

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

# **Soldiers and Students**

A Study of Right- and Left-Wing Radicals

**Rob Kroes**





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## Soldiers and Students

*Soldiers and Students* (1975) adopts an original approach to the confrontation of deprived and possessing parties under conditions of scarcity. With reference to the course of conflict, the actions of the competing parties are shown to be interlinked, yet the difference between their strategies are clearly defined. Right-wing radicalism is treated through a study of military intervention in domestic politics; left-wing radicalism through analysis of student radicalism. The case studies are centred on recent Dutch history, but the theoretical perspective underlying the argument is essentially comparative. Thus Dutch military responses to the decolonisation of Indonesia serve to illustrate the strategies of a military apparatus on the brink of politicisation, radicalism among Dutch students in the sixties offers the empirical reference for the analysis of left-wing radicalism.



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# Introduction

I hesitate to suggest that this book is an exercise in the sociology of conflict. The reproach, heard repeatedly over the past fifteen years, that established academic sociology has exclusively focused on problems of order, stability, equilibrium, and harmony, has led some sociologists to come up with the alternative perspective of a sociology of conflict.<sup>1</sup> The German sociologist Dahrendorf, for one, suggested that one should consider conflict and harmony as disparate phenomena each of which needs an explanatory framework of its own. He invokes the Janus face of social reality: harmony and conflict can each be discerned, depending on what perspective one chooses. A theory meant to explain the one phenomenon cannot possibly refute a theory touching upon the other. The explanatory reaches of the theories do not intersect.<sup>2</sup>

An approach along these lines, however, would restore conflict as a proper subject of sociological analysis at the expense of problems concerning the relationship between order and conflict. Only if we manage to develop a perspective on social life that would allow us to conceive of order and conflict as divergent outcomes of one and the same *game* between groups in society, may we hope to acquire insight into the conditions causing order to give way to conflict or conflict to be transformed into order. The game concept has been used before as a metaphor to demonstrate the artificiality of a rigid separation of conflict and order. In an essay on soccer,<sup>3</sup> Norbert Elias pointed out that whatever changing configurations the game displays, conflict and co-operation are concurrent aspects. The chain of configurations cannot be properly understood unless one conceives of the game as co-ordinated conflict. This is one of the basic insights we have wished to insert into the perspective from which this book has been written.

Usually, conflict and co-ordination tend to evoke divergent

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associations as to the impact of each on the persistence of a specific game pattern. Co-ordination is usually conceived of as a contribution to the structuring of a game, to the emergence of a set of rules, whereas conflict tends to be seen mostly as a disorganizing force, a constant source of threat to persistence and order. In that sense, both concepts are more than just references to concurrent aspects of the game: they point out the forces which can organize or disorganize it. They can, therefore, be used in an historic or diachronic analysis of how specific games have come about. They can serve to highlight the permanent tension between the forces of 'coagulation'—leading towards the emergence of order and regularity—and those of fluidization and disorganization. This summarizes one more insight that will guide the analysis throughout this book. However, fallacious implications may be lurking here, which again, however inadvertently this time, the work of Elias may illustrate. Notwithstanding the almost ideal view of the constantly shifting forces of coagulation and fluidization of forms of social life which the perspective, as outlined above, offers, the observer may be tempted to stress the forces of co-ordination and order, thus reducing the on-going alternation of order and conflict to a finite process. Open alternation has then become subject to a definite entelechy. The clearest example here may be Elias' classic study on the process of civilization.<sup>4</sup> The dominant picture to emerge from this analysis is one of an unfolding, almost pre-ordained development towards a situation where, in the end, the disorganizing potential of conflict has been checked by a gradual build-up of counter-forces such as the monopolization of the means of violence in the hands of a central state authority or the gradual growth of psychological forces of impulse restraint. The misleading suggestion emanating from a similar entelechian perspective would leave us fully unprepared for the analysis of the vulnerability and actual breakdown of these counter-forces.

Therefore, I have carefully attempted to keep teleology from interfering with the analytic perspective. Indeed, throughout the book, a main effort has been to bring out and highlight the potential for disruption of whatever institutionalized order has taken shape. The most general definition of those forces, as well as of the factors constantly supporting them, will be given in the first chapter. The following chapters can best be thought of as illustrations—comparative studies of how to recognize the general model in specific historical situations. *Qua* illustrations, the chapters inevitably may seem arbitrary. They are handpicked from the universe of situations differing in time and locale which the researcher would need for a methodologically impeccable, comparative approach.

