predominant types of issues are of types long life span and low saliency, or short life span and high saliency. Let us look at each type of issue.

There are a few short-term highly intensive issues that the Dutch political system has faced since 1945: the decolonization issue, the South Moluccan protests in the 1970s, and some scandals caused by the Royal family (the Lockheed affair). We still find traces of the old long-term issues that used to characterize the conflict between the so-called *zuilen*; yet, we also find new kinds of issues that linger on though they are not explosive: the problem of regional development, questions relating to the participation of the Netherlands in NATO (nuclear weapons, i.e. the Pershing missiles) as well as ecological matters. These new issues have tended to disrupt the classical lines of confrontation between the *zuilen*, but they are hardly salient enough to create a political system issue. These ongoing concerns in the political system also include the confrontation between leftist parties and conservative parties about the overall size and shape of the public sector.

Norway

The non-occurrence of political system issues may be interpreted as a sign of system persistence; however, it may still be difficult to create stable governments and the occurrence of other kinds of issues may trigger civil disorder actions. Yet, political instability does not necessarily imply a threat to system persistence. The Norwegian political system is accepted by all political groupings; and there has been little debate on political system issues since the Norwegian Social Democratic Party accepted parliamentary democracy in the 1920s, yet Norway has experimented a period of temporary political instability. When there is little conflict concerning the political system, the decision-makers are provided with an opportunity to concentrate on other problems. This is also what we find in Norway where the state is heavily involved in various activities.

The dominant position of the DNA in government has meant an extensive build-up of the public sector, which only the Conservative Party has contested vigorously. The state has also engaged in the oil industry where the carefully built-up state involvement has been generally accepted though the Conservative Party opts for more private commitment. If one wants more fiercely contested issues, one must turn to the spectacular conflict concerning the Alta River. The occurrence of the conflict over Norwegian entry into the Common Market was not accidental, because foreign policy issues as well as defence policy issues have tended to occur now and then as a considerable leftist group within the DNA has not been happy with the Western orientation inherent in Norwegian foreign policy and in the Norwegian defence system. Entry into NATO was not unanimously accepted and since the 1950s leftist political groups have demanded that no nuclear weapons of any kind should be stored in Norway. The course of events in the EEC issue where extraparliamentary groups managed to defeat the proposal of the two major parties – the DNA and the Høyre acting in unison – testifies to the fact that an issue may require extraordinary decision techniques and cause a rise in political instability, even though the system continues to operate.

There are two structural issues that are politically relevant because two parties have made these issues their prime concern. The Kristeligt Folkeparti keeps the problem of abortion politicized whereas the Venstre used to be a strong adherent

to the New Norwegian language opposing the classical Norwegian language. More recently ecology problems have become more salient than the language question. Apparently the ecological movement has better access to the small parties than to the major parties. Finally, it may be added that the state has conducted a successful regional developmental policy, which is supported by all political parties more or less. The issue involved here concerns the economic and cultural differences between the center and the periphery as well as between urban and rural areas.

Portugal

Of course, issue-making is not independent of the form of the political system; when a political system breaks down and is replaced by a new polity this occurrence of system failure is bound to affect issue-making. Whereas system persistence tends to be conducive to a concentration on other kinds of issues than political system issues, the opposite is the case when a political system breaks down. In autocratic Portugal the fundamental issue was the political system issue, whether Salazar or Caetano would manage to mobilize enough support to keep the autocracy intact. The basic test of the capacity to sustain the autocracy came with the traumatic process of decolonization in the African provinces. The inability of the Portuguese military to suppress the liberation movements in these provinces led to a military takeover and the beginning of a process of democratization.

Since the non-persistence of the Portuguese autocratic polity political debate and conflict have predominantly focussed on political system issues. The new regime has revealed great difficulty in resolving a number of crucial constitutional problems. One of these concerned the role of the military, which was seriously attacked by the non-socialist parties. Another constitutional problem has been the division of power between the presidency and the office of prime minister. These constitutional problems have been politicized in the midst of a sharp class conflict between socialist and non-socialist groups. Though the political system issues have been the more spectacular ones the new political system has not been paralyzed, but it has introduced a considerable number of reform bills, nationalization or denationalization of private industry and banks, the introduction of land reforms as well as the annulment of such reforms. The political system issues have tended to coincide with the structural issues, though the

memory of the autocracy has persuaded the contending parties into accepting the basic features of the new political system.

