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I, Too, Am State-Sensitive: A Response to Christopher Klyza

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I would like to thank the editors of this journal for providing this venue and thus allowing this exchange between myself and Prof. Klyza to take place. Moreover, I would like to thank Prof. Klyza for his thoughtful rejoinder. Nevertheless, and not surprisingly, I disagree with his interpretation of my work. More importantly, however, I disagree with Prof. Klyza's interpretation of his own work as well as with his interpretation of the state-centered approach.

The first point of disagreement I will raise is with Klyza's casting of my interpretation of Grant McConnell's and Theodore Lowi's works.[1] Contrary to Klyza's claim, I do not allege that Lowi or McConnell supported, tacitly or otherwise, interest group liberalism or the making of public policies through small bureaucratic units. In outlining the fragmentation of the policymaking process, both of these thinkers strongly critique this phenomenon. I echo their critique in my article here as well as elsewhere.[2] Additionally, I do not characterize the graziers on the public grasslands as economic elites. Instead, I place them under the category of producer groups.

Moving on to more theoretically contentious issues, Klyza claims that his work, and that of other state-centered theorists, can be most aptly described as "state-sensitive." In setting out his theoretical approach as state-sensitive and not as state-centered, he is alleging that I am mischaracterizing his work and, in a sense, creating a straw man. Therefore, Klyza in his rejoinder holds that interest groups are central to his analysis, and that I am wrong to suggest otherwise. He contends that "a state sensitive approach gives significant attention to state structure, state capacity, and state actors in addition to societal actors in explaining policy." If this is the case, however, I too am state-sensitive. Klyza's quoting of my work in his rejoinder demonstrates this. I, like most contemporary theorists of the state, give "significant attention to state structure, state capacity, and state actors."[3] Not only is this reflected in my work presented in this issue, but it is also amply evident in my work on the forest and park service, as well as in my commentary on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), respectively.[4]

The issue dividing myself and Klyza, as well as other state-centered theorists, is the role of state structure, state capacity, and state actors in the policy formulation and implementation processes. Led by Theda Skocpol, state-centered thinkers would have one believe that state structure, state capacity, and state actors have autonomous roles, or at least potentially autonomous roles, in the shaping of state behavior.[5] I, as well as other critics of the statist approach, demonstrate that there is little empirical basis for their claims.[6]

1. Grant McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy* (New York: Knopf, 1966); Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States* (New York: Norton, 1979).

2. George A. Gonzalez, *Corporate Power and the Environment: The Political Economy of U.S. Environmental Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 3–4, 7–8.

3. Gabriel A. Almond, "The Return to the State," *American Political Science Review* 82 (1988): 853–74; G. William Domhoff, *State Autonomy or Class Dominance? Case Studies on Policy Making in America* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1996), chap. 8; Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics," *American Political Science Review* 85 (1985): 77–96; Clyde Barrow, *Critical Theories of the State* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press, 1993).

4. George A. Gonzalez, "The Conservation Policy Network, 1890-1910: The Development and Implementation of 'Practical' Forestry," *Polity* 31 (1998): 269–99; "Book Review of *Pluralism-by-the-Rules* by Edward P. Weber," *American Political Science Review* 93 (1999): 461–62; and *Corporate Power and the Environment*, x, 17, chap.2, chap. 3.

5. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Kenneth Finegold and Theda Skocpol, *State and Party in America's New Deal* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

6. For example, G. William Domhoff, *The Power Elite and the State* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990); and *State Autonomy or*

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Turning more specifically to Klyza's work, in his rejoinder, Klyza explains that contrary to my assertions he "nowhere argue[s] that ideas are 'responsible' for a particular policy." Klyza makes this point to again assert that I am mischaracterizing his work and creating a straw man. In responding to Klyza's claims, I will let his words speak for themselves. Klyza, in an article published in an earlier volume of this journal, wrote that "interacting with state and societal groups, these *ideas produced* different patterns of policy development" [emphasis added].[7] In other portions of his work, Klyza might back away from the power he affords ideas in this quote; nevertheless, the thrust and content of his most important works point to ideas as key independent and explanatory variables.[8] Indeed, Klyza's rejoinder in this issue aptly reflects the importance and power he ascribes to ideas. He writes here that "the dominant ideas regarding the public lands at the time [of the formation of the public grazing regime] were economic liberalism (and its variants), technocratic utilitarianism, and preservationism." It is my position that there is no empirical basis for Klyza's assertions concerning the role of ideas in the U.S. policymaking process.