The fanning-out of conflict into the emergence of oppositional camps, outlined in the first chapter, renders the overall picture of the

breakdown of a given established order. Both rival camps in this context can be thought of as embodying the forces of maintenance and upheaval of that order. What we shall call the left-radical camp represents the forces of upheaval; what we shall call the right-radical camp represents the attempts at reaction and restoration.

A curious paradox is involved here. In the conflict both parties tend to grow alike in so far as both increasingly tend to resort to those means of organization and violence which in themselves signify the disruption of established order. The disruptive potential of conflict tends to be multiplied in the process. This offers one more reason for conceiving and analysing forces of conservation and disruption as interdependent. Yet, in the analysis of concrete, historical cases, we may choose to accentuate either force, without, however, neglecting the other. For indeed the oppositional camps that take shape when conflict runs its course have strategic options of their own which deserve separate attention. Therefore, two chapters are devoted to the right-radical camp in action, under the heading of 'Right-wing radicalism and the military'. The following two chapters deal with the left-radical camp under the title of 'Left-wing radicalism among students'. Notwithstanding this focus, however, time and again the other camp—be it left- or right-radical—is introduced in the analysis, true to the perspective that we have outlined above. It is our conviction that the analysis of student radicalism in particular, usually treated as a separate left-wing phenomenon by other authors, in total neglect of its interplay with adversaries, has stood to gain by our approach.

In the final chapter we return once more to the perspective in its full scope and bearing. This chapter, in a sense serves as counterpoint to the first chapter. There, an upward movement may be noticed; based on surmises and intuitions, disparate theoretical insights are interwoven, resulting in a concise statement of what we hold might be a fruitful process model of conflict and the rise of radicalism. The endeavour, in its lifting itself up from vague intuition on to a clearer perspective, unhampered by empirical vicissitudes, may seem reminiscent of the baron of Munchausen who managed to pull himself from the swamp by his own hair. In contrast to this, the final chapter shows a downward movement; the confrontation of model and empirical fact in the preceding chapters had illustrated the need for delimitation of the perspective, or rather the specification of what, in the first chapter, may have seemed, however briefly, to aim at general validity.

In addition to this, the final chapter presents some theoretical reflections on the perspective which, throughout the preceding analysis, has been brought to bear on problems of order, conflict and radicalism. Here we may briefly point out that the overall

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perspective represents the fusion of structuralist and interactionist or phenomenological approaches. Thus the analysis of the impact of underlying structures of interests, arising in a setting of social competition, and of normative structures, regulating competition, proceeds by way of the definitions accorded these patterns by the actors involved in the situations under study. Specific patterns of incongruity of interests as well as of normative conflict—referred to as the interference of criteria of achievement and ascription—are shown to give rise to specific patterns of redefinition and re-orientation for the various parties involved in competition. Thus processes are set in motion which, summarily, can be taken to range from competition to confrontation. An additional advantage of the approach may be that it allows the synthesis of sociological perspectives which are commonly presented as disjunct alternative views of society. They are, respectively, the consensus view, the exchange view and the coercion view of society. In our perspective they can be taken to represent the actors' dominant outlook on society during different stages of conflict. Thus exchange and consensus may be taken to represent the main ingredients of social integration in conditions of competition. Latent functions, in the Mertonian sense, of processes of mobility and piece-meal social change may, however, spur the processes of conflict and radicalization which, in the end, may be reflected in the dominance of a coercion view of society under conditions of confrontation. Although we propose to reserve the finer implications for separate treatment in the final chapter, it may be good to keep these theoretical considerations in mind when reading the preceding chapters.

# 1 Conflict and radicalism: a two-stage model<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Two seemingly incompatible models of conflict generation can be found in studies of social conflict. In this chapter we shall attempt to delineate both models and to explore possible ways of reconciling them. It will be shown that one such way is a re-interpretation of the models in social-psychological terms. This will allow us to perceive the models in their proper time sequence and to conceive of one model as fulfilling an 'ignition function' for the second. We shall refer to the two models as the rank equivalence model and the rank inequivalence model respectively.

The models are similar in several respects. Both relate the occurrence of conflict to certain socio-structural factors. Both focus on the criteria according to which scarce goods such as political and economic power, prestige, income, and education are distributed. Both involve a multi-dimensional conception of society, the members of which can be ordered according to their share of social goods. Aside from similarities, several differences can be mentioned.

