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Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Brown University

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DIETRICH RUESCHEMeyer
Brown University
Dietrich_Rueschemeyer@brown.edu

Democratic government and generous social provisions are both critical qualities of good societies, at least in the prevailing views in most rich countries. Democracy and social welfare policies are also interrelated. While social policy can thrive in authoritarian political systems, democracies often present specifically favorable conditions for sustainable social provisions. In turn, the growth of social welfare states has arguably supportive of the consolidation of democratic rule in Western Europe after the Second World War. The two books under review make important contributions to the causal analysis of democratic governance and social welfare policies. Both enter crowded fields of scholarship, and in both fields substantial progress has been made in past decades (Amenta 2003; Mahoney 2003).

Charles Tilly's Democracy builds on a lifetime of work on state formation and governance; revolutions; contention and collective violence; as well as trust relations; inequality; and more. In addition, this book, together with his earlier work on Durable Inequality (1998), represents the fruition of a shift in Tilly's analytic strategy: from a theoretically oriented pursuit of important historical questions to a more formal—if still richly informed by history—use of mechanism hypotheses as tools of causal explanation. For both reasons, Democracy meets with great expectations and deserves a close reading.

Tilly focuses on processes of democratization, de-democratization, and on degrees of democracy rather than on the attainment or the loss of a defined state of affairs called democracy: “Democratization . . . consists of an increase in conformity between state behavior and citizens' expressed demands” (p. 140). This conformity is specified in four dimensions: as the degree to which there exists broad, equal, and mutually binding consultation of the citizenry by the state, and the degree to which citizens are protected against arbitrary state action. For the first three dimensions of this compound definition, Tilly uses Freedom House assessments of political rights as rough indicators, and for the fourth, the Freedom House ratings of civil liberties. At the same time, not focusing on the presence or absence of democracy, and instead, emphasizing processes in the direction of democracy or away from it, allows Tilly to continue his efforts to bring long stretches of history to bear on understanding democracy and the processes that advance it or detract from it (Tilly 2004).

The core theoretical argument of Democracy holds that three processes are necessary for advancing democratization and that their inversions cause de-democratization: (1) the dissolution of social trust networks separated from regimes and the integration of trust networks into public politics; (2) the insulation of public politics from “categorical inequalities” based on social categories that profoundly shape the organization of social life and separate people with different life chances, “as is commonly the case with categories of gender, race, caste, ethnicity, nationality and religion and is sometimes the case with categories of social class” (p. 75); and (3) the reduction of autonomous power centers outside the control of public politics, whether they are part of the state or not. Clearly these processes cover
a wide territory. Thus, the reduction of autonomous power centers refers both to non-state power and to power concentration within the state and it involves, to cite one formulation, "(a) broadening of political participation, (b) equalization of political participation, (c) enhancement of collective control over government, and (d) inhibition of arbitrary coercive power by political actors, including agents of government." (p. 96).

For each of the three master hypotheses, Tilly offers intriguing lists of mechanisms that underlie the broader processes. In their richness and originality, these propositions about specific mechanisms—understood as universal causal links that in different combinations account for historical processes—have few equals in the literature. The causal assertions are developed, illustrated, and, to an extent, justified with sketches of the course of democratization and de-democratization in a variety of countries, including Kazakhstan, Jamaica, France, Russia and post-socialist Eastern Europe, India, Switzerland, the United States, South Africa, Spain, Venezuela, and others. The translation of the three broad processes into specific detail—universal mechanism hypotheses identified in diverse historical constellations—is given much attention, and yet these specifications are on occasion hard to decipher and not easy to assess in their validity.

In the course of confronting a number of historical trajectories with an abundance of theoretical claims, Tilly offers many important empirical generalizations as well as orienting theoretical ideas that complement the theoretical core of his argument. Thus, democratization is best understood as a matter of conflict, often initiated by pressure from below. Developments of de-democratization tend to be faster than democratizing changes and are typically associated with elite interests. Both democratization and de-democratization often occur in the same time periods. The way states acquire their resources—through ownership of production by the ruler, through control of natural resources such as oil, or through extraction of economic resources and personnel from citizens—has profound consequences for the need to negotiate and bargain with the citizenry and thus for the chances of democratization; it is here that the capitalism-democracy nexus has, in Tilly's account, its strongest grounding.

