

Review: Differences between state, regime, and government; structuralist vs. voluntarist approaches

Where do the readings from this week fall in terms of the structuralist/voluntarist divide?

Definitions: Structuralist -Causal importance of deeply entrenched conditions. Minimize the role of human agency. Tend to be pretty deterministic. Voluntarist -Focus on the role of leadership and human agency in shaping outcomes

Our readings: Structuralist -Lipset (econ development), Moore (classes), Huntington (culture), Voluntarist Lipset on Washington (1998) In the middle -Dahl talks about structural factors like dispersal of resources in the society, but also talks about developing systems of mutual security (a discussion that di Palma picks up on) and the importance of beliefs about the appropriateness of military intervention in the economy, Przeworski and Limongi -talk about political actors initiating democracy but economic growth facilitating regime stability

What is democracy?

Levitsky: regimes with governments chosen with free and fair elections, universal suffrage, citizens have civil liberties necessary to oppose government (speech, press, association); and elected governments must have real power to govern

Dahl: Democracy (ideal system): citizens can 1) formulate their preferences 2) signify preferences by individual and collective action 3) have preferences weighted equally in government; democracy as Dahl sees it has never existed, he uses the term polyarchy to talk about a relatively democratized regime (popularized and liberalized)

On Boix, is democracy and regime in general all about economic preferences and redistribution?

Do certain cultural contexts help or impede democracy?

In so much as economic development might be tied to democratization (per modernization theory) Weber might argue that certain (Protestant) cultures are better for democracy

Huntington: One potential problem is lack of experience with democracy; is this cultural? He says, "one serious impediment to democratization is the absence or weakness of real commitment to democratic values among political leaders in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East." Two forms of cultural thesis: 1) that only Western culture provides a suitable base for the development of democratic institutions, 2) (less restrictive) that certain non-Western cultures are peculiarly hostile to democracy (particularly Confucianism and Islam).

Arguments about Confucianism: that classic Confucianism emphasized the group over the individual, authority over liberty, responsibilities over rights; the conflict of ideas, groups, and parties was viewed as dangerous and illegitimate; Confucianism merged society and the state and provided no legitimacy for autonomous social institutions at the national level

But he talks about Korea in the 1980's losing this cultural impediment at the hands of urbanization, education, the development of the middle class, and the impressive spread of Christianity

Claims that East Asian dominant party systems involve competition (w/in mainstream party) for power but not alternation; that this represents an adaptation of Western democratic practices to serve not Western values of competition and change but Asian values of consensus and stability

If we do have a transition to democracy, how/when is it likely to happen?

Dahl's axioms and sequencing: axiom 1 (w/decrease in expected cost of participation)
When might this happen? (Boix: economic inequality; capital mobility)

Dahl axiom 2 (w/increase in cost of suppression)
When might this happen? (increase power of opposition; international sanctions)

Axiom 3: the more the costs of suppression exceed cost of toleration, the greater the chance for a competitive regime

What are the paths/sequences to democracy for Dahl? Which is safest? Why?

Closed→liberalized→inclusive (safest)

Closed→inclusive→liberalized (why potentially dangerous?)

Abrupt jump (What happens w/abrupt collapse of old regime for Dahl?)

Historically, the most common is the first; the other two more dangerous. The greater the number of people and variety and disparity of interests involved, the more difficult the task and the more time required

But, first path no longer open to most countries with hegemonic regimes because most countries with hegemonic regimes already inclusive; risk of failure can be reduced if steps toward liberalization are accompanied by search for viable system of mutual guarantees (note the volunteerism in this portion of the theory)

What happens with abrupt collapse of the old regime and democratization for Dahl?

Most stable polyarchies come about from peaceful transition because it is most likely supported by widespread sense of legitimacy

Sudden collapse of old regime leaves new regime without sense of legitimacy

What about the other theories from this week; do they see successful democratization as a gradual development or an abrupt change?

Lipset (Political Man): Gradual; modernization theory applied to democratization. *For Lipset, what is the key variable that leads to democratization? What is the mechanism through which this variable leads to democratization?*

Key variable: economic development. Mechanism: development leads to urbanization, education, communication/information, wealth, cross-cutting cleavages, civil society, which all lead to tolerance, moderation, social ties and organization, interest in politics, people with more to lose (bigger pot for Lipset means wealth is spread more evenly, with a larger middle class), ability to combat a repressive state

How does Przeworski/Limongi's modernization theory argument differ from that of Lipset?

Economic development makes it more likely that democracies will be stable/last, but doesn't increase the chance of actual democratization. Instead, they discuss how political actors initiate democracy.

How does Moore's theory differ?

While focus is still on economic variables, most important for Moore is class conflict; democratization is fast and violent, rather than slow and peaceful.

Why is commercialization of agriculture important? (Type: labor repressive (requires repressive state) versus market; how do they differ? Why differentiation important? Market: strong ally for bourgeoisie; gets rid of potentially dangerous peasant)

Strength of bourg; who are they and why are they important? How do you get them (will come from industrialization); if weak, what happens? (ally w/landed elite); if strong, set “tone” of partnership

Why is violence important?

Dislodges landed elite/nobility; break royal absolutism

(some notes from Skopol review)

-Insofar as any theoretically significant common causal pattern is identified as characteristic of the three “bourgeois revolutions,” it is “the development of a group in society with an independent economic base, which attacks obstacles to a democratic version of capitalism that have been inherited from the past”; emphasizes the role of commercial agrarians—gentry in the English Civil War, rich peasants in the French Revolution, and commercial farmers in the American Civil War

- The first key variable is the strength of a bourgeois or commercial impulse; some degree of commercialization, which for him means growth of urban-based commodity markets, is asserted to be operating to undermine and destabilize each agrarian state that Moore discusses

-According to Moore, the “bourgeois rev” countries are characterized by the presence of a “strong” bourgeois impulse at an early state of modernization; this bourgeois impulse is of “medium” strength in early modernizing Germany and Japan; and it is “weak” in late nineteenth-century China and Russia; if it is strong, it will set the cultural and political “tone” of any coalition with a landed upper class no matter who actually holds political office; if it is only of “medium” strength, the landed upper class will set the tone

-Two remaining key variables: “the form of commercial agriculture: “labor repressive” versus “market”; the other is “peasant revolutionary potential”

-“Market” commercialization created crucial agrarian political allies for “strong” bourgeoisies in England and the (Northern) United States. In contrast, “labor-repressive agrarian systems provided an unfavorable soil for the strong growth of democracy and (if peasant revolution failed and a moderately strong bourgeoisie existed) an important part of the institutional complex leading to fascism

Let’s think about all of our theories in terms of the creation and stability of American democracy.

Lipset (Washington) makes a volunteerist argument regarding American democratization; what is the logic here? How might the various structuralist theories explain democratization and stability in the US (cultural theorists, modernization theorists, class-based theories)? What do you find to be the most convincing argument?

Is it possible to generalize about democracy and democratization across time and space?