Three Approaches of Institutionalism

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Source

Two Central Questions

• All approaches seeks to elucidate "the role that institutions play in the determination of social and political results"
• All started in the early 1980s
• Two central questions
  1. Institutions vs. individual behavior
  2. How institutions originate and evolve
Rational Choice Institutionalism

• Example: Congress, circular voting, from "impossibility" to stability

• Actors have a fixed set of preferences or tastes, behave instrumentally to maximize its goals; in a highly strategic manner of extensive calculation

• Politics: a series of collective action dilemmas (prisoner's dilemma; tragedy of the commons)
Rational Choice Institutionalism

- Role of strategic calculation (institutions structure such interactions)
- Origin of institutions: to realize or maximize actors' value, survival of the fittest
- Institutional change: exogenous shocks push equilibrium to a new equilibrium
- Common questions: why do "bad"/"inefficient" institutions persist?
Sociological Institutionalism

• Arose from "organizational theory" in late 1970s against "means-ends" rationality in organization

• Culturally-specific practices, akin to the myths and ceremonies devised by many societies (Culture vs. Calculus)
Sociological Institutionalism

• Action is tightly bounded up with interpretation
• Individual must find a way of recognizing situation as well as of responding to situation
• A world of individual or organizations seeking to define and express their identity in socially appropriate ways
• Mutually constitutive character between institutions and individual action
Sociological Institutions

• Problematic: why organizations take on specific sets of institutional forms, procedures or symbols
• Broader definition of "institutions": symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the "frame of meaning" guiding human action (Culture is institutions)
• Institutions to provide the very terms through which meaning is assigned in social life
Sociological Institutionalism

• Organizations often adopt a new practice because it enhances the social legitimacy of the organization and its participants. ("logic of social appropriateness" vs. "logic of instrumentality")

• Examples: immigration policy, battle of sex and gender, SCO
Historical Institutionalism

• Institutional organization of the polity or political economy as the principal factor structuring collective behavior ("structuralism")

• State (or others) not as a neutral broker among competing interests but as a complex of institutions capable of structuring the character and outcomes of group conflicts
Historical Institutionalism

• Institutions: the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy (organizations and the rules or conventions promulgated by formal organizations)

• Eclecticism: both "calculus" and "culture"
Historical Institutionalism

• Asymmetries of power associated with the operation and development of institutions
• Emphasize "path dependence" and "unintended consequence"
  (examples: QWERTY keyboard; SCO; Soviet Nationality policy)
• Persistent institutions are not always purposive and efficient
• Role of ideas and Beliefs
More questions


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