Defining The Comparative Historical Analysis

Comparative historical analysis (CHA) has a decade-long history in social science research. Although by the mid-twentieth century, it experienced some periods of decline in researchers' methodology adoption, it showed a remarkably revival by the late 1970s and early 1980s and proves an important role in today's social science.

Comparative historical analysis is a method of social science that engages in comparisons of social processes across times and places, CHA is defined by three main features. First, comparative historical investigates the causal explanation of causal configurations that bring about outcomes of interest. Second, comparative historical researchers explicitly analyze historical sequences and take seriously the unfolding of processes over time. Finally, CHA is distinctive because of its practitioners engaging in contextualized comparisons of similar and contrasting cases. In general, CHA is a term covering the work of scholars investigating contextualized comparisons.

Regarding the advantages of CHA, first and foremost, by investigating a small number of cases, comparative historical researchers can bring in a proufound theoretical reach in the interest of moving back and forth between theory and history to formulate new concepts, review existing theoretical expectations in light of detailed case evidence. In addition, because comparative historical investigators usually understand each of their cases thoroughly, they can measure variables in broader context of each particularity, thus achieving a higher level of conceptual and measurement efficiency than when a large number of cases are selected in cross-national stastitical works.

Although such a method can be use in a variety of analysis, most frequently it has been ultilized to the processes and outcomes among the nation states. Nation states offer the myriad of qualitative and quantitative data to conduct the various comparisons. In this essay, we observe the relationship between democracy and capitalism.

CHA carries out research on a few countries at a time. Works in this set a high value on the historical origin of social and political structures and developments. Meanwhile, the other cross-national method of study on the relation between capitalist development and democracy has shown us opposite results. The quantitative cross-national research covers many countries, takes for each country a limited of standardized but not always reliable information. CHA is consider "Unsuited for an exploration of the causal conditions of democracy in the eyes of students who conceived of quantitative analysis as the only viable substitute for the experimental approach that is impossible in macro-social analysis." (Rueschemeyer 1992, 12-13). Quantitive cross-national analysis have found consistently a positive correlation between development and democracy. But this method can not explain the causal sequences. By contrast, comparative historical studies are far more pessimistic about today's developing countries.

Moreover, comparative historical analysis also allow us to inverstigate in different causal paths in contextualised comparisons. A telling expample can be seen from Moore's Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (1966). Moore argued that there were several distinct paths to

modernization, followed by different economic and political results. Through historical case studies of six typical countries – England, France, the United States, Japan, India, and China – and two other references, Germany and Russia, Moore figured out three paths to political modernity, which are: he path to parliamentary democracy, the path to fascist dictatorship the path to communist dictatorship. The emergence of parliamentary democracy represents the oldest route to modernity. This route is more complex than of the two other cases. Conflict and a fairly even balance of power between the lords and the crown are a first condition. A strong bourgeoisie, at odds in its interests with the rural dominant class and even abe to entice landlords into commercial pursuits, is of critical importance: “No bourgeoisie, no democracy” (Moore 1966: 418).

He emphasized that therse routes are not alternatives that open to any periods of world history. Thus he considered the conditions favourable for democrat associated with the historical constellation of early capitalism: the route that ended up in capitalist democracy…was itself a part of history that almost certainly will not repeated” (Moore 1966). In fact, Singapore has built successfully an open market economy owing to its competitive, business-friendly country. Nonetheless, it often faces backlash for its mode of government even though democratic is the least corrupt. It also operates under a one-party rule and does not vigorously defend freedom of expression given its government-regulated press. Besides, it is more doubtful about chances of democracy in contemporary developing countries as its extremely unfavourable conditions.

Guillermo O’Donnell (1979b) explained authoritarian developments in South America during 1960s and 1970s and considered that they seem at odds with the optimism implied in modernization theory. Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and other countries ruled out democratic constitutional forms at significantly high level of development. Therefore, the impact of capitalist development on democracy is still quite controversial.

With regard to methodological critiques, seeking generalization by using a few case is still a matter of debate. The political processes studied are conceptualized at a macro level while analysts using CHA generally carry out on a finite set of cases and aim to determine the causal sequences and patterns producing outcomes of interest in those specific cases. Generalization is achieved by piecing together finite sets of cases, not by sampling and inference to a larger universo is still controversial. For example, the capitalist democratic path in Moore’s work, he started out by exemplifying by just three particularities (England, France, and the US) before assuming general patterns. However, Charles Ragin (1997) argued that social phenomena is characterized by “causal complexity,” in which the same result is often produced by varied and different combinations causes, so that a finite set of necessary and sufficient conditions for specific outcomes does not exist.

Moreover, the time periods taken into account for the different countries vary significantly in length. While the case of democratization are pursued over very long time periods, the discussion of Japan and Germany breaks off with the establishment of Fascism.