

Impacts of Colonialization and Modernization on the Timing of Social Insurance in Africa

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ABSTRACT:

One of the chief issues in welfare state studies has revolved around causal reasons for the development of the welfare state: which factors have affected the origin and timing of social security legislation, and the institutional shape social policy has taken in different countries. Usually this kind of macro comparative welfare research has relied on a sample of 18 or so OECD countries. However, the problem is that here we immediately run into the small-n problem: too many variables and too few cases. In order to avoid this, I will expand my study to the African nations that have been in shadow in international social policy discussions.

With slight exaggeration it is possible to recognize four lines of explanation in the macro historical research tradition. The main characteristic of the “first generation” was that the welfare state was seen as a functional solution to big structural changes in society. Whether it was about industrialization (Wilensky & Lebeaux 1958; Kerr et al. 1960; Wilensky 1975; see also Wilensky 2002), economic growth or increase in capitalism (e.g. Gough 1979), the development of social policy was interpreted as an automatic response to these structural transformations. For decades, this logic of industrialism was a sleeping beauty until kisses given by the globalisation theories revitalised the basic ideas of the theory.

The ‘second generation’ emphasized the distribution of political power as the most important explanatory factor (Korpi (1980; 1983; 1985; Esping-Andersen 1990; Stephens 1979). As a counter reaction against social (democratic) explanations the third generation’ argued that the prerequisites for social policy development were set not by socio-economic structures, but by the institutional and legislative structures of the state (Skocpol 1985 and 1992; Orloff & Skocpol 1984; Steinmo & Thelen 1996). The ‘fourth generation’ pinpoints the importance of cultural legacies. In principle this approach could be an extension of power resource approach: power resources could be seen to pertain to the distribution of all kind of power in society. The wide array of studies where differences in the characteristics of national social policy institutions have been derived from various cultural straits, religions, religious parties are getting more footing when we are looking wider than at the OECD hemisphere (van Kersbergen 1994, Ka 1999).

The main aim of this study is to examine the bearing of these theories in the African context. I seek to assess how modernization, previous institutions and a number of political and social factors have affected on the implementation of major social policy programs (work accident, pension, sickness, unemployment, and family insurance programs) in 47 African countries. To be more concise, I will examine whether differences in the timing of the five social policy programs are connected to:

1. wealth of nations
2. timing of suffrage
3. degree of democracy
4. colonial background (English, French, others)
5. lingual and ethnic homogeneity
6. legislative structures (common law vs. Civil law countries)
7. religious composition of the country (Islam, Christianity, other)

The method used is Cox regressions, a variant of survival analysis (SA). SA is frequently used in medical and bio-sciences. Apart from the fact that survival analysis has theoretical points in common with the research tradition concerning the timing of social security, the methods have been used very little in the examination of social policy development (for applications see e.g. Pavalko 1989; Usui 1994; Carroll 1999; Griffin & Linden 1999).

The results show that the wealth of the nations (modernization theories) perform quite well, whereas political factors (suffrage and degree of democracy) play a minor role. Colonial background is an important explanatory factor: the English colonies tend to lag behind the French ones. Common law system and 'Englishness' are mutually exclusive and they can not be used in the same equations. There seems to be a tendency that common law nations enact their legislation later than civil law countries but this result is conditional to the colonial inheritance, i.e. 'Englishness' is more important than the common law system. Controlling for other variables ethnic composition of the country does not play a major role, whereas there is a tendency that Islamic countries have be a bit ahead the Christian nations in implementing the first social policy laws.