Spain

Spanish issue-making is similar to the politicization of problems in Portugal in the concentration on political system issues, which follows naturally from the break-down of the Franco autocracy, but as was the case in Portugal other kinds of issues cropped up once the restraint on political opinion and political demands was removed. Spain is different from Portugal in that political conflict has focussed more on one type of structural issue, ethnic and regional problems, than on another kind of structural issue, viz. class confrontation. Moreover, there has actually been a more serious, real attempt at a coup d'état in Spain, because there is a strong group that has not given up autocracy, but we do not find the persistent preoccupation with constitutional problems that characterized Portuguese issue-making.

The basic structural issue in the Spanish political system concerns the relationship between the centralized government in Madrid and some of the larger old regions – the Basque provinces, Catalonia, Galicia – with cultures that differ from the main Spanish one. It is not only a matter of language, but the issue also includes old historical traditions from a period when Spain was a loose federation. The regional conflict involves several parties. On the one side there are regional groups fighting for their own ends though the socialist parties are in principle sympathetic to the idea of regionalization. On the other side traditional groups reject the introduction of extensive regional autonomy in its general form or as home-rule for special provinces, because they adhere strongly to the idea of a united Spain. In the 1970s it seemed as if the issue of regionalization in Spain belonged to the unsolvable issues as whatever was done to increase regional autonomy was insufficient for the Basque provinces (ETA). However, the attempt to introduce a far reaching regionalization of the political system in the early 1980's has been accompanied by a reduction in the tension typical of this issue.

Of course, the fall of the Franco autocracy brought forward both class conflict and conflict between Catholicism and secularization. Abortion and divorce have been politicized, but it must be emphasized that the class conflict has been mitigated due to a concern on the part of leading

groups within the socialist and the non socialist camps to safeguard the democratic constitution. And these efforts have no doubt been successful as the political system has moved towards a legalisation of the Communist Party as well as a removal of censorship and political trials. The regime has also been successful in solving foreign policy issues, for example entry into the EEC and the decolonization of the Spanish Sahara. The extent to which Spain should be a part in the Western alliances is an on-going issue, as strong leftist forces oppose Spanish participation in NATO.

Sweden

Issue-making in Sweden belongs to the instrumental type where there is a concentration on specific problems to be solved presumably by state action of some kind. Though a new constitution was introduced in the early 1970s political system issues have never been politicized to such an extent that they have resulted in political instability. Political conflict has tended to focus upon the size of the public sector, where the socialist parties have been more in favor of public section expansions as well as of increased public administration of social life whereas the non-socialist parties have favored this development to a lesser extent. This basic line of confrontation has been taken up on two major issues: the fight over the supplementary pensions plan in the 1950s and the creation of a system of public funds for owning a substantial portion of the capital in business companies, suggested by the Social Democratic Party in the 1970s. Both these issues have caused deep seated conflicts and the question of the supplementary pensions program had to be resolved through a referendum in 1957. Actually, the referendum technique has been employed most skilfully by the political parties fearing that certain issues would result in internal party schisms. The ecology issue was heavily politicized during the 1970s as a reaction to a rapid build-up of nuclear power plants and the disclosure of extensive pollution. As was the case in Norway the new policies demanded by the "green wave" were more easily accepted by the smaller parties than by the large ones. The distinction between the nuclear policies of the Social Democratic Party and the Conservative Party was very fine indeed.

Sweden used to be famous for its homogeneity, as was emphasized in the early Rustow analysis (Rustow, 1956), and we thus expect to find few structural issues. Maybe the Rustow analysis

underestimated the prevalence of class conflict in Swedish politics. However, political systems change and no doubt there has been an increase in heterogeneity due to the extensive immigration from Finland and the Mediterranean areas. The system has produced an immigration policy that has had the effect of preventing the politicization of such problems. Moreover, we also find regional and religious issues, in particular issues relating to the uneven regional development of Sweden since the early 1960s. The regional conflict between the parties is concerned with how much should be spent on areas where unemployment has been unusually high; it appears that the socialist parties and the Center party have been more interested in the creation of a comprehensive regional policy.