One model, organizing insights that can be traced back to Marx, and, more recently, to Dahrendorf,<sup>2</sup> relates conflicts to a distribution of social goods where each individual's shares of each of the goods tend to grow equivalent. The other model, the incipience of which can perhaps be found in de Tocqueville's analysis of the *ancien régime*, directs the analysis rather towards an inequivalence of shares of social goods which individuals have managed to acquire for themselves.

An early example of the rank equivalence model is Marx's analysis of the contradictions inherent in a society with a capitalistic system of production, though we need to remind ourselves of the fact that there the pattern of equivalence derives partly from a tautology. Positions on non-economic dimensions fall in line with the distinction

## CONFLICT AND RADICALISM: A TWO-STAGE MODEL

between proprietors and non-proprietors of capital goods on the basis of definitions rather than empirical regularities.<sup>3</sup>

An example of the rank *inequivalence* model is de Tocqueville's analysis of the *ancien régime*. His insight that the chance for social conflicts to arise increases after a period of improvement in economic conditions, rather than being contingent upon any absolute standards of living, or a downright decline therein, can be translated in terms of our pattern of inequivalence. The improvement in economic conditions can be conceived as a collective ascent of groups in the society along the dimension of, say, income. When on other dimensions the positions remain unchanged at their previous low level, we are able to recognize the pattern of the second conflict model.

The impression of mutual incompatibility of the models, accentuated by our use of the words *equivalence* and *inequivalence*, may be deceiving. We shall have to interpret the models in order to trace what, particularly in recent use of the models, the precise links are thought to be between structural data and the occurrence of conflicts. Thus we may hope to arrive at a more precise statement of possible inter-relations between the models.

### 2 The concepts of conflict and radicalism

Because we are dealing with the way conflicts can be related to structural data, these will be our focus in the definition of the concepts. Structural data, in our analysis, are thought to refer to the different positions occupied by the members of a society on a number of dimensions on the basis of their different shares of certain social goods. As a general rule, we state that a given distribution entails different interests for groups that hold different shares. The ones best-off are assumed to be actively striving to maintain or enlarge their share. We might call these interests *objective* in the sense Marx uses the term. We thereby grant the possibility that groups in a society can behave in a way which deviates from their objective interests—the possibility, that is, that objective interests may fail to be transformed into clear guides for action. Thus the empirical problem arises as to which factors cause objective interests to become self-conscious. We shall come back to this later. At the moment, however, we shall try to designate the logical categories describing a 'field' which consists of two rival parties under the conditions of a zero-sum game<sup>4</sup> in which a gain by one party causes an equally large loss to the other party and in which both parties may or may not act in accordance with their objective interests. See table 1.1.

The situation (— —) indicates the extreme case in which neither of the parties is guided by its objective interests as defined above. In this category belongs the type of society in which neither the criteria



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TABLE 1.1 *Objective interests and subjective awareness*

<i>Objective interests of the worst-off</i>		<i>Objective interests of the ones best-off</i>	
		not self-conscious -	self-conscious +
not self-conscious	-	- -	- +
self-conscious	+	+ -	+ +

of distribution nor the factual distribution which results from these is in dispute, a situation which can either be the result of the power estimates of the parties involved, or, on the other hand, can result from an effective value consensus.

The situation  $(- +)$  could be one of exploitation in the Marxist sense: the ones best-off are up to enlarging their shares at the expense of the ones worst-off who fail to show signs of realizing their objective interests. The situation  $(+ -)$  is one in which the worst-off realize what their objective interests are and act accordingly; the positions of the best-off are attacked without the latter reacting as might have been expected on the basis of their objective interests. In the situation  $(+ +)$ , finally, both parties confront each other, bringing to bear the opposing strategies which we assume them to display on the basis of their objective interests. Given our additional assumption of zero-sum conditions, it is impossible for both of the parties to attain their goals. Therefore we term this situation one of *conflict*.<sup>5</sup>

In this connection one may note that our definition of objective interests and the assumption of zero-sum conditions imply a conflict situation. However, it is only when both parties are self-consciously aware of their objective interests that a situation of actual conflict arises.<sup>6</sup>

