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Historical institutionalism, one of the important traditions employed in the discipline of comparative politics, has recently begun to be used in international relations. Historical institutionalism in international relations attributes a central role to history in the formation, change and transformation of institutions, as opposed to international institutional studies that were under the domination of rationalist theories during the Cold War and proceeding towards the rationalism-constructivism dilemma since the Cold War. However, since it is an emerging theory, historical institutionalism is often seen as a bridge between rationalist and constructivist approaches, or is attributed an auxiliary role where other theoretical approaches are not able to explain institutional developments. Taking this problem into consideration, *Historical Institutionalism and International Relations* aims to outline its own paradigm. The book consists of three parts, two of which are the introduction and conclusion, and the other is empirical chapters that examine change, stability and transformations of different international institutions.

In the first part, which deals with the theoretical foundations of the book, Tomas Rixen and L. Anne Viola examine the basic assumptions and concepts of historical institutionalism as an alternative to institutionalist approaches dominated by the constructivist or rational-choice paradigms. According to the rationalist school, institutions meet the functions of solving the problems of collective action, lowering transaction costs and increasing the mutual gain. But, taking the existence of the institutions entirely on the basis of mutual benefit, this approach ignores the decisive

role of institutions on the behavior of the actors. Thus, when actors do not have the benefits they expect, institutions cannot constrain them to leave. On the other hand, sociological institutionalism inspired by constructivism associates the existence of institutions with norms and rules that actors see legitimate and appropriate. Besides these two approaches, realist paradigm considers international institutions as a reflection of purely power distribution and thus does not see institutions as prominent objects of inquiry. Moreover, in the case of institutional change, these theories –focusing either on mere change or continuity– are not able offer an approach to combine both.

Particularly after the Cold War, the international environment has led scholars to seek for alternative theoretical frameworks that can combine both change and continuity. The most important feature that distinguishes historical institutionalism from other institutionalist theories is “its conviction that understanding an institution requires an analysis of an institution’s origin and developments over time” (p. 10). In other words, historical institutionalism is inherently historical. It also aims to provide an explanation based on the central notion of “development,” which involves change and transformation in a synthesis, contrary to the approaches reducing one into other. In this respect, there are three main contributions of historical institutionalism to the institutionalist literature. First, it attaches great importance to the role of history: when and how institutional changes take place? What can the decisive effects of the constitutive moments be on the behaviors of actors in the future? Beyond structural and historical determinations, when would agencies and ideas be influential? Second, taking constituents’ interest and positive feedback mechanisms into consideration, it provides more powerful tools to theorize endogenous exchange. Third, historical institutionalism that developed originally in the field of comparative politics can also make significant contributions for explaining the interactions between international and national institutions (p. 4).

This original contribution of historical institutionalism to the literature stems from three basic concepts that the book is based on: *path dependency*, *critical junctures* and *sequencing*. According to the concept of path dependency, institutions becomes self-reinforcing for the subject as a previous preference, event or decision have increasing returns later; that is, their preferences are restricted by the norms and rules of the institution. In this respect, institutions with increasing returns would become more stable over time, and it would be even harder for actors to violate the insti-

tutional norms and rules. As a result, the institution would be more resistant to exogenous shocks. This would ultimately make the institution more resistant to change. The concept of critical junctures implies that the institution has entered a new path, distorting the long-term stability that an existing institution has in the face of exogenous shocks. The result is that the institution has either entered a new path-dependent process or has lost its effectiveness. Finally, the concept of sequencing stands for the idea that subsequent institutional decisions are constrained by a path, which is the result of previous preferences. In this sense, the concept means that an actor within the institution has a lower freedom of action because of previous institutional decisions. These three concepts are the main analytical tools for historical institutionalism in explaining institutional change.

However, there are also some problems of historical institutionalism. First, the greatest deficiency of historical institutionalism is that it does not have a clearly-articulated applicable theory. Because of this deficiency, historical institutionalism has often been seen as a bridge between rational-choice or sociological institutionalism, or as a theory filling the gaps left by them. As a result, this created an eclectic structure and made historical institutionalism additional to rationalist and constructivist approaches that are grounded on different ontologies and epistemologies. This problem also causes historical institutional explanations to provide a picture based on purely description. Moreover, the fact that there is no consensus on the above-mentioned concepts of historical institutionalism, sometimes causes its explanations to become blurry.

