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## Building Security, Justice and Public Authority in Weak States:

Contested Transitions, Unstable Social Orders and Institutional  
Hybridity

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**Building Security, Justice and Public Authority in Fragile States**  
**Contested Transitions, Unstable Social Orders and Institutional Hybridity**

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Orthodox theorists assume that security and justice, as well as other essential services should be provided by modern state and private institutions in Late Developing Countries, but they provide very inadequate cover in most weak states and almost none in fragile or conflict states where local communities need to rely on often reinvented 'traditional' institutions to maintain order and create livelihoods. These coexist and interact in complex and often contradictory ways with modern institutions creating *dualistic* societies whose institutional arrangements and evolutionary processes can only be understood by developing a theoretical apparatus that not only obliges us to identify the principles that govern both modern and traditional systems, but also the way in which they co-exist and co-evolve together to produce unique *hybrid* solutions and developmental trajectories. We show how this approach allows us to develop a convincing historically based analysis of the problems involved in creating political order in weak states, and show how Malinowski's 'three column anthropology' (1945/61) provides us with a powerful analytical tool when we do so.

**Key Words:** Political order; Security and Justice; conflict states; dualism; hybrid institutions; Malinowski.

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## Political Authority, Security and Justice in Fragile States: The Issues

Modern states should maintain security and justice by protecting the poor from economic oppression, criminality, war, corrupt officials and environmental degradation, but few weak and fragmented states can do so, increasing poverty, encouraging violent conflict and resurrecting long-standing cultural antagonisms. People 'walk the streets at night in safety' in strong states, without realising that 'this is due solely to the working of special institutions'. (Hegel, 1821/1967: 282) They cannot do so in fragile states because their institutions are too weak, fragmented or oppressive to protect them as they should.

The absence of legitimate economic opportunities and state protection in these societies has forced local communities to reinvent exclusive ethnic or sectarian identities and cultural practices in order to create the solidaristic links and movements that guarantee their survival. Progressive local political movements and the development community have attempted to address these problems by introducing liberal political, social and economic institutions, but these have clearly failed to resolve the intensifying political conflicts and economic decline that is destroying security and justice in the weakest states. These failures have allowed regressive movements like Isis, Boko Haram or the Lord's Resistance Army to survive and impose order through extreme violence justified by fundamentalist religious beliefs.

The neo-liberal theorists who have transformed the global system over the past 35 years believed that transferring the institutions of liberal democratic capitalism to weak authoritarian states would eliminate the predatory and irrational policies that generated the widespread economic and political breakdowns that have devastated the weakest states in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. However, the unresolved conflicts and breakdowns that still dominate many of them suggest that introducing elections and market competition in societies that lack the necessary capacities to sustain them will not resolve these tensions but can even exacerbate them. Radical third world theorists and movements believe that these societies should revert to pre-capitalist systems; other critics attribute them to the disruptive consequences of *transitions* from one set of institutional arrangements to another that can only be effectively addressed by adopting hybrid solutions that enable local societies to evolve unique solutions to these fundamental challenges. (Brett, 2009)

This paper will attempt to justify this claim and identify the difficulties involved in putting it into practice by examining the limitations of liberal reforms in fragmented societies and the nature and effectiveness of the often illiberal local institutions and practices being invoked to remedy them. These responses vary dramatically and are always rooted in local histories, knowledge systems, cultural practices and endowments, but they are also shaped by the impact of national and global policies and processes that influence their state's ability to guarantee livelihoods, protection, services and safety nets.

## Creating Public Authority in Contested Environments

Orthodox theorists attribute good governance and economic prosperity to the existence of strong open institutions that allow political and economic elites to enforce order and efficiency, but then subject them to competitive elections and markets. However, their models only enable us to understand how these processes operate in developed societies (DCs) that have already consolidated the necessary institutions, but ignore the disruptive consequences of institutional *transitions* in societies that are moving from closed systems based on authoritarian principles to open ones. These transitions usually create instability and disorder in late developing countries (LDCs) because they create dual societies in which new and old practices coexist, and transfer resources from ruling elites and their supporters to new ones, generating zero-sum conflicts, crises and break-downs. These tensions have destabilised developmental processes since the start of the modern era, and have produced a long tradition of critical theory that we rely on here, notably North, Wallace and Weingast's seminal text on *Violence and Social Orders* (NWW 2009); Charles Tilly's *Democracy* (2007), and Malinowski's classical analysis of *The dynamics of culture change*, (1945/1961).