What is striking in the political development in Sweden is the institutional emphasis on consensus among the political parties; often issue-making is more conflict oriented before the political parties start to handle the issue. This is true with regard to some religious issues concerning female priests, the relationship between the state and the church and the status of religion in the public schools. It is also true with regard to defence issues where all the parties support Swedish neutrality and association to the Common Market. Such a consensus oriented system that is mainly pre-occupied with more or less technical issues handles conflict in two widely different ways: it suppresses conflict on a day to day basis only to concentrate on a single issue every decade and these conflict-loaded issues tend to be highly divisive. It has been argued that the Swedish model of public policy-making has lost much of its vitality (Ruin, 1982), though the process of politicization, decision-making and depoliticization has been strongly institutionalized in the political system. Even if the level of conflict may have been high between the various blocks there has been a tradition of accepting the outcome of the decision-making process. The first major deviation from this pattern concerns the fund decision in 1983 which the non-socialist parties have agreed upon to undo if they are returned to power.

Switzerland

One may distinguish between two types of conflict patterns that characterize political systems. Conflicts may tend to be *issue oriented*, meaning that the conflicts between the contending groups are concentrated on issues. The occurrence of profound political party conflicts resulting in fierce

political competition is typical of the latter type, though it is not always the case that highly divisive issues are involved. The former type is very much substantiated in the Swiss policy, where each issue tends to be decided upon on its own merit with its own decision-making process. It follows that it is not difficult to identify issues in the Swiss political system. They are also reflected in the extensive use of referendum as a decision-making mechanism.

The Swiss referendum is employed to handle both structural and non-structural issues. Among these two types we find trivial as well as non-trivial ones. Though issue-making is specific, issues may be long-term as the adherents of a proposal in a referendum do not have to abide by a negative outcome but may attempt to reintroduce the issue. The most spectacular political system issue has been the question of female franchise in federal elections. In 1959 the proposal of female franchise was rejected, but in 1971 the time was ripe as a considerable majority (65.7%) accepted the constitutional change. Among the less salient political system issues we may identify the Mirage affair in 1963 and the critique of the typically Swiss way of governing (elite cooperation). To the set of non-structural issues belongs the depoliticization of the question of atomic energy. The Swiss manner of handling the atomic energy problems is typical of the Swiss model of government. In 1957 the people decided to accept the introduction of nuclear power plants, and in 1979 the people rejected a proposal to tie the employment of nuclear power to stringent criteria. What was accomplished by means of two simple decisions causing little contention between the ruling political parties has been the subject of endless political confrontation in other countries where the political parties have politicized the questions concerning nuclear power along conflict lines between the parties.

We find two main structural problems that the Swiss political system has had difficulty coping with for a long time. Repeated referendums have been resorted to in order to come to grips with the popular resentment of foreign workers as well as with the consistent demand from the French-speaking majority in Jura for a separate canton. In the referenda concerning the rights of foreign workers the Swiss nation has been divided into two major blocs, and in 1970 it was actually close to a decision to oust the foreign workers (1970:46%, 1974:34% and 1977:29%). It should

be emphasized that the major political parties have been opposed to these proposals, which testifies to the fact that issue-making need not be identical with partisan conflict.

The decision-making process resulting in the establishment of the new canton of Jura in 1979 followed the same pattern of politicization. The question of the demands of the "*Rassemblement Jurassien*" was not politicized by the major political parties; at first it was treated as a problem for the canton of Bern to be decided on by means of cantonal referenda; then when the issue became more conspicuous the system of both cantonal and federal referenda was employed to reach a solution. We also find a minor religious issue with deep historical roots in the 1847 Sonderbundskrieg. In 1973 a referendum decided to undo the cause of that civil war by repealing the confessional articles in the constitution (Jesuit ban).

