Sociology 924 Agenda issues from Interrogations #3, (Week 4). 9/25/2002

DEFINITIONS

1. *Nash Equilibrium*: what does this mean? (Christine Overdest)
2. *Quasi-voluntary compliance*. How precisely does this process work? Does relying on this notion contradict the idea of the rulers as "predatory"? (Bradly Brewster)
3. *Government/state/private-agents* in Aoki. How, precisely, does Aoki define "the state" (Shamus Khan)
4. *rulers/ruled vs state/civil society as categories*. Are there advantages to using the ruler/ruled way of talking about the state? (Bradley Brewster)
5. *rule-of-law state vs dictatorship in Barzel* (Cesar Rodgriguez)

AOKI

1. **Aoki's concept of the state-as-equilibrium**. What precisely does Aoki mean by "equilibrium" (Christine Overdest) and how does the "equilibrium" that defines the institution of the state emerge? Is this a purely descriptive idea or is it explanatory as well? (Matt Vidal) Can the state be an "actor" as well as an institution? (Shamus Khan) Does the process imply high quality "information" and prescience on the part of actors? What happens when some actors are able to *manipulate information* and thus the convergence of beliefs does not happen "naturally"? (Teresa Melgar)

2. **Endogenous/exogenous rules**. What precisely does Aoki mean by this contrast? Why does he state that "statutory rules" are "exogenous"? (Cesar Rodriguez) Does Aoki's model of institutions basically treat them as self-contained entities mainly explained by internal processes? (Sun Jing)

3. **Unitary state assumption**. It seems that all of these theorists assume a "unitary state". Empirically this seems very problematic – but how much damage to their arguments does this make? (Cesar Rodrigue). What are the implications of a fragmented state with competing groups for Aoki's idea of the state as an equilibrium (Teresa Melgar)

4. **Power**. Is there room for Power in Aoki's analysis? (Shamus Khan). Does Aoki's "theory" imply a subjectivist theory of institutions in which power relations are ignored? (Matt Vidal)

5. **Models and Predictions**. Can Aoki's models be used in predictions? (Amy Lang)

6. **Concept of democratic state**. Aoki proposes a three-fold generic typology of the state: predatory, collusive, and democratic. But in his analysis land reform voted by the vast majority would count as a collusive state, not democratic. "Rule by the majority" is not part of his concept of democracy. (Pablo Mitnick)

7. **Aoki & Levi**. Can Levi's arguments about QVC be framed as an institutional equilibrium in Aoki's models? (Christine Overdest)

BARZELL

8. **The Origins problem.** Barzel argues that the Hobbesian problem of the emergence of the state from the "state of nature" skips the pivotal step of the prior creation of a "collective action mechanism" to constrain the protector. What precisely is his argument here? Is this an "historical reconstruction" or a "logical reconstruction"? The "state of nature ≤ social contract to create a state" story seems much less plausible than the origins of the state being located in subjection in the first instance – i.e. that it is not the division of labor and exchange but inequalities of power that generate the proto-state. (Cesar Rodriguez, Keedon Kwon). Isn't the whole origins discussion nonsense? (Matt Nichter)

9. **Multiple third-party enforcers.** How should we understand the situation in which there are multiple third parties with overlapping jurisdictions over a given agreement – eg the church and the state over marriages? (Landy Sanchez)

10. **Protection & the collective action mechanism**. Barzell argues that historically the central obstacle to the Protector becoming a dictator is the presence of a "collective action mechanism." Is it convincing that this collective action mechanism must rely on self-enforcement? (Landy Sanchez)

11. **Asymmetry in transition from rule-of-law to dictatorship vs dictatorship to rule-of-law states.** Barzel provides a specific explanation of why (a) rule-of-law states should be more efficiency-enhancing than dictatorships, and yet why (b) dictatorships should be historically more common. Is this is convincing general argument? (Cesar Rodriguez) Barzel's story of the origins of the state seem quite implausible – that the rule-of-law states came first and then the protector usurps power. (Cesar Rodriguez)

12. **The Allende/Pinochet argument**. Isn't it absurd to see Pinochet invoking a "collective action mechanism" against a would-be dictator Allende? (Matt Nichter, Landy Sanchez)

13. **Some (possibly) interesting hypotheses in Barzel (EOW)**
    ?? **State mergers.** Barzel offers a specific hypothesis about the conditions for states to merge into larger entities and rejects the view that this has much to do with military protection. Is this reasoning cogent? Barzel does not include the US as an instance of merger. Should it be?
    ?? **uncertainty about power & violent conflict**. Barzel makes the hypothesis that where the balance of power is uncertain (an information problem) violent conflicts are more likely. What is the reasoning here? What are the most crucial sources of this uncertainty? Is this a reasonable way of thinking about these issues? How does this bear on the issue of the "comparative advantage" of the state?
    ?? **Federalism**. Both Barzel and Aoki offer explanations for federalism. For Aoki federalism is a device to block market-disrupting "soft budget tendencies" (including collusion with particularistic interests); for Barzel it is a way of preventing dictatorship.

14. **Standards, legal rights, enforcement.** How would Barzel's model describe/explain the recent spate of corporate scandals? (James Benson) What would be the differences between Aoki & Barzel in dealing with this issue

15. **generality of Barzel's theory**. In some ways this account of the state seems much more relevant to the *capitalist state* rather than the state in general – this is where the rule of law, real specification of property rights, etc., matter. (Matt Dimick)

16. **constraints on predation**. Do these constraints have to come from internal forces? What about international constraints? International Agencies? (Amy Lang)

Levi

17. **Revenue-maximizing assumption**. Is this assumption about ruler motivations even roughly satisfactory? Isn't the deeper core motive of rulers staying in power or something like that? (Cesar Rodriguez, Matt Dimick). Perhaps the extent to which rulers have revenue-maximizing motivations depends upon the specific kind of ruler (being a "principal" or an "agent", for example)? (Teresa Melgar) And even if rulers want to maximize their personal revenues, maximizing state revenues may not be the best way to do this (Pablo Mitnick).

18. **The logic of Quasi-Voluntary Cooperation**. What happens when you have rich & powerful people who have a collusive relation with the state and avoid taxes? Does the logic of QVC apply to them (Teresa Melgar). More generally: can the QVC taxation odel be modified to include cross-class variations? (EOW)

19. **Explanation of variations**. It isn't clear exactly how Levi would propose to explain *variations* in tax policies or compliance levels in states with roughly similar technologies and social contexts. (Robyn Autry)