NWW show that authoritarian societies governed by 'closed access orders' use very different rules and principles from democratic or 'open access orders' to sustain public order. The former do so by using direct coercion and normative orders based on religion or other collective loyalties to lock their subjects into inferior roles; the latter give rulers the power to enforce the law, but oblige them to base their decisions on open consultation, and allow citizens to remove them when they fail. Stable closed or open systems can generate high levels of security and order, but as NWW show, closed systems 'have their own logic', and achieve their goals by utilising their authority in ways that contravene 'the norms and values of open access orders'. (269)

However, the last 30 years has witnessed a globalised transition from closed to open orders, but they also show that this:

... cannot, in and of itself, produce political and economic development. Indeed, to the extent that these institutions are forced onto societies by international or domestic pressure but do not conform to existing beliefs about

economic, political and social systems, the new institutions are likely to work less well than the ones they replace. Worse, *if these institutions undermine the political arrangements maintaining political stability, the new institutions may unleash disorder, making the society significantly worse off.* (Ibid. 264/5, Emphasis added)

Now orthodox theory tells us how formal liberal institutions *should* operate in LDCs, and local micro-studies tell us how the 'actually existing organisations' that local people use to manage local social systems do actually operate, by creating what Tilly calls 'segregated trust networks' based on collective loyalties that insulate themselves from external threats and provide themselves with services that their rulers fail to provide. (Tilly: 74; also see Meagher, 2011, Scott, 1996) However, we also need to explain why they need to exist at all, can only provide limited protection, and often fail. These failures are not caused by local variables alone, but by the interaction between global, national and local structures and cultures that need to be addressed at every level if the devastating wars, migrations and impoverishment that dominate these troubled regions are to be overcome.

These breakdowns can therefore only be understood by recognising that failed transfers of 'western' models to local societies, and the destructive consequences of a reversion to 'traditional' ethnic or sectarian beliefs and practices that they often produce, are a function of the coexistence of multiple and contradictory institutional systems that can produce injustice and insecurity rather than development. This requires:

a historically based and collectivistic analysis based on a historical and 'process-sociological approach' that recognises the limitations of western knowledge systems *when they are transferred to non-western environments*, as well as the rationality and viability of the normative principles and knowledge claims of pre-modern societies in contexts where limited resources and external threats makes it impossible for them to behave as western individualists would. (Brett, 209: 191)

Classical development theorists called these 'dual societies' and recognised that their institutional arrangements, problems and possibilities could only be understood and managed through the development of a conceptual apparatus that allowed them to take account of the tensions generated by the contradictory demands generated by the uneasy coexistence of modern and traditional institutions and cultures. We believe that more effective solutions to the ongoing crises in the weakest states depends on an approach that treats the *interactions* between these contradictory systems as its key explanatory variable, and the evolutionary adaptation of *hybrid* institutions as the only viable solution to them, a view that is generating a growing body of influential literature<sup>1</sup> I will first review some of the key issues raised by the problem political order in weak states, and then, following Malinowski, consider the complex theoretical and practical challenges involved in using hybrid solutions to address it.

### Security, Justice and Political Order in Fragmented States

Security and political order depend on justice, and justice depends on the existence of *universal* and effectively enforced rules that resolve the inevitable conflicts generated by competition for scarce resources. (Rawls, 1972) Individuals or groups steal, kill or rebel for many reasons, but the *prevalence* of social or political violence in any community depends on the adequacy of the organisational structures and normative codes that oblige officials to enforce laws, and persuade people to obey them, either out of consent or fear. Hobbes' (1651/1968: 184/5) 17<sup>th</sup> century claim that the inability to *enforce* political order must produce 'a warre ... of every man against every man' is as relevant in Syria, Libya and South Sudan today as it was during the English civil war.

