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Book review

Charles Tilly, *Democracy*.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 205 pages + References and Index

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The international attempts to install democratic regimes in certain parts of the world have questioned the existence of a universal model of promoting democratic values and processes. Differences among states, whether political, institutional, historical or cultural, lead to different opportunities and development. In *Democracy*, Charles Tilly – author of many volumes on the topic of democracy (*Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000*; *Trust and Rule*) – tries to identify some mechanisms that proved to be necessary for democratization along history.

Tilly defines democracy as a specific relationship between state and citizens, relationship that, at the same time, is considered to be a dynamic one. Starting from this simple definition, Tilly argues in favor of two important indicators in the relationship among state and citizens: political rights (free and fair elections, broad consultation, respected minority rights, etc.) and civil liberties (independent judiciary, equality under the law, freedom of expression, equality of opportunity etc.). In order to identify the differences among the states with similar democratic capacity (i.e. similar state-citizen relationship), the author introduces a second dimension, and namely that of state capacity: „*the extent to which interventions of state agents in existing non-state resources, activities, and interpersonal connections alter existing distributions of those resources, activities, and interpersonal relations, as well as relations among those distributions*” (p. 16). Taking into account these two dimensions, the degree of democratization is measured by determining the extent to which the state acts in accordance with the expressed demands of the citizens, the indicators being the broadness, the equality, the protectedness, and the existence of mutually binding consultation in the individual-state relationship (p. 13).

This book analyzes a series of countries from a historical-comparative perspective in order to identify mechanisms important for democratization, the unit of analysis being the state. The analyses are based on Freedom House data, but these are not sufficient to explain the differences in among the different paths of democratization and de-democratization. The author argues in favor of three large processes that appear in the process of democratization: (1) the integration of trust networks and public politics, (2) insulation of major categorical inequalities from public politics, and (3) the autonomy of major power centers in public politics (p. 23). The statement implied in these ideas, and namely that public participation benefits the process of democratization only under certain circumstances is definitely a merit of the volume, because Tilly questions the ideal world of Putnam (see: Putnam, Robert D., with Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, 1994) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press), where participation is a cure-all. He offers alternative solutions for identifying and enhancing democratization through consolidating the three processes mentioned above. Since democratic regimes depend on the cooperation of the citizens (i.e.: the delegation of power to a limited number of representatives), the state can only secure legitimacy, if it gains the trust of citizens. Trust, and thus cooperation, can be attained through the integration of trust-networks into public politics (e.g. patron-client networks, networks based on ethnicity, etc.), the isolation of politics from categorical inequalities and the dissolution of autonomous power centers within the state.

Such an analysis on democracy and the processes of democratization may lead us to many conclusions. First, the degree of democratization and the potential of development of different states is important due to the fact that under democratic regimes living conditions (access to education, medical care and legal protection – see: p. 6) have proved to be better. Introducing the aspect of time – and dynamics – into the analysis may lead us to forecasting possible paths of democratization, based on which action plans can be developed.

Second, comparing the degree of democratization in different states may be relevant from the point of view of cooperation among states, i.e. it may predict the stability and transparency of the participating regimes. Transparency reduces the risk of breaking contracts, trust lowers transaction costs. Under democratic conditions the number of political and financial relationships with other states may increase, while the relationships also tend to be beneficial for both sides. Based on Freedom House reports it may be concluded that states of the same type (free, partly free and not free) generally appear in the vicinity of each other. Tilly states that cooperation among states promotes democratization, but we have to recognize that the same value-transmission process functions among non-democratic regimes as well, maintaining the lack of trust and more expensive transactions due to the increased level of risk.

Third, also from an international perspective, Tilly's points may be useful in the explanation of the efficiency/inefficiency of previous international interventions aimed at installing democratic regimes. Results may be interpreted in their specific national contexts using the indicators defined.

Although the author states that he did not intend to find a universal recipe" for democratization, the book aims at establishing a theoretical model - made possible by the simplified definition of democracy and its identification through indicators in only two dimensions: political rights-civil liberties and state capacity. Still, the analyses are rich in historical and contextual explanations, giving a detailed image of the processes of democratization/de-democratization. Having both theoretical and practical references, the book is recommended for those involved in democratization research, to members of state/non-profit agencies aiming to strengthen democratic regimes, as well as for for-profit agencies, which may add a new perspective to their market-evaluations.