United Kingdom

The political system of the United Kingdom is the opposite to that of Switzerland so far as decision-making mechanisms are concerned. Issue-making in the United Kingdom hinges on the political parties, which means that it is impossible to separate political issues from party conflict. The only issue which has been initiated without the backing of the major political parties is the politicization of the ethnic problems in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The fact that these problems broke into the political arena implied a change in the British party system. The regional demands have met with some sympathy on the part of the Labour Party and the Liberal Party, who speak about the need for *devolution*. Yet, the overall pattern is one of *political party issue-making*.

Two types of issues have dominated conflicts in the British political system: questions of economic policy and class relations on the one hand and foreign policy matter on the other. The initiative in both these issue areas lay with the Labour Party after the Second World War. The idea of expanding the public sector and creating social security programs stemmed from Labour Party ideology; the same applies to the idea of decolonization. However, there was also a background of policy consensus from the War effort meaning that the shift in power 1951 did not result in major policy reversals, though the steel industries were denationalized. New issues cropped up in the 1960s when the relationship to the Common Market became a very difficult problem to handle for the

political parties. Actually, the political parties had to deviate from the traditional principle of the sovereignty of Parliament in order to have the issue decided, with Labour as very split. A referendum in 1975 confirmed a parliamentary decision to enter the EEC. It seems that the employment of an un-British principle of decision-making was catalytic of forces that may be conducive to a major transformation of the British party system.

However, these new trends have also been affected by the declining performance of the British economy, which again is an issue that the political system has great problems in coping with. The successful policy for utilizing the oil resources of Scotland has presented the major parties with a temporary breathing space. It must be emphasized that the utilization of various resources has recently been politicized along traditional partisan divisions, the Conservative government preferring a policy of privatization and the Labour even more committed to planning and nationalisation.

In the 1980s there is increasing concentration on foreign policy matters and economic policy. The Falkland war – a highly divisive issue – was fought successfully in 1982 meaning that the United Kingdom for the first time in decades were engaged in military action towards a foreign nation. The emphasis of the Thatcher government on the implementation of a new economic policy has no doubt heightened the level of class conflict, in particular, government policies restricting the right of trade unions as a focus of class conflict. The serious issue of unemployment effectively involves the whole scope of economic-financial policy.

Issues, social structure and political structure

After this somewhat lengthy overview it is time to attempt an analysis of the social roots of issue-making and the system implications of patterns of politicization. The task of the analysis is to inquire into the possible relationships between three entities: (a) issue patterns, (b) social structure, and (c) political stability. The findings are arrived at by means of a statistical analysis of ordinal measures.

The classification scheme concerning issue-making contains seven categories, and we measure the occurrence of these in terms of the properties of issues – intensity, extension, number and frequency – along an ordinal scale from one to five. The time period since the Second World War is divided into two: 1945–1965 and 1966–1982.

The indicators of social structure properties as well as of political stability are less problematic in terms of validity and reliability than the application of the issue categories to empirical data; for the social structure we use indices for affluence, industrialization, urbanization, ethnic structure, religious structure, religious orientation and income distribution (Lane & Ersson, 1985); the concept of political stability is operationalized in terms of indicators of governmental change, party system volatility and civil disorder (Ersson & Lane, 1983).

The various scores concerning issue-making, social structure and political stability have been submitted to an analysis of variance and a correlation analysis. The findings tentative as they are, of course, may be summarized in a few hypothesis. Thus, the analysis covers sixteen nations at two periods of time; since Portugal and Spain have had democratic governments for a limited period of time we end up with thirty cases. The classification of issue occurrences is given in Appendix I, the scores of which will be used below. The analysis is based on measures derived from an analysis of variance (the Eta squared statistic = E^2) as well as on the Pearson correlation coefficient (r).

Hypothesis 1: Cross-sectionally speaking issue-making varies more within the various nations than between the various nations ($E^2 = .16$). When we concentrate upon the occurrence and saliency of seven issue types – class, religion, region, ecology, political system, foreign policy and public sector – and map these issue types for the two time periods the findings is that the intranation differences in issue-making are much larger than the inter-nation differences. The interpretation is that the various types of issues tend to occur in most nations and that several nations concentrate upon certain types of issues to the exclusion of others over time.

