

An Institutional Approach to World-Systems Analysis*

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The purpose of this paper is to propose the institutional approach of organizational theory as a source of contributions to the theories of development and world-systems. Three essential arguments are raised to the debates of development theory and the complexities of relations between nation-states: 1) organizations can serve as models for nation-states. The interaction of nations is emphasized to turn the dichotomous or typological debates of development theory into a general comparative (relational) theoretical perspective; 2) global integration and an increasingly structural homogeneity of subunits should be equally emphasized as the issue of inequality in international class formation. This approach is to explore the intertwined relationship between external environmental constraints and intranational structural processes; 3) Power and control can serve as mechanisms of historical transformation of nation-states. This approach suggests that nation-states grow toward homogeneous entities as they copy the social and economic goals and structural means employed by those in a dominant position in the world systems.

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Introduction

This paper proposes institutionalism as an alternative perspective for analyzing global development. Wallerstein's world-systems perspective has been the dominating paradigm in holistic social theory. world-system theory basically takes historical approach seriously and emphasizes on the capitalistic reproduction as the core of world integration. Giddens (1990) makes two useful comments: world-system theory centers solely on a single-dimensional economic system; also, nation-states should be treaded as actors. Nevertheless, these comments did not go beyond conventional wisdom of organizational theory, namely institutionalism.

How institutional approach enhances the capability of world-system analysis? Institutionalism is good at balancing interrelated macro feature and individual actor of structure. Multidimensional analysis is another character to institutionalism which avoids the pitfall of economic determinism. Hawley's (1986) principle of isomorphism,¹ namely organizational convergence adds a broader perspective over the issue of inequality in international class formation.

Accordingly, these analytical tools are derived: (1) a relational network in the creation and diffusion of world-system; (2) the notion of structural isomorphism facilitates similar organizing forces and restraints; (3) power and control as structural and political means of the dominant states within the institutional environments.

Prior to applying the institutional analysis to the trend of global integration, the paper begins with a brief literature review of development theory. Major debates and controversial arguments among theoretical paradigms are identified and carefully examined. Following the review, I present institutionalism as a distinctive approach to

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the analysis of global structure and phenomenon. The conclusion points out the importance of synthesizing wisdom from various viewpoints.

Theoretical Debates in the Sociology of Development

The modernization model of societal development, which postulates the linear notion that the historical growth of western societies represents the pathway of development for the contemporary Third World, was probably the first dominant paradigm in the sociology of development (Wilson 1984). Following this historical trend, dependency theory originated as a challenge from the left to the orthodox modernization theory of economic growth and development (Weaver and Berger 1984). Wallerstein's (1974) world-system theory depicts the importance of specific social structures within an historical context, and its connection with the emergence of a European capitalist world-economy. By adopting Marxist's spirit, the class formation of the world-system is viewed as the result of asymmetric exchange relations among countries.

The above three major theoretical perspectives within the literature of development theory will be compared and contrasted according to their key components. Note that each theoretical approach will be viewed as a coherent whole although there are almost as many variants of the earliest approach as there are in the most recent one. General directions for applying institutional approach will be generated after the literature review.

We can identify some most explicit and/or controversial arguments within the literature of development theories. First of all, there is a debate over the absolute importance between economic and political sectors. Hence, some essential factors such as culture are treated merely as ideology (or indirect factors) either to facilitate the emergence of the world economic system or to contribute to national prestige in the world system. Second, Third world development is the major concern of development theory. Consequently, the asymmetric relationship between the core and peripheral nations are

central to the arguments. This leads to the development of a world economic system and a world stratification structure. Third, development theory was initially developed through observation on a regional basis; for example, Wallerstein focused on small European nation-state or city-state, and dependency theorists focused on Latin America. Fourth, arguments of development theory usually sound pessimistic in terms of the international class formation of global development. Stated differently, one of the striking feature of global development was the remarkable slowness of response between economic growth (development) and change of position (vertical mobility) in the hierarchy of the world-systems. Nevertheless, most theoretical controversies within development theory stem from sources that generate inequalities.