Shifting the discussion to my article, I will focus on one putative weakness of it offered by Klyza. I will state at this point that I believe that my article published in this issue stands up well to all of Klyza's rebutting remarks. Thus, for the most part, I will leave it to the reader to assess my work in light of Klyza's criticisms. I want to draw attention to one of his points about my article, however. I do so because it brings into relief the divergent theoretical and methodological approaches taken by Klyza and myself. Specifically, Klyza argues that my approach to analyzing the formation of the federal grazing regime "tells us little about the specifics of . . . policy adoption." It is patently evident within my piece that the federal grazing regime took the form it did because a consensus was achieved by a substantial portion of the livestock community around the management approach experimented with in the Monte-Hall-Lewis plan. Klyza overlooked this portion of my argument because it does not conform with his understanding of policy development. He specifically argues in his rejoinder that "in order to understand better the specifics of this, or any other, policy process, we need to know more about the ideas, interests, and institutions at work at a particular time." Therefore, Klyza proffers the amorphous notion of "ideas producing" policy patterns, and the empirically dubious concept of autonomous, semiautonomous, or potentially autonomous state capacity to analyze state behavior. In contrast, my approach to analyzing state behavior involves closely examining the political forces underlying the policy formulation and implementation processes, and the interests that benefit from said public policies, how, and why.

Klyza also assails my general theoretical approach by claiming incorrectly that it is ahistorical and acontextual. I do not emphasize the same variables that he does, nor do I begin or end my analysis at the points that Klyza deems appropriate. None of these factors, however, makes my work ahistorical or acontextual.

Ironically, in his rejoinder Klyza renders judgements about events and policies without reference to the historical, political, or economic context in which they took place – the very weakness he attributes to my work. In his concluding remarks, he implies that the passage of the environmental legislation of the early 1970s is evidence that is counter-indicative of a business dominance view. Klyza, however, makes this claim without referring to the historical, political, or economic context within which these pieces of legislation were enacted and subsequently enforced. The laws that granted the federal government far-reaching power to regulate various types of environmental pollutants and hazards were created within a tumultuous political and social milieu, wherein students and others were protesting U.S. foreign policy, gender and ethnic inequality in the United States, poverty, and business treatment of the environment.[9] Within this context, it is reasonable to conclude that the environmental legislation of the early 1970s was passed to demobilize those whose protests against capitalism were predicated on environmental issues,[10] and in doing so bringing social and political peace to a U.S. society that was being destabilized with social protest movements. The EPA was also created within this milieu. One can readily see how the bringing of peace and stability can be in the interest, and to the benefit, of the U.S. corporate community. Moreover, when one examines the implementation of the environmental legislation of the early 1970s, and of its ancillary legislation, it is apparent that this legislation has only minimally altered the operation of the U.S. economy.[11]

Class Dominance?; Mitchell, "The Limits of the State"; and Clyde Barrow, "Corporate Liberalism, Finance Hegemony, and Central State Intervention in the Reconstruction of American Higher Education," *Studies in American Development* 6 (1992): 420–44.

7. Christopher McGrory Klyza, "Ideas, Institutions, and Policy Patterns: Hardrock Mining, Forestry, and Grazing Policy on United States Public Lands, 1870–1985," *Studies in American Political Development* 8 (1994): 343.

8. Christopher McGrory Klyza, "A Window of Autonomy: State Autonomy & the Forest Service in the Early 1900s," *Polity* 25 (1992): 173–96; "Ideas, Institutions, and Policy Patterns," and *Who Controls the Public Lands? Mining, Forestry, and Grazing Policy, 1870–1990* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

9. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

10. Richard C. Ford, "The Political Response to Black Insurgency: A Critical Test of Competing Theories of the State," *American Political Science Review* 95 (2001): 115–30.

11. Steven L. Yaffee, *Prohibitive Policy: Implementing the Federal Endangered Species Act* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); Matthew A. Cahn, *Environmental Deceptions: The Tension Between Liberalism and Environmental Policymaking in the United States* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995); Gonzalez, *Corporate Power and the Environment*, chap. 6.

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Therefore, when one examines the passage of environmental legislation of the early 1970s and the creation of the EPA within their historical, political, social, and economic context it becomes less evident that these events served as a defeat for the business community, and may even be viewed as a victory of sorts for it.

Klyza makes similarly ahistorical and acontextual judgements about recent policy changes undertaken by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. He deems these changes as political defeats for the economic interests involved without drawing reference to the economic, political, or environmental context within which these policy changes took place. I would argue that judgements about said policies without fully taking the context into account would be premature and unwarranted. As I explain in the introduction to *Corporate Power and the Environment*, "It is my position that we need to scrutinize closely the influences that shape public policies and how they operate in the U.S. political economy before we can draw any strong conclusions about who wins and loses with regard to such policies."[12] Such an approach to policy analysis requires that I take the historical, political, and economic context into consideration. I feel this is reflected in the article published in this issue, as well as in all of my published work to date.[13]

12. Gonzalez, *Corporate Power and the Environment*, ix.

13. George A. Gonzalez, "Obstacles to Achieving Sustainability," in *Flash Points in Environmental Policymaking: Controversies in Achieving Sustainability*, ed. Sheldon Kamieniecki, George A. Gonzalez, and Robert O. Vos (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997); "The Conservation Policy Network"; *Corporate Power and the Environment*; and "Democratic Ethics and Ecological Modernization: The Formulation of California's Automobile Emission Standards." *Public Integrity* 4 (2001): 325–44.

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