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Summaries in English

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Summaries

Elites in the Soviet Union

by J. Slomp

Next to the party elite of the Communist Party, there are several policy elites in the Soviet Union. They consist of officials in every field of policy and have their basis of power in the resources that are allocated in the government budget. Most resources flow to the economy, the scientific and cultural sector, the military and the administrative apparatus. So elites in these sectors can be seen as most influential in the policy-making process.

The party elite, however, makes all long-term policy decisions, it can regulate the recruitment of new members into these policy elites and it can call the elites to account by permitting public discussion of policy decisions. Policy elites have more influence in policy-making, when they have more representatives in the Politburo and in the Central Committee. Indeed their representation has grown since 1953 – be it irregularly –, but the party elite still has the majority in these party organs.

Policy elites also have more influence as there is a constant flow of their members into the party elite. This makes the party elite less coherent and causes more disputes within the party elite. Yet the policy elites are not content with their possibilities to influence policy making; in this they are in opposition with the party elite that does not want to give them more influence, esp. in long-term policy decisions.

Easton's 'authoritative allocation of values': a reappraisal

by V. Rosenthal

Like many of their colleagues abroad, Dutch political scientists recommend the use of Easton's well-known formulation of the 'authoritative allocation of values'. However, they do not take into account the rather specific way in which Easton defines the concept of authority.

The most extensive elaboration of Easton's conceptual framework is found in his contribution to the Nomos volume on 'Authority'. There, he emphasizes that authority pertains to the fact of compliance, irrespective of the reasons for compliance. Authority may be based on coercion. It may be legitimate. But it may be nonlegitimate (coercive) as well. The 'authoritative allocation of values' refers to the binding character of the outputs of the political system. We are bound to comply, whether we want it or not.

It is often said that Easton's formulation restricts the subject matter of political science to political systems characterized by the legitimacy of the power-holders.

He would follow the Weberian tradition in political science with its accentuation of the legitimate application of physical violence. Consequently, there would be no room for the analysis of illiterate societies, international systems or revolutionary politics.

The meaning assigned by Easton to the concept of authority allows us to reject this line of reasoning. We should admit that there are other elements in Easton's political analysis, which may suggest his pre-occupation with the politics of consensus and democracy. Firstly, he pays considerable attention to the input of support into the political system. Yet he goes as far as saying that we are lending support to the power-holders, even when we are complying under the threat of severe deprivations. Secondly, the relative frequency of compliance is

introduced as an essential variable of the political system. But this relative frequency may be relative to such an extent that it would be unnecessary to require a reservoir of diffuse support (for instance legitimacy). When, ultimately, Easton does start back from the idea that coercion may guarantee the persistence of a political system, this is a rather shaky step.

Easton seems to be set against the application of 'undemocratic' instruments. But it should be clear that such antipathy as to coercive means of compliance does not fit in with his remarks on the place of authority in the conceptual framework. As far as the crucial formulation of the 'authoritative allocation of values' is concerned, it is possible to analyse tests of strength, revolutions, terrorism and despotism. The approach is fairly dynamic. Today's power-holders may be to-morrow's powerless: the 'authorities' have the capacity to order others, neither more nor less.

The reliability of questions on voting behavior

by J. Thomassen

The analysis of changes in voting behavior is often based upon recall data. In this research note the reliability of this type of data is questioned. The author demonstrates that recall data underestimate the number of changes in party choice. No evidence has been found that the use of recall data has any consequences for the study of the relationship between the stability of party choice and such variables as political interest, political knowledge and education. The analysis of the reliability of questions on turn-out is not conclusive. However, there are very strong indications that in each election study non-voters give less reliable answers than voters. This unreliability is especially high when recall data are used.

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