The emergence of modernization theory in the late fifties and early sixties set the stage for the contemporary synthesis. The body of literature built around the concept of modernization was the first substantial set of writings by mainstream sociological and political scientists that focused on what was happening in the Third World (Evans and Stephens 1988). Modernization theory emphasizes the social, cultural, and western model of capitalism is set up for the poor countries. Stated more specifically, modernization theory can be characterized as a theory of underdevelopment because its theoretical framework concentrates on the negative phenomena and modernizations of Third World societies and their effects on economic growth. Clearly, modernization theory neglects the uniqueness of each culture and social structure, and the significance of historical context within each country. Furthermore, as international transactions are becoming increasingly important, a series of critiques were raised. Nevertheless, the paradigm of success in the western developed countries as dominant content of world culture has been adopted in the argument of international relations (Meyer et al. 1975; Boli-Bennett 1980; Meyer 1980).

Challenges to modernization theory primarily point to its neglect of international factors and its conservative neoclassical sociological and economic premises. Dependency and world-system theories are

the two most significant theoretical perspectives within the opponent camp. Both perspectives draw heavily on Marxist theory and focus more on the asymmetric Third World development. In addition, the sovereignty of the nation-state and economic influences arising from capitalism are the core topics. More importantly, it emphasizes the inevitability of stratified structures within the world system. A similar argument can be found in Dahrendorf's (1959) theory. The structure of a social formation remains the same, dominant and dominated groups, but the occupants change.

Wallerstein's theory of world system emphasizes solely the economic dimension. World system theory recognized that all national economies are part of a world wide division of labor and stressed the asymmetric character of the exchange relations existing between developed and developing nations, which are said to benefit the former (Wallerstein 1974). Simply put, the European world-economy is an economic rather than a political entity. Wallerstein further suggests that the techniques of modern capitalism and technology of modern science enabled this world-economy to thrive, produce, and expand without the emergence of a unified political structure. However, technology is not a critical factor because China had about the same level of technical development as European countries had in the sixteenth century, but it never emerged as a world economic system. Moreover, each single and vast political regime such as China, Persia, and Rome were never free from political crises compared to Western small city-states, nation-states, or small empires.

What Wallerstein is arguing is that capitalism as an economic mode is based on the fact that the economic factors operate within an arena larger than that which any political entity can totally control, namely capitalism is the political side of the form of economic organization. Wallerstein suggests that cultural qualities, such as a spirit of collective psychology, are the product of very specific social structural conjunctures and do not long outlive their base. However, he contradicts himself by saying that nations of Protestantism are core-states and nations of Catholicism are peripheries, as adopted

from Weber's theory on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. We can infer that religious belief was a form of culture which made the world-economy survive for five centuries. Although Wallerstein insists on capitalism as the single dimension which is responsible for modern transformation, the profound role of a broader cultural constraint within the world system is quite obvious.

Dependency theory focuses on the unequal exchange between nations. Yet, dependency theorists recognize the international class structure and also simply take capitalism and international trade as the key factors. Its main contributions are to distinguish development as a continuous concept and to point out the dynamic relationship within the world stratification structure over time. Nevertheless, this approach fails to interpret the qualitative reasons for stable positions or stagnation of upward mobility within the semi-peripheral and peripheral areas. Using Canada and Mexico as examples, both have been dependent for development on the U.S., while one is in the core and the other is in the periphery. In other words, dependency theorists made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the way the world is, but they were weak on explaining why it is that way (Weaver and Berger 1984).

The other criticism is from its failure to explain why political independence did not lead to development for many Third World countries in the post-colonial period. Therefore, the so-called nondependency Marxist theory of development, one of the major variants within dependency theory, claims that the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in the Third World are largely internal and that their solution are internal. In general, dependency theory may fall into a trap of mechanistic oversimplification, assuming that the less-developed countries are developing and that their internal problems will resolve themselves. One final note is that both world-system and dependency theory are developed from a regional base, European countries and Latin America, respectively. As Evans and Stephens (1988) postulate, as long as the range of cases being compared remains so restricted, claims to the establishment of general explanatory relations must be considered fragile. Only by studying very dif-

ferent world-systems can we formulate a theory of structural transformation (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1993).