Hypothesis 2: Longitudinally speaking issue-making tends to be constant meaning that the within time differences in issue-making over time are greater than the between time differences ($E^2 = .04$). Thus, we do not find great differences in the types of problems politicized in European democracies before and after 1965. The only traces of the emergence of *new politics* are to be found in the rise in the scores for ecology and public sector issue-making (cf. Inglehart, 1977).

Hypothesis 3: Aggregating the various issue scores into an *overall* national measure for issue-making

for each of the two periods of time we find that nations differ in the extent to which problems are politicized. The finding is that the inter-nation differences in overall issue-making during the two periods studied are much larger than the intra-nation differences over time ($E^2 = .73$). We rank the nations in the following way on the basis of their overall issue score: Spain, Belgium, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Portugal, FR Germany, Finland, Greece, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

Hypothesis 4: The occurrence of issues displays few interdependencies. The finding is that in the politics of the post-war period the occurrence of political system issues is closely related to class issues and weakly related to religious issues. We also find that political system issues and foreign policy issues have some reciprocity, whereas public sector issues go together with ecological issues. The overall picture is, however, that issue types are not a function of each other (Table 1).

Hypothesis 5: Issue-making displays a few clear relationships with the social structure though it is certainly not the case that properties or dimensions of the social structure of a nation strictly determine the occurrence of issues. Obviously it is hardly a daring guess that the extent to which a country is fragmented ethnically or religiously has a bearing on the politization of certain kinds of problems, but the difficult part of the equation is to show how strong the social implications for issue-making are; more specifically, between what social structure dimensions and which issue kinds is there this type of relationship? Table 2 contains some clues about the social determination of issue-making.

It is quite clear even when consideration has been paid to the shortcomings of the analysis that

there is *some* truth to the old saying that politics is a reflection of society; the emphasis here is not on "truth" but on "some". The occurrence of issues – intensity, extension, frequency and saliency – has social roots, but the set of such social sources is a limited one and the strength of the associations varies. Most interestingly we find some specific relationships between the occurrence of issues and properties of the social structure: ethnic issues is a function of the ethno-linguistic structure ($r = .66$); in countries like Belgium, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom characterized by a heterogeneous ethnic structure highly salient ethnic issues occur. Correspondingly, the proportion of Catholics in the population affects the occurrence of a politicization of religious problem ($r = .43$), which is particularly true of Italy. The saliency of political system issues depends upon the wealth of a nation; it almost seems as if poverty is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of political system issues ($r = .72$) as we find this type of politicization in Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. However, poverty is not a necessary condition for the occurrence of political system issues, as the cases of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom testify to. This is as far as the social structure is relevant for the determination of issue-making. Obviously, issue-making in political structures is not simply a reflection of divisions in society, but it is also not the case that issue-making has few social sources.

Hypothesis 6: Issue occurrences have implications for political system properties like stability and type of government. Again, the overall finding is that one must pay attention to some specific and strong relationships between certain types of issues and certain political system properties. Firstly, the occurrence of political systems issues has strong negative implications for government stability ($r = -.66$) as well as civil disorder ($r = -.63$). Almost as strong is a high saliency for the

Table 1. Reciprocities between Issues

| ISSUE TYPES | Class | Religious | Region | Ecology | Political System | Foreign Policy | Public Sector |
|------------------|-------|-----------|--------|---------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Class | | | | | | | |
| Religious | | | | | | | |
| Region | | | | | | | |
| Ecology | -.30 | | .26 | | | | |
| Political System | .67 | .24 | | -.24 | | | |
| Foreign Policy | .33 | | -.30 | -.31 | .38 | | |
| Public Sector | | | | .62 | | -.19 | |