Except for a brief classification of earlier work as idealist, structuralist, or instrumentalist, Democracy does not engage the existing empirical theories of democracy. This is a pity—not only because we do not learn how much overlap or disagreement exists between the accounts of Tilly and others, but also because Tilly's own claims would have become clearer through such interrogation and commentary. For instance, the role of social class in the effects of social inequality on democratization and de-democratization remains unclear. Often, class is not included in the repeated lists of relevant durable inequalities; and from several formulations it seems that durable inequalities matter only if they are "directly inscribed" in public politics.

Among the issues that need clarification, perhaps the most important concern is the confidence claimed by Tilly for the empirical validity of his causal accounts. In a symposium on John Goldthorpe's critique of comparative historical case studies, Tilly argued persuasively for assessing causal mechanism hypotheses by confronting them with varied historical sequences in diverse settings. Students who employ this mode of analysis, he argued, believe such propositions "because for a large range of times, places, and situations they can construct relevant, verifiable causal stories resting in different chains of cause-effect relations whose efficacy can be demonstrated independently of those stories" (Tilly 1997: 48). Still, the confidence of such beliefs depends on the repeated fit of the different theoretical claims and their specified domains with the concrete historical trajectories examined. While in analyses of this kind one cannot expect numerical probabilities, explicit claims and arguments about the adequacy and strength of empirical support are welcome. Tilly displays a good deal of implicit confidence; sometimes the correspondence between political stories and theoretical interpretation is tight; sometimes historical accounts are interspersed or followed by references to causal claims that are much looser, and sometimes his confidence is tempered by ironic reservations about mere conjectures (e.g., pp. 184-45).

There are a number of open substantive questions this reader is left with by the book. Tilly often speaks of an overall historical development as resulting in democratization or de-democratization; this is reinforced per-
haps by the frequent use of Freedom House’s numerical judgments. Yet advances toward democracy and movements away from it occur in four analytically separate dimensions—the equality, breadth, protection, and binding character of the citizens’ consultation. In addition, different groups may fare quite differently at the same time period in a given country. For example, “the arrival of Hugo Chávez caused significant withdrawal of trust networks among the middle classes and organized labor. At the same time, Chávez’s populist policies may well have produced unprecedented integration of indigenous and marginal people’s trust networks into Venezuelan public politics” (pp. 171–72). If one nevertheless aims for aggregate judgments about democratization and de-democratization, one has to be prepared to spell out how a change in one dimension can compensate for opposite changes in another and whether and why changes affecting one group are less or more important than the impact of obverse developments on another. This problem remains unresolved except by implicit assertions.

A parallel issue concerns the relations among the three causal master hypotheses. They are said to interact in their effects, and this is a problem Tilly formally put on his agenda. The three processes are claimed as jointly necessary and sufficient for democratization (p. 96), and their reversals appear as jointly sufficient for de-democratization. There are more detailed interaction hypotheses, but much detail beyond these broad assertions is left open.

The reduction of autonomous power centers and the integration of trust networks into public politics are both potentially ambiguous in their effect on democracy. Tilly does not assert that the integration of trust networks can advance theocracy and fascism rather than democratization, but makes little of this observation later on. The reduction of non-state autonomous power centers has similarly been claimed as a development that can favor totalitarian rule. In this vein, Dahrendorf (1967) argued that the impact of the Nazi regime on the underlying social and political processes in Germany at once secured the regime’s consolidation and established the potential for democracy after its demise due to the shock of defeat in war. The potentially divergent outcomes of two of Tilly’s central process hypotheses, the possibility that integrating trust networks into public politics and constraining autonomous centers of social power and influence may have pro- as well as anti-democratic effects, can also throw additional light on his finding that historically both democratization and de-democratization are closely interlinked.

