

role, developing the capacity to be more independent (Lachmann 2010). Governments and privately owned companies grew powerful together because they needed and aided each other, and in the process they subordinated the Catholic Church and military leaders. Much of Western history from that time forward centered on the struggle for ascendancy between the owners of commercial enterprises and top government leaders.

The continuing changes in the relationships among the four power networks overviewed in the previous two paragraphs put constant strains on seemingly settled power arrangements, thereby creating fissures within national power structures, which is why Iranian revolutions based in a religious movement arise (1979), Soviet Unions with faltering economic systems collapse (1991), Arab Springs in countries with tyrannical governments seemingly appear out of nowhere (2010), and New Deals and civil rights movements occur in the aftermath of Great Depressions and major world wars. They render past methods of challenging power structures obsolete, turning advocates of the old ways into anachronistic futilitarians, while at the same time creating openings for upcoming generations of activists that are alive to the new possibilities because they are rooted in the here and now, not past social movements.

When applied to the United States, the four-network theory explains how and why the economic network has always had ascendancy over the other three. It explains why the federal government was not very large until the 1940s and never very independent of those that dominated and benefited the most from the economic system. It explains what most Americans take for granted and that most social scientists agree upon, that the military has never had a large or independent role in important government decisions and that the churches and other places of worship have been too divided and fractious to be the kind of power base that the Catholic Church once provided in all of Europe and then in several major nation-states, such as Italy and Spain.

If the dominance of the economic network is given its full due, and if the desire of the corporate rich to limit programs that might help government develop more independence and capacity is fully appreciated, then the country's weak union movement and the late arrival of its government social insurance programs, a major concern of research by historical institutionalists, are understandable as outcomes of corporate dominance. This point about corporate dominance includes the conservative coalition's control of Congress on issues having to do with taxes, labor unions, and business regulation.

Similarly, the prominence of the economic network, in conjunction with the somewhat conflicting needs of Northern business interests and Southern planters from the country's founding until the late twentieth century, helps account for the institutional impediments to majority rule that are stressed by pluralists and historical institutionalists as independent causal factors. They include the nature of the Constitution, the decentralized structure of the government, the weakness of the federal bureaucracy, and the strongholds of committee power within Congress. The American federal government lacks "capacity," except as a military

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