In situations of both the  $(+ -)$  and the  $(- +)$  variety, the party that acts on self-conscious interests is able to reach its goals. The acquiescence of the opposing party is, as in the  $(- -)$  case, evidence of an effective consensus, or the result of power estimates of the parties involved. These two alternatives have been suggested by both Parsons and Etzioni in their (remarkably consonant) analyses of the concept of power.<sup>7</sup> Attempts at either establishing societal consensus or maintaining it, can be considered as a useful means in the defence of or the attack at a given distribution of social goods. As such, these attempts can be taken to signal the stage where one of the parties has become aware of its objective interests. For either the  $(+ -)$  or  $(- +)$  situations, however, the appeal to common values will issue in starkly divergent ideologies. The characteristic ideology justifying the  $(- +)$  situation may be called *conservative*; the ideology for the  $(+ -)$  situation *egalitarian*.

## CONFLICT AND RADICALISM: A TWO-STAGE MODEL

The confrontation of both the egalitarian and the conservative ideologies in a (+ +) situation where, under zero-sum conditions, they advocate conflicting goals, may have specific consequences for each of them. The fact that each party is thwarted in reaching its goal by the adverse policy of the opponent, lends a particular character to the ideologies that we choose to call *radical*. We seem justified in doing so in so far as radicalism is generally understood to combine a set of cognitions and beliefs regarding a drastic change in a social structure with conceptions of the identity and the aims of a malicious adversary blocking the road to the cherished goal. Radicalism in that sense focuses on the militant strategies that are advocated in an ideology.

### 3 The rank equivalence model

As we said earlier, the rank equivalence model is marked by the maximum inter-correlation between separate dimensions of social distribution. It allows us to conceive of this model as a limiting case of a continuum of patterns of increasingly lower correlations. The second limit, then, is the pattern that shows zero-intercorrelations; here the position that an individual holds on one dimension does not warrant predictions as to his positions on other dimensions. This latter type can be taken to represent a pluralistic society<sup>8</sup> in which, characteristically, individuals on the basis of their divergent interests find themselves alternatively aligned with the ones best-off and with the ones worst-off. This society is marked by a dispersion of interest groups and, consequently, of individual solidarities, which clearly contrasts with the pattern of polarized interest groups that was found at the other extreme of the continuum. Grossly synonymous with the term pluralist society<sup>9</sup> are such labels as multiple loyalties and multiple role-playing,<sup>10</sup> criss-cross,<sup>11</sup> multiple group affiliations,<sup>12</sup> interlocking memberships.<sup>13</sup>

In order to analyse the possible relevance for a general theory of conflict of these different patterns of interconnections between dimensions of social distribution, we shall consider a simplified example of society which has only two distributive dimensions, which, in turn, have only two positions each—a top position T and a low position L.<sup>14</sup>

We assume that the goods distributed along these lines, are respectively economic power and political power. All possible combinations of positions can be shown in a simple  $2 \times 2$  matrix. See table 1.2. The actual distribution of members of this imaginary society within this matrix determines the rank of this society on the continuum, ranging from pluralism to polarization, that we referred to above.

1 The polarized type can be easily identified. When the members

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TABLE 1.2 *Two dichotomous dimensions of social distribution*

<i>Economic power</i>	<i>Political power</i>	
	T	L
T	TT	TL
L	LT	LL

of the society are distributed in such a way as to leave the LT- and TL-cells empty, the situation reflects the pattern of our model of rank equivalence.

2 It may seem slightly more complicated to define the conditions for pluralism as an extreme case. However, if we recall what we said earlier, that a pluralistic pattern does not warrant predictions as to combinations of positions, the different dimensions being independent of each other, we can define a pluralist society as one in which the distribution of the entire population within the matrix does not differ from its distribution along the separate dimensions. In such a case neither the T-, nor the L-group on one dimension are over- or under-represented in taking T- or L-positions on the other dimension.<sup>16</sup> An example may illustrate this point (see table 1.3).

TABLE 1.3 *The limiting case of pluralism*

<i>Economic power</i>	<i>Political power</i>		
	T	L	Total
T	20	20	40
L	30	30	60
	50	50	100

Both dimensions are completely independent. In other words, the TT and LL cells do not show any heavier concentrations than the TL and LT cells. A simple measure may be as follows:

$$\frac{[(TT) + (LL)] - [(TL) + (LT)]}{N}$$

For the above case of perfect pluralism the measure would have a value of zero, which in fact would indicate the absence of polarization. Indeed, the opposite case of perfect polarization would cause the measure to show a value of 1, as Table 1.4 illustrates.<sup>16</sup>