Criticisms point to the long and on-going debate within development theory are virtually adopting a problem-solving fashion. Consequently, particular flaws of development theory are criticized, but the theoretical argument remains lacking a coherent whole. In addition, problem-solving strategies usually fall into the same trap as development theory by focusing on individual or regional states, or groups of opposing states. Furthermore, in his most recent article, Wallerstein (1993) emphasizes the forgotten timespace consideration in the analysis of world-system. The importance of time and space has been mentioned frequently in the literature of development theory. However, it was deliberately neglected.

Based on the observation of historical transformations, the research trend of globalization have provided a coherent perspective for world-system analysis and development theory. The trend of globalization is different from the single-dimensional perspective stated above within the approach of development theory in many aspects. The major difference is it takes a variety of dimensions into consideration such as capitalism, industrialization (international division of labor), dominance of nation-state, military power, technology, and culture. Next, the location of power and control concentrates on different networks of dimension. In other words, the world-system is in a balanced and equilibrium situation. The concepts of nation-state, asymmetry, dependency, exploitation are thus less emphasized. Instead, the network approach is applied to interactions which occur to different nation-state actors within each institutional dimension.

The concentration solely on either nation-state dominance or capitalist world-system has been mixed within multidimensional perspective. Giddens (1990) criticizes the world-system approach's heavy concentration on economic influences and finds it difficult to satisfactorily account for those phenomena made central by the theorists of international relations: the rise of the nation-state and the nation-state approach by proposing the dialectical character of globalization and also the influence of processes of uneven development. He

argues that loss of autonomy of the part of some states or groups of states has often gone along with an increase in that of others, as a result of alliances, wars, or political and economic changers of various sorts.

Furthermore, as for the significance of nation-state and international class relationship, Sztompka (1990) contends that differentiation into local communities, tribes, clans, ethnic groups, nations, even states, has lost at least some of its former significance. Their borderlines have become more fluid, and much more comprehensive wholes have emerged as crucial. Consequently, the importance of a general international influence over individual or regional nation-states within development theory was proposed.

Applying the Institutional approach to Development theory

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state that institutional theory presents a paradox. Institutionalism purportedly represents a distinctive approach to the study of social, economic, and political phenomena; yet it is often easier to gain agreement about what it is not than about what it is. In an effort to fulfill three essential directions stated above that development theory are required, this section is aimed at three key theoretical components that the institutional approach adds to debates to world-systems analysis and development theory. The first emphasis is put on the macro features and normative aspects, and in the importance the emphasis attributes to a relational network in the creation and diffusion of world-systems. Second, the application of institutional isomorphism is expected to shed some light on the debate over whether or not blocs of societies would involve in a common direction. Simply put, the debate is between convergence-international and divergence-intranational approach within development theory. The former argues for convergence around the requirements of the international modern economic whereas the latter argues for divergence along lines set by intranational political and cultural factors. Third, the emphasis on power, in particular on the role of the states in the institutional envi-

ronment. The institutional isomorphism process of global development is explained with a focus on legitimation of world culture.

Concerning the first direction that organizations can serve as models for nation-states, Carroll's (1984) classification of three levels of analysis provides an adequate reference to world-systems analysis. The lowest level - the organizational - involves the study of demographic events and life-cycle processes across individual organizations. The second level is the study of populations of organizations. The third level of analysis studies community ecology. Carroll distinguishes research on the world system as the macroevolutionary approach. Researchers using this approach attempt to identify the structural characteristics of societies and to analyze societal changes over long historical periods (Duncan 1964).

