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The Exclusive Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy

Introduction

This book has investigated the Permanent Emergency Welfare Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa since colonial independence, highlighting the exclusive origins of dictatorship and democracy. By examining the key characteristics, strengths and shortcomings of these welfare regimes in transition, it has shown that while governments in the region have designed temporary measures to address urgent socio-economic problems, over time, as the difficulties have remained, the emergency institutions have become permanent structures, contributing to the reproduction of existing inequalities and to the creation of new ones. Hence, the main systemic problems and structural challenges that characterize the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been highlighted (see Chapter 4), with the objective of finding possible future solutions.

A multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach to economic development, social protection and democracy promotion has here been identified as necessary.

An overview of the main development pathways that have materialized in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1960s has also been provided, with the goal of understanding the causes that have led to the implementation of a specific model of development at the expense of others.

In identifying the main welfare trajectories and development pathways (see Chapter 3), this book has drawn attention to the serious shortcomings present in current theories of system transformation and, in particular, has highlighted the necessity of going beyond classical structure versus agency dichotomies. The adoption of a mechanism-based approach to understanding complex processes of political, economic, cultural and social transformations and evolution in the key elements of modernity has been proposed, emphasizing the need to better capture the interactions between institutional and social mechanisms. Causes per se, it has been argued, do not produce outcomes. Mechanisms do.
Transformation dynamics: Institutional and social mechanisms in action

In emphasizing the need to look beyond classic structure versus agency dichotomies, this book highlights the importance of adopting a mechanism-based approach (Hedström and Swedberg 1998; Hedström and Bearman 2009; Demeulenaere 2011) to explain political, institutional, economic, cultural and social events. As new institutionalists have shown (Hall 1986; North 1990; Steinmo et al. 1992; Skocpol 1995; Hall and Taylor 1996; Pierson 2000, 2004; Streeck and Thelen 2005), institutions matter, but this is still not sufficient to fully explain political, economic, cultural and social change. An institutions-centered approach based on a simple understanding of structures is, in fact, not sufficient to capture highly complex patterns of system transformation.

Beside the important role played by structures, the agency of actors must be examined carefully (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Schmidt 2010; Lustick 2011; Streeck 2012). In this account, the book has highlighted the importance of the work of social theorists, of new institutionalist scholars and of analytical sociologists and their reflections on the processes of individual socialization, collective mobilization and institutional permeation. It has been shown that the relationship between structure and agency is not a linear but a circular one (Long and van der Ploeg 1994; Long 2001). Institutions or structures (including social structures) do constrain the actions of actors, but the actors are equally capable of drastically altering the make-up and function of these structures.

This book has emphasized the need to look beyond the rational aspirations and actions of the actors involved in system transformation (whether political, institutional, economic, cultural or social), as some recent amendments to new institutionalism have proposed (see e.g. Scharpf 1997; Streeck and Thelen 2005; Schmidt 2008; Häusermann 2010; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). It has demonstrated that people sometimes act rationally, being moved by material, institutional or ideational constraints and incentives, but this does not account for the complexity of their behavior. The borders between rationality and irrationality are fragile and, in many cases, they are an artificial academic creation (Elster 1996, 1999, 2007). For example, in the case of international migration, emotions play a vital role in the process of institutional transformation, influencing, through a circular process, our perceptions, preferences and actions (Carmel and Cerami 2011). As discussed in Chapter 9, another telling example is represented by the issue of spirit possession and transitional justice in Sub-Saharan Africa (Baines 2010). This reached its apex in the demonstrations of 1997 in Ziguinchor and Dakar (Senegal), where protestors killed eight immigrants, claiming they were using foreign magic to shrink their genitals (presumably a particularly odious crime in Senegal) (SCAD 2011, Senegal), and in 2008 in the Republic