

Moore's theory of democracy analysis



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Book Review: Barrington Moore, Jr. *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Beacon Press; Reprint edition, 1993

Moore's work is an enlightening discussion of the class structures and social origins of democracy and dictatorship, examining the social change process that transformed states and societies from agrarian societies to industrial ones. The book demonstrates the social origins of democracy and dictatorship mediated through class structures (landlords, peasants, and urban bourgeois) and economic arrangements. Moore's investigation of the quest for modernization and freedom reveals the history and sociology of political resistance and violent social revolutions against domination, mediated through political and economic interests that provided the impetus to occasions of revolution and also produced counter revolutionary forces that impacted societies' political paths. He makes a pointed argument, comparatively explaining how relationships between classes change with increasing commercialization of agriculture and this lays the groundwork for the process of change in the social structures.[1]

Moore elaborates on the political and economic power of class structures and the process of social change, and he analyzes their relationship and how this impacts political outcomes.[2]The convergence or divergence of interests (political and economic) among these class structures and their influence on political development provides an adequate explanation of the sociology of modernization and the history of revolutions and social change.[3]Moore uses the theoretical lens of Marxist class analysis to explain these dynamics and their role among class structures that in turn have impacted the political

path of societies-and how that influenced or shaped the nature of the state and society.

Moore's work is an important scholarly contribution to the theoretical discussion of the process of modernization and the role of class structures and economic arrangements in comparative case studies. He introduces three categories to explain the process of modernization and the outcomes. The first, "bourgeois revolution," features England, France, and the US, all countries that abolished traditional landed elite domination and became capitalist democracies.[4]The second category focuses on the revolutions in Germany and Japan that resulted in fascism-what Moore calls "revolution from above," a process which produced the defeat of popular revolution by the traditional landed elite and preserved their dominant position during industrialization. The third category, "peasant revolution," features Russia and China, where revolutionary peasantry abolished the traditional elite. Moore makes the radical and intriguing argument that violent social revolution was necessary, that liberal democracy succeeded and constitutional democracy was established in these countries *because of* the violent social revolutions against traditional agrarian elites. [5]

Moore's social class perspective enhances our understanding of the history and sociology of the process of modernization. I found his work to be eye-opening, as it provides an insightful explanation of the social roots of modernization and what has followed. His work may be a major contribution in understanding the social process and social roots of democracy and dictatorship, focusing attention on social change factors and the class relationship rather than the more conventional institutional and state-

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centered explanation. However, his work overlooks or undermines the role and significance of the relative strength or weakness of the states in the comparative case studies as factors that influenced the states' political paths.

This comparative study of the importance of class analysis and social change and how they impact outcomes and influence political and economic change helps to explain authoritarianism and democratization in the contemporary world. This book may draw researchers' attention away from positivist and institutional analysis, helping to understand and explain the nature of political regimes (democratic and dictatorial). Moore's analysis of class and social change provides tools to understand the genealogy of the nature of the state and the processes of social change that have impacted the political outcomes of contemporary regimes. His work is clearly relevant to authoritarianism and dictatorship in Africa, with regard to dictatorship. His theoretical insight may be useful in understanding the social origins, social bases, class structures and social change processes in that continent, to explain the socio-economic and political context of dictatorship and the process of democratization. This, however, does not mean that his case studies or historical analysis should be superimposed, but rather that his insight and analytical methods may be an important input. The utility of Moore's approach in studying contemporary African states and political regimes will likely be found in the tools it provides for understanding the emergence of class and inter-class coalitions and capturing the story of resistance/coalition among the various class structures.

Methodologically, this book demonstrates the importance of including insights from case studies within the comparative framework in order to raise questions that can help us understand relationships, interests, processes and outcomes. Methodologically, Moore's comparative approach is important because specific insights from specific cases can be used to appreciate variations and distinct processes specific to other contexts using analysis of change in class structures. Because of this methodological approach, the "historical conditions" that have created the conditions for the emergence of western parliamentary democracy, dictatorships, fascism and communist regimes, have been adequately illustrated.

Moore's work is a comparative study of modernization through the transition from the pre-modern to the modern industrial era. His main contention is that class and social change explain why some governments developed into dictatorial forms while other developed into democracies. His book central theme revolves around how the political path of modern states (liberal democracy, fascist dictatorship and communist dictatorship) had its origins from the revolutionary past mediated through class structures and process of social change in illustrated through multiple case studies. The political outcome of the class structures, their relationship and contention, is the central theme, supporting his argument that the class struggle between the peasants and the landlord with commercial agricultural interests, and the role of the urban elite, has huge significance.

Moore's main engagement is with the role of class structure in shaping or influencing political forms of governance in modern industrialized societies. He explicates the relationship between class structure and history and the

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political outcome of this. Moore states repeatedly that commercialization of agriculture and urban classes are inevitable factors that influence and shape political outcomes and the transition to the industrialized modern world order. Moore illustrates that it was important to destroy the power of the landed agrarian elite in order to allow the rise of democratic political regimes.

[1] Moore, B. (1993). *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: Lord and peasant in the making of the modern world* (Vol. 268). Beacon Press. p 418-419

[2] Ibid Page 422-424

[3] Ibid p 486

[4] Ibid 428-478

[5] Ibid xxiii , page 10-22, 52-57, 115-150