However, the highest distinctions that have been given to world-systems analysis separates different approaches of development theory for understanding "the collection of all the populations that live together in some region (Roughgarden 1979)." In other words, development theorists commit theoretical flaws by focusing merely on dichotomous or categorized populations of organizations (nation-states) rather than sets of populations (world-systems), namely, overlapped processes of macro levels of analysis are neglected. For example, Wallerstein's Eurocentric world-system approach, dependency theorists' sole attention on Latin America, and modernization theorists' capitalist model of modernization. Development theory is lacking theoretical connections between units of analysis to make its arguments more universalistic. Kahn and Zald (1990) consider that the introduction of organizations theory into the study of international relations not only continues the theme of organizations as sources of workers well-being, but carries it beyond the populations of owners and managers, consumers and producers. In addition, it involves the effects of organizations, positive and negative, at community, national, and global levels.

Friedland and Alford's (1991) notion of nested levels of analysis may be helpful add to development theory's ambiguity and confusions. They contend that each level of analysis is equally an abstrac-

tion and a reification; each is implicated in the other; none is more "real" than any other. Although they refer three levels of analysis to individuals, organizations, and institutions, the spirit of higher levels of constraint can be adopted by world-systems analysis. Friedland and Alford (1991) have a suitable description:

We conceive of these levels of analysis as "nested," where organization and institutions specify progressively higher levels of constraint and opportunity for individual action. The relevant temporal frame in which it makes sense to study variation is longest for institutions and shortest for individuals. The relevant spatial extent over which activities can be organized is greatest for institutions and least for individuals. The symbolic world can only be constructed theoretically at the institutional level (Friedland and Alford 1991:242).

This line of argument may be based on the early work of Emile Durkheim and Ludwik Fleck and the recent similar work of Mary Douglas. Douglas (1986) challenges argument that proposes a suprapersonal cognitive system which talks about institutions or social groups as if they were individuals. She asserts that institutions cannot have minds of their own; however, thinking itself is dependent on institutions. Hence, the superiority of a higher unit of analysis interacts with all other nested units. Thus structures of world-systems can be institutionally patterned through a logic of nested levels of analysis. progressively higher levels of constraint and opportunity applies to blocs or regions of societies. Developed and less-developed, core and periphery societies can be compared in a relational basis since they share common institutional fields. world-systems analysis should turn to a macro socially constructed normative world in which societies exist. In a sense to comparable the idea of "Bringing society back in," we may urge development theorists to "Bringing the system back in."

Within the hot debate of convergence-international and divergence-institutional approach, Meyer et al. (1980) and Sztompka (1990) provide both theoretical and empirical evidence for the phe-

nomenon of global integration. According to the data on various indicators of national social and economic development, Meyer et al. (1980) point out the data and events of the last quarter-century have destroyed the possibility of stagnant development in the periphery areas, producing consensus on what would have been considered convergence theories. As Tilly describes:

A sensible rule of thumb for connectedness might be that the actions of powerholders in one region of a network rapidly (say within a year) and visibly (say in changes actually reported by nearby observers) affect the welfare of at least a significant minority (say a tenth) of the population in another region of the network. Such a criterion indubitably makes our own world a single system; even in the absence of worldwide flows of capital, communications, and manufactured goods, shipments of grain and arms from region to region would suffice to setablish the minimum connections (Tilly 1984:62).

Convergence-international approach seems have occupied the dominant position of theoretical debate. However, on the other hand, divergence-institutional theorists contend that although in reviewing the rapid political and economic development in the modern world, bottlenecks of problems in various social spheres have been explored by development theorists, the stagnation of upward mobility in the semi-periphery and periphery nations have been internationally neglected. Given the dramatic economic development in the so-called Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) and militarily powerful countries in the socialist world, the hierarchical situation seems not to have been affected very much. It is very likely that the dominant position of the "First World" countries is sustained beyond the control in the context of economic, political, and military power.