All societies address this problem by using institutions that give dominant elites the power to exercise authority by making and imposing decisions, but pre-modern societies give their rulers far greater levels of discretion in extracting surpluses from, or imposing sanctions on the people they govern. Their room for manoeuvre then depends on the nature of the incentive and accountability mechanisms that have been created to reward and sanction their behaviour. These are designed to reinforce dependence and inequality in authoritarian and predatory states, but to maximise efficiency and equity (rather than equality) in mature market based political and economic systems. Small-scale societies solve these problems by depending on cultural values and structural processes that are embedded in 'concrete personal relations and structures (or "networks") of such relations', (Granovetter, 1985: 60) and therefore operate virtually unseen. However, large-scale societies create order by giving states a monopoly of force, universalising normative principles and institutionalised processes that oblige both rulers and people to subordinate their own interests to those of the society as a whole, and create costly juridical and punitive agencies to enforce them.

These rules depend on abstract principles of justice and generalised social norms, but they also sustain an allocation of power and wealth that not only guarantees security and economic stability, but also makes some people rich and keeps others poor.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Brett, (2009) on development theory; Boege et. al., (2009) on the politics of peace building; Cleaver et. al., (2013) on natural resource management; Bhabha, (1995) on post-colonialism; and Young, (1995) on culture and race.

Excluded or subordinated individuals or groups, are always likely to challenge these inequalities, and to systematically break the rules when the 'special institutions' to which Hegel refers are seen to be unjust or threaten their survival, so their compliance is especially hard to sustain in LDCs characterised by contradictory normative systems, non-negotiable ethnic, sectarian or class antagonisms, high levels of exclusion and poverty, and weak enforcement mechanisms.

Open access orders in DCs manage conflicting interests by giving rulers, the authority to enforce the law, firms the right to fire workers, and social organisations the right to exclude or discipline members, but legitimate their power by creating political and economic markets that give individuals the right to sanction them when they fail. Closed orders give these elites monopoly powers that create what Tilly (2007) calls 'categorical inequalities' by allow them to forcibly deny subordinates their freedom, lock them into inferior roles, and use religious and other ideological systems to persuade them to accept their inferior status. All actual societies sit somewhere between these two ideal typed, but NWW show that societies close to each end of the spectrum use distinctive and internally consistent principles to justify their constitutive rules, their right to punish deviance and extract taxes. However, the dynamic and ongoing institutional transformations generated by transitions from many different kinds of closed orders - feudalism, patrimonialism, theocracy, command planning, and authoritarian structuralism - to liberal democratic capitalism has produced many societies in which they coexist in contradictory and disruptive ways.

The global community and 'progressive' local social and political movements are all committed to democracy, regulated markets, and social equality, as we have seen in Egypt, Libya, Syria and South Sudan, but their assumption that an immediate transition to an open system must automatically create political order is highly questionable. Mainstream theorists assume that even the least developed societies should, and even must, make immediate transitions from closed to open access systems. They recognise the existence of pre-modern institutions in 'late developers' but treat them as regressive survivals that need to be eliminated and replaced, producing a world based exclusively on liberal institutions. Strong autocracies rely on coercion, socially accepted ascriptive ties, and solidaristic norms; strong democracies on the consent derived from rights-based systems. *However elites involved in liberal transitions may lose their coercive powers before their societies have consolidated the new skills, normative codes and organisations needed to sustain open orders, so societies involved in radical institutional transitions are far more prone to political disorder and social violence than either closed or open orders as Fox & Hoelscher (2012) show*<sup>2</sup>

This proposition has radical developmental implications because liberal democratic capitalism and science-based knowledge systems that dominate the modern world have evolved out of asymmetrical and often violent encounters between modern and pre-modern systems based on *contradictory* and not just *different*, authority, incentive and accountability mechanisms. Slavery, feudalism, patrimonialism, theocracy, patriarchy or command planning are incompatible with liberal individualism, impersonal bureaucracies or gender equality. These transitions have therefore produced a multiplicity of contradictory institutional adaptations, rather than the linear shift from 'traditional' to 'modern' institutions predicted by orthodox modernisation theorists in the 1950s and 1960s, and by neo-liberals now. These long-term processes of disruptive or 'messy' adaptations stem from historically and contextually contingent interactions between imported open and closed local institutions that have produced new hybrids that are partially derived from both systems but are 'not a mere copy of either' as Malinowski showed. (1945/1961: 10) Following Kohli, (2004) we call such societies 'fragmented states' because they do not rely on stable open or closed orders, but on systems characterised by the contradictory coexistence of both.