Democracy is wonderfully rich in original ideas and strong interpretations of historical antecedents as well as of current developments in democratic governance. It makes forceful claims and raises intriguing and important questions. Not surprisingly, some issues remain unresolved. This book and its predecessor (Tilly 2004) will no doubt have a strong impact on future work in the empirical theory of democracy.

In Why Welfare States Persist, Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza show that citizens’ political preferences are a major determinant of social welfare effort in democracies even if indicators for other causal conditions affecting welfare state policies—economic productivity, demographic change, the power balance in society, and political institutions—are taken into account. This is a sophisticated and careful cross-sectional time-series analysis of 16 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Its first and major finding is that “the magnitude of these effects [of policy preferences] is substantial . . . a standard unit increase in mass preferences raises by 2.59 percentage points the level of welfare effort [government social expenditures as percent of GDP], while a standard unit increase in the level of left cabinet control raises it by just 2 percentage points” (p. 48). This effect of mass preferences was adumbrated in much of the comparative studies of welfare state development; but only one earlier cross-national investigation (Mehrtens 2004) had demonstrated an effect of public opinion independent of other determinants of social welfare policies.

Brooks and Manza show how mass political opinion about the government’s responsibility about unemployment and income inequality interact with other factors shaping national welfare efforts, and they detail this for different countries and for three sets of countries distinguished in line with Esping-Andersen’s (1990) typology of social democratic, Christian democratic, and liberal democratic welfare states. Citizens’ preferences co-deter-
mine the stark differences in national welfare effort, which in 2001 ranged from 17 percent of GDP in liberal welfare states to 26 and 27 percent in the other two regime categories. People’s policy preferences were also a significant factor in preventing overall retrenchments in social welfare efforts during the 1980s and 1990s in all but two—Ireland and the Netherlands—of the 16 countries. The policy preferences expressed in public opinion are convincingly interpreted as “embedded” in people’s social affiliations and in their contacts with social institutions. This means that they are relatively stable for years and even decades. Why Welfare States Persist raises important questions for welfare state theory that I cannot discuss here. In particular, the relations between changes of embedded political opinion and transformations in institutions and in the political balance of power involve wide open theoretical questions. After all, the latter constitute much of the social environment of “embedded” opinion formation.

What does this book teach us about how democracies function? A simple answer might be that if public opinion corresponds at least roughly to a nation’s social welfare efforts, there may be more to the imperfect, but really existing forms of democracy than the critics of “formal democracy” assume. After all, here is a significant degree of “conformity between state behavior and citizens’ expressed demands” (to quote once more Tilly’s ultimate definition of democracy). Brooks and Manza reject the radical skepticism about democracy that found justification in findings about most people’s ignorant and inconsistent political views, most famously detailed by Converse long ago (1964). They rely instead on more recent findings and interpretive arguments, some of which apply with special force to “embedded opinion.” This points, for instance, to common ways of taking one’s cue from trusted others and to the collective astuteness of aggregates of people, most of whom are only moderately informed.

Yet building a thoroughly optimistic revision of critiques of formal democracy on this book’s findings would be simplistic, and Brooks and Manza are far from doing so. Yes, collective policy preferences of a global kind not only are meaningful and display a relatively stable character; they also exert a real influence on policy. But their impact is quite varied across countries. It is generally weaker on particular policies such as health care, public employment, and pension benefits than on welfare effort as a whole (p. 137). And even on welfare expenditures as a whole, its effect is of course only partial, sharing a determining role with interest groups, administrative bodies, and elected politicians. Finally, there are the open questions of where policy preferences come from. In the long run they are most likely shaped at least in part by past policies, by social and political institutions, as well as by influential interests. Democracy represents an opening for social welfare policies responsive to citizens’ preferences. But democratic policies are inevitably the result of compromises among contending forces. And these have quite a different shape in different countries, even in different capitalist countries and in the different welfare state regimes of capitalist democracies.

References