Both approaches treat global transformation as a synonym for the revolution of communications and flows of information or mechanized technologies of communication (Sztompka 1990; Giddens 1990). In addition, economic development and socio-political order are still the major concerns. The institutional constraint seems to be

relegated to a subordinate, purely instrumental role in global development. Meyer and Boli-Bennett (1975) postulate that the increasing uniformity of, and exchange between, societies brought awareness that they may diverge or converge with respect to equality of development as well as in organizational modernity. Their argument may suggest that the debate over convergence-international and divergence-institutional should be turned to homogenizing effects of industrial societies. Furthermore, global transformation should be seen as resulting from the evolution of world society, more than from the independent evolution of separate societies.

convergence and divergence approaches can share common theoretical components by turning debate to homogenous effects of industrial societies. Either integrated or stratified societal formations may share common institutional constraints and opportunities. The concept that best captures the process of homogenization is isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In Hawley's (1968) description, isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions. Wallerstein's capitalist world-system may have seized the essence of institutional isomorphism by arguing a unified European world-economy. Nevertheless, he puts too much theoretical emphasis on geographical differences and requirements of modern capitalism and technology of modern science.

The new institutionalists in organizational theory argue that the processes by which organizational forms tend toward homogenization cannot be explained by their contributions to efficiency, particularly as an organizational field evolves (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Furthermore, from an institutionalist perspective, organizations which adopt the appropriate forms perform well not because they are most efficient, but because these forms are most effective at eliciting resources from other organizations which take them to be legitimate. It is a perspective concerned more with legitimacy than efficiency (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Evidences from various aspects of research may direct the approach of institutional isomorphism over the original debate within development theory. For

example, Meyer et al. (1980) have referred stratification systems at the international level. They found that almost any society with occupational roles comparable to those in other countries will allocate prestige in roughly the same way the others do, even though that society is not highly industrialized. Hoselitz (1972) states that societies converge as they copy the social and economic goals and structural means employed in dominant system. Expanding world economic and social forces produce convergence by penetrating many societies (Parsons 1971).

The last section of argument puts emphasis on power, in particular on the role of the states in the institutional environment. In modern societies, the nation-state is a vital source of resources and coercive power and often imposes uniform structures on procedures or organizations. Thus the state is an important source of isomorphism in organizational fields and in shaping the demography of organizational populations (Singh, Tucker, and Meinhard 1991). Therefore, power is argued to be the mechanism which produces legitimating effects for the process of isomorphism within global development. The institutional isomorphism process of global development is explained with a focus on legitimation of world culture.

As Boli-Bennett (1980) points out, the world system contains a fairly coherent and uniform set of ideologies and organizational standards of national behaviors. Meyer et al. (1980) call it "World Culture." Three sets of standards or ideologies were specified. First, standards that define external success in the system: economic predominance, geopolitical influence, and national autonomy. Second, standards which define the meaning of internal success such as rising GNP per capita, schooled and literate population, some degree of advanced technological development, and highly polished forms of cultural expression that contribute to national prestige in the world system. A third set of standards are the ideologies defining the mechanisms to be used to achieve internal and external success.

Consequently, we can argue the way that the peripheral countries approach their position in the global stratification structure is shaped by the "world culture" or ideologies developed by the "First

World" dominant countries. This line of argument takes into account the role of power as well as ideas, principles, and norms in the world system. In other words, dominant countries are in power of practicing cultural resources. Even though some countries can therefore gain access to economic development or some state elites utilize this ideology to increase their state's dominance internally, they are simply conforming to the cultural standards or signals set by dominant countries. Stated differently, even the dominated countries who have recently succeed in economic and political development are acquiring the cultural practices of the dominant group. Even the economic superpower - Japan - has felt the pressure of internationalization, especially from people with European cultural roots or "Westerners" (Koreo, 1986).

Meyer (1980) contends that culture is a world-legitimated consumption good, but is also a world-legitimated investment: all sorts of ideologies define it as an important factor of production (eg., Harbison and Myers 1963). Peripheral countries can import central professional economists and manpower planners who will help legitimate it, and even make possible external loans and aid for its development. Hence, the dominant group (nations) have to control access to and the distribution of scarce social resources, and retain (Lamont and Lareau 1988) their dominance through the imposition of arbitrary cultural norms, values and practices, through the institutionalization of these practices as naturally superior. In the exchange network within international societies, capital, commodities, and technology could be the major profiles of scarce social resources controlled by the dominant core countries. In addition, external support - aid, military support, protection, legitimation, and licensing arrangements of technology would be another form of scarce resource. Once elites (military, political, intellectual) and sectors of the population subscribe to the goal of competitive progress in the world, a stratified homogenizing structure is becoming more transparent.