*This proposition also has critical theoretical and policy implications, because it demands a non-equilibrium approach to institutional change that treats development as a contested and evolutionary process that generates new institutions through a contingent and dialectical clash between closed and open systems.* The results of these interactions are shaped by conflicts between the excluded elites and subordinate classes that expect to benefit from institutional reforms and those that control and benefit from the existing order. They are most intense in transitional states, as we know, and can only be understood using models that not only enable us to understand the principles that govern both modern and pre-modern institutions, *but also the complex interactions between them.* Neo-liberal theorists teach us how to manage open systems and critique closed ones. Historians and mainstream anthropologists describe the pre-modern cultural and organisational systems that local communities actually use in contexts where liberal systems have yet to be created. Most development economists ignore the paradigm debates over macro-economic policy agendas, but confine themselves to increasingly complex econometric evaluations of local programmes and projects. All of these approaches are indispensable, but only generate real traction when they are supplemented with a systematic understanding of the dialectical consequences of the interactions between both, as Malinowski realised.

<sup>2</sup> Their study of 120 cases found that 'countries with 'hybrid' political orders - weak democracies or autocracies - 'experience higher rates of social violence than those with strong autocratic or strong democratic regimes, and that weakly institutionalized democracies are particularly violent'. They also found a strong link between 'poverty, inequality and ethnic diversity and social violence.' (2012: 1)

All societies are characterised by the juxtaposition of institutional arrangements and cultural attributes derived from encounters between systems with different, even contradictory attributes,<sup>3</sup> and they all combine 'modern' and 'traditional' elements, as Almond (1960:20-22) classically showed.<sup>4</sup> However, the balance between these elements differs dramatically in the liberal USA and North Korea, or Afghanistan under the Taliban, dominated by commandist, or theocratic institutions, as do the tensions generated by the interactions between them in weak states involved in radical structural transitions from one system to another. Biologists define hybrid organisms as 'the offspring of unions' between males and females from one race, variety, species, genus, etc.' and another; we define *institutional* hybrids as the offspring of unions between open and closed orders that produce new varieties that may or may not be better adapted to local contexts than either, and will show that Malinowski's idea of 'three column anthropology' provides us with a powerful methodological approach to this problem.

### Theorising Hybridity and Evolutionary Change

The liberal institutions that shape the modern world have emerged out of a long series of asymmetrical encounters between dominant and subordinate social systems going back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in the ongoing and heavily contested shift from structuralist to neo-liberal institutions in most LDCs and post-communist societies. Orthodox theorists failed to anticipate these tensions because they treated institutional change as a technical problem, but classical and critical theorists have always recognised that the need to reconcile the conflicts generated by the co-existence of contradictory 'modern' and 'traditional' institutions, or in Marxist terminology, 'capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production',<sup>5</sup> explain both the progressive and disruptive consequences of developmental transitions.<sup>6</sup>

Malinowski's seminal study of *The Dynamics of Culture Change ... in Africa*, (1945/61) provides us with a simple yet powerful methodological tool for the analysis of these processes. He showed that the diffusion of institutional change does not depend on the nature of either the dominant external, or reactive local culture, because the interactions between them do not produce 'indiscriminate give and accidental take but [are] directed by definite forces and pressures on the side of the donor culture and well-determined resistance on the part of the recipients'. (17/19) This produces contingent, but not random change, driven by the interactions between both, and outcomes that are neither uniform nor predictable because the opportunities and threats that operate on both sides are constrained by the nature of the institutions and resources controlled by the interacting parties.