Table 2. *Social Structure and Issue-Making*

| ISSUES | SOCIAL STRUCTURE | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Affluence | Industriali- zation | Urbandi- zation | Ethno- linguist | Religious structure | Catholics | Religious conscious- ness | Income distribu- tion |
| Class | -.49 | | | | | .26 | -.32 | .34 |
| Region | | .28 | | .66 | | | | |
| Religious | -.39 | | | | | .43 | .49 | |
| Ecology | .26 | .30 | | | | | | -.24 |
| Foreign Policy | -.28 | | | -.30 | | | | |
| Political System | -.72 | -.38 | -.34 | | -.25 | .58 | | .51 |
| Public Sector | | | | | | | | |

Note: The social structural properties have been measured by indices; the index for affluence, for industrialization and for urbanization is presented in Ersson & Lane, 1981; the indices on ethno-linguistic structure, religious structure, catholics, religious consciousness and income distribution are presented in Lane & Ersson, 1985.

Table 3. Issue-Making and Political Stability

| ISSUES | STABILITY | | |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| | Governmental stability | Party system stability | Civil disorder |
| Class | -.64 | -.29 | -.50 |
| Region | | .27 | |
| Religious | | | -.29 |
| Ecology | .25 | | |
| Foreign Policy | -.26 | -.40 | |
| Political System | -.66 | -.48 | -.63 |
| Public Sector | | | -.26 |

Note: The political stability properties have been measured by indices; the indices on governmental stability, party system stability and civil disorder are presented in Ersson & Lane, 1983.

class issue type, which severely affects government stability ($r = -.64$) as well as civil disorder ($r = -.50$). We also find that foreign policy issues tend to be conducive to political instability.

In most political systems where we find political system issues we also find one or other of the two types of civil disorder phenomena, the occurrence of violence and of protest phenomena: France, Greece, Spain and the United Kingdom. In some nations where class issues are prominent there is a tendency towards government instability: France, Finland, Italy and Portugal. However, we also find the occurrence of foreign policy issues in nations with rapid changes in government: Finland, France, Greece and Portugal.

Conclusion

Issue-making is the link between social structure and social cleavages on the one hand and political stability on the other. Political systems do not vary in terms of stability (government change or civil disorder) as a strict function of the divisions in the social structure, the behavior of political parties simply reflecting cleavages between social groups. Societal problems must be politicized before they can affect the institutions of the system; and the politicization of problems that are to be handled by the public may constitute a viable method for the peaceful settlement of decisive cleavages. Actually, issue-making and issue-resolving may constitute a method for the reduction of tensions in society. How could there be conflict management without a continuous process of politicization? How could there be political stability without issue-making and issue-resolving? Yet, issue-making may also threaten political stability and even result in system non-persistence.

Issue-occurrence is not random. There is a finite set of issue types that tend to occur in a set of political systems like the West European ones. There is no country specific pattern in so far as the occurrence of certain types of issues is concerned; nor is there any time specific pattern in the occurrence of various kinds of issues. Thus, issue-making or the politicization of social problems involves a true cross-sectional and longitudinal variation. Moreover, issue-resolving is not mechanical. The capacity to handle social problems that have been politicized varies between nations as well as over time. Of course, the occurrence of political system issues is a particularly dangerous aspect of the stability of the political system. Structural issues are more salient in societies that are heterogenous in terms of ethnicity, religion and class, but it is not generally true that the occurrence of political system issues depends upon the occurrence of structural issues (Greece and Finland). It seems that some nations keep concentrating on political system issues for long periods of time whereas other systems display a capacity to take on various types of issues and to resolve issues efficiently; it seems as if this differential is related to the affluence of the society in which the political system is embedded.

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APPENDIX 1. Classification of Issue-Occurrence in European Democracies 1945-65 (I) and 1966-82 (II).

| | Class | | Religion | | Region | | Ecology | | Political system | | Foreign policy | | Public sector | |
|----------------|-------|----|----------|----|--------|----|---------|----|------------------|----|----------------|----|---------------|----|
| | I | II | I | II | I | II | I | II | I | II | I | II | I | II |
| Austria | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Belgium | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Denmark | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| F R Germany | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Finland | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| France | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Greece | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Ireland | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Italy | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Netherlands | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Norway | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Portugal | | 5 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Spain | | 4 | | 3 | | 5 | | 3 | | 5 | | 3 | | 3 |
| Sweden | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Switzerland | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| United Kingdom | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 |