Virtually all the major approaches have shortcomings in identifying the role cultural resources play in transforming the world

system into a homogenous world class system in global development. Modernization theory neglects the notion of dependent development by adopting cultural concept - "Capitalist Culture" - in changing the internal societal values. What modernization theorists missed is the utilization of cultural symbols (high culture) in the dominance of world systems. Dependency and world-system theorists emphasize the structural immobilization of economic sectors in the semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. The international relations perspective contends that state elites diffuse ideologies in order to ensure and increase their internally dominant position. The convergence perspective points out the importance of mass media in the process of globalization, but they fail to recognize that world ideology also travels through the mass media and global international movement; increasing integration into the world system exposes local elites increasingly thoroughly to the ideological assumptions underlying these media (Boli-Bennett 1980).

Most studies on cultural capital have followed Bourdieu and paid special attention to "high culture" in pointing out the items that make up the legitimate culture (Lamont and Lareau 1988). If we adopt Bourdieu's (1984) classification on zones of taste which roughly correspond to Wallerstein's hierarchies of the world system, we can generate that some cultural symbols which belong to "legitimate taste" are currently practiced in the peripheral countries. Speaking English and Christian religious preference would be the most obvious forms among the others. For example, speaking English could be a symbol of higher class membership, which corresponds to educational and social classes; Christian beliefs could mean a higher status in governmental and educational institutions. Hence, membership under the legitimate culture to reflect the interests of dominant states is an pivotal indicator of interdependence and of institutional developments in international relations. Furthermore, nation-states grow toward homogeneous entities as they copy the legitimate tastes employed in the dominant system. This line of argument could equip development theory with the mechanism, other than merely sources, of explaining international inequalities, and in shaping a stable hier-

archical world system. However, since group boundaries are not well-defined in the trend of globalization, participation in higher status culture could be more important than status group membership in transposing cultural domination between and within societies.

Consequently, we can argue that an elite dominant group in the peripheral countries may be functioning as an agent in transforming national hierarchy by promoting Western high culture as legitimate tastes. Similar arguments can be found in dependency and its critic of nondependency Marxist's theory. Both admit that alliances between ruling classes in developed and underdeveloped countries can block capitalist development in the less developed countries (Weaver and Berger 1984). Furthermore, governments of the developed countries allied themselves with local ruling classes in the less developed countries that had substantial interests in maintaining precapitalist production relations. However, states are seen as political organizations that represent the interests of the capitalist class. By emphasizing individuals and states as actors and primary units of analysis may enhance the strength of argument for dependency theorists. Also, we can find parallel arguments in Wallerstein's theory of the world system from the historical point of view. He states that it is only in the periphery that the economically more powerful group is able to reinforce its position by cultural domination as well (Wallerstein 1974). However, Wallerstein, as well as many other development theorists, overestimates the sovereignty and power of the nation-state and neglects the institutional constraint of external world-systems.

We use legitimacy to explain how dominant nation-states have their actions endorsed by powerful control of cultural resources or symbols. Broadly speaking, cultural capital equips dominant countries with legitimacy for a long-lasting and stable domination which shapes the world homogenous structure. Note that the power of legitimacy is controlled by the external system outside the nation-states. As Preffer and Salancik (1978) state, legitimacy is a conferred status and, as such, is usually controlled by those outside the organization.

Conclusion

Debates within world-systems analysis have been growing magnificently in the past few decades. However, many efforts were considered as deficient or inadequate in promoting the understanding of global development. Theoretically speaking, no single paradigm comprehends the complexities of relations between nations or between organizations. In many ways, however, the future development of world-systems analysis depends not on the dominance of one perspective, but on the wedding of the most important insights from various perspectives. The institutional approach of organizational theory would be a good starting point for theoretical endeavors in exploring world-systems analysis.

Notes

1. According to Hawley, the principle of isomorphism holds that system structures converge upon a common form to the extent that their interactions are frequent.

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