

Conceptual Poverty as a Cause of Political Polarization

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Overview: The basic point of this paper is that political polarization results partly from crude conceptualizations of views and options. If capitalism and socialism are the only options, then policy options on the role of market vs. government will be seen as extreme, all or nothing choices. The charts below counter this by highlighting a spectrum of choices and views. Depolarizing may occur if more options are seen so that choices don't look as extreme, feelings may become less intense, and citizens divide into many preference groups rather than large hostile blocks.

CAPITALISM VS. SOCIALISM: THE STANDARD CONCEPTUALIZATION IN U.S. POLITICS

◀← More market/Less government		A SPECTRUM OF SYSTEMS					More government/Less market →▶			
ALL MARKET NO GOV'T	ANARCHO-CAPITALISM	MINIMAL STATE CAPITALISM	UMPIRE STATE CAPITALISM	PRAGMATIC CAPITALISM	EMERGENCY RELIEF WELFARE STATE	OPPORTUNITY WELFARE STATE	DECENT LEVEL WELFARE STATE	MARKET SOCIALISM	STATE SOCIALISM	ALL GOVERNMENT NO MARKET

Forms of Libertarian Capitalism

ANARCHO-CAPITALISM	MINIMAL STATE CAPITALISM	UMPIRE STATE CAPITALISM	PRAGMATIC CAPITALISM
Pure Market System No Government, No government services	Market System + <i>Gov't protection against force and fraud</i>	Market System + Gov't protection from force & fraud + <i>gov't as economic rule-maker, umpire, definer of property rights, conflict arbiter, enforcer of rules</i>	Market System + Gov't protection from force & fraud + gov't as economic rule-maker, umpire, definer of property rights, conflict arbiter, enforcer of rules, <i>provider of some social benefits.</i>
To each according to ability to pay + gifts No guaranteed resources	To each according to ability to pay + gifts + <i>guaranteed access to police/army protection</i>	To each according to ability to pay + gifts + guaranteed access to police and army protection + <i>economic rule-making adjudication, property right enforcement.</i>	To each according to ability to pay + gifts + guaranteed access to police/army protection + adjudication, property right enforcement + <i>limited socially useful benefits [education, parks, protection from some negative externalities]</i>

Forms of Welfare State

EMERGENCY RELIEF WELFARE STATE	OPPORTUNITY WELFARE STATE	DECENT LEVEL WELFARE STATE
Market system + Gov't protection against force and fraud and other life-threatening emergency conditions	Market system + Gov't protection against force and fraud and other emergency, life-threatening conditions + guaranteed access to education + other opportunity-generating resources	Market system + Gov't protection against force, fraud + guaranteed provision of resources required for a decent level of well-being [i.e., the abolition of poverty]

Some sources: On anarcho-capitalism, Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (1973); minimal state capitalism, R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State & Utopia* (1973); Pragmatic Capitalism, M. Friedman, *Capitalism & Freedom*. (1962); decent level welfare state, S. Nathanson, *Economic Justice* (1998).

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