The second part of the book is composed of a variety of empirical studies analyzing the change and transformation in international institutions such as the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations from the historical institutionalist perspective. In addition to the concepts of path dependency, critical junctures and sequencing, international institutions are analyzed in terms of depth, scope and speed in the empirical chapters. For example, the high rate of change shows that there is a critical juncture in institutional development; and if it is slow, the institution is stable. Or, resistance to external shocks can be attributed to the depth of institutional norms and rules. Therefore, the approach that deals with these three dimensions of change should be seen as one of the most important contributions of the book to the institutionalist literature, as it offers more sophisticated tools to better assess institutional change. On the other hand, the most striking problem in this part is the empirical analyses that do not accord with the claim put forward in the first part that the

historical institutionalism should be seen as an original paradigm, rather than a bridge between sociological and rational-choice institutionalism. In other words, except the Chapter 4, the analyses in the second part use historical institutionalism to fill the gap left by rational-choice or sociological institutionalism. This leads the usage of historical institutionalism in international relations to have an eclectic form. For example, in the Chapter 5, after examining the state participation in the United Nation Security Council, Alexandru Grigorescu argues that while the realist paradigm can explain the permanent membership, historical institutionalism is more descriptive for non-permanent membership. On the other hand, it can be argued that Tine Hanrieder's analysis of the regional structure of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Chapter 4 is the single analysis which is not eclectic. Accordingly, the influence of regionalists in the early stages of the WHO could have led to the subsequent blockade of centralizers' reform demands, including the United States.

On the other hand, it can be said that, in contrast to the general tendency to employ qualitative methods in historical institutional investigations, the use of quantitative ones in the Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is a guide for future examinations that would be based on quantitative data. In particular, the quantitative analysis in Chapter 7, which examined the access of 298 organizational bodies to 50 international organizations between 1950–2010, provides important insights in identifying the concept of critical junctures by using quantitative data. In addition, the authors in this chapter present an analysis of the critical junctures that should be appreciated. Accordingly, critical junctures are the points, which have causes that are short in duration; that are brief moments in which the structural constraints are relaxed, and permit change; and which are the beginning of a new path-dependency (p. 182).

In the final part consisting of the conclusion, Michael Zürn presents important insights and opinions about historical institutionalism. He argues that, apart from some exceptions, such as Stephen Krasner and John Ikenberry, historical institutionalism could not, at least so far, create a serious paradigm in international relations. This makes historical institutionalism a sideline paradigm in international relations (pp. 201-202). Zürn underlines that historical institutionalism needs to be implemented together with other theories of international relations as it does not take into account the motivations of agents. More precisely, for him, historical institutionalism should also study beliefs, desires, and sources of agents in order to provide a complete account of the institutional development (p. 222).

Zürn also argues that historical institutionalism only makes historical examinations because the concept of critical junctures is backward-looking (p. 216); thus, it cannot become a forward-looking theory if it fails to provide generalizations about the circumstances in which institutional break-downs take place. Finally, given the title of the book, one of the most important points that Zürn indicates is the fundamental difference between international and domestic spheres in terms of institutions: the international environment is wider and more complex (p. 220), the probability of experiencing reactive sequences and critical junctures is more frequent. That is, international institutions are more unstable than domestic ones. But it should also be added this does not constitute an obstacle for the application of historical institutionalism to international relations.

An important problem that we have encountered throughout the book is that though it is claimed that historical institutionalism grants a significant space for agency, it is unclear how to realize this without falling into the determinism of institutionalism. Except for the Chapter 2, the general approach of the authors is based on the idea that agency emerges only in critical junctures, and it seems that determinism is the dominant tendency in the times of institutional stability. In addition, the lack of explicit discussion about the intellectual foundations of historical institutionalism undermines the claims of originality. Zürn's claim that the theories of dialectical crisis are unintentionally implied in historical institutionalist analysis is not sufficient to overcome this problem (p. 216). Moreover, the fact that about half of the chapters on the empirical studies are devoted to political-economy issues and that there are little discussions about security-related international institutions may lead readers to doubt the applicability of historical institutionalism to international relations. On the other hand, both the theoretical and the empirical parts of the book are good guides to future work, given that historical institutionalism is a new discipline in international relations. The conceptual framework of historical institutionalism is very important contribution as it has the potential to provide researchers with valuable theoretical tools of analysis. The book's empirical part is a guide in showing how these concepts would be applied in the international sphere. As a result, it can be easily concluded that the book is stimulating for the discipline of international relations that needs alternative theoretical approaches.