He then argued that these processes can best be understood using what he calls 'three-column anthropology'. The first column addresses the nature and objectives of the external model, column three, the nature of traditional institutions, and column two the actual reality of the hybrid solutions that are generated by the interaction between both. These are:

not a mere fusion or mixing but something oriented on different lines with definite purposes, which are not quite integrated with each other, and which therefore do not act in any simple manner; above all do not simply mix or fuse with African cultures but modify them in a much more complicated and dynamic way. (21)

This crucial insight turns development into a dialectical and evolutionary, non-linear process that does not depend on 'a mechanical joining of the original influences' but on the outcome of asymmetrical encounters that produce 'conflict, cooperation and compromise' and eventually produce 'entirely new products'. (Ibid. 26/25)

This 'three column approach' provides us with a dynamic analysis of developmental transitions where changes in all three columns constantly interact in different ways to produce different outcomes. The institutional arrangements of capitalism in DCs themselves have changed dramatically, and this has also changed the demands that they have imposed on LDCs since the start of the colonial project. These changing demands have then interacted in different ways with the different local institutions and cultures existing in column three in these societies at any point in time. These interactions have integrated LDCs into the dominant capitalist order since the earliest encounters, but done so on very different terms and produced very different hybrids during different eras and in different regions and nations.<sup>7</sup>

### Asymmetrical Encounters, Hybrid Adaptations and Evolutionary Change

<sup>3</sup> For example, Elias notes how the Mafia has survived and prospered in the USA by exploiting 'structural features of the pre-state kin association, such as is found in its original form – usually designated as "feudal" in the technical language – only in predominantly agrarian societies [that] reappear in a less structured form in keeping with the urban state conditions and as a result of being forced into criminality.' (1987/2001: 216) I have provided a general analysis of the developmental implications of this process in *Reconstructing Development Theory*, (2009)

<sup>4</sup> Almond, (1960). Parsons provided a systematic basis for the analysis of institutional dualism. See Parsons, (1951/64); Geertz, (1963); Riggs, (1964)

<sup>5</sup> Marx, (1857-8/1964)

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the debate between Andre Gundar Frank, (1967) and Ernesto Laclau. (1971) Also Charles Bettelheim. (1972)

<sup>7</sup> See for example Acemoglu & Robinson, (2012); Brett, (1973); Kohi, (2004) Landes, (1999);

The processes involved in integrating LDCs into the global capitalist systems changed radically during three broad periods – coercive penetration and incorporation; authoritarian structuralism, and neo-liberalism generating different types of conflict, adaptation and crises during each stage.

First, European expansion was initiated by predatory capitalist managed by mercantilist and racist states that first plundered, then conquered and colonised local communities and created authoritarian political, economic and social systems similar to those in their own countries. Different levels of state effectiveness and development in both metropolitan and dependent countries produced dramatically divergent outcomes. The Spanish and Belgian occupations of Latin America and the Congo devastated local cultures and economies. British rule 'white' settler territories like the USA and Australia marginalised indigenous populations but produced progressive transitions to democratic capitalism, while its 'indirect rule' strategies in India and Africa reinforced 'traditional institutions' and political fragmentation. The centralised and interventionist strategies of the Japanese in Korea created the basis for its strong state and successful capitalist transition. (Kohli, 2004)

Second, the shift from predatory to liberal or corporatist capitalism in the west in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries produced a corresponding shift to similar systems in the colonies, that were copied from the west but operated on authoritarian rather than liberal principles in colonial states that had to deny political and economic rights to their local subjects. Thus, as Malinowski pointed out this produced authoritarian hybrids 'designed to exploit African resources by Europeans for Western ends' (13/14) like industries imported from Europe that did not replicate 'European or African prototypes' because they were based on a racist division of labour, (22/24) and traditional institutions like Chieftainship that imposed colonial authority, together with attempts to eliminate 'repugnant' local practices like witchcraft that took on new forms and purposes because they were driven underground. (35-7) The nationalist leaders that achieved independence after the Second World War, (Brett, 1973) first attempted to replace colonial states with the social democratic models they had learnt in European schools and Universities, but the fragmented systems they inherited were incompatible with these models, so most of them introduced authoritarian state-led or 'structuralist' alternatives instead. Some, like the East Asian NICs, were very successful, but many others, like those in Africa and Central America failed.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the shift from structuralist to shift to neo-liberal market based systems in in the developed world, and imposition of similar systems on aid-dependent LDCs and post-communist societies through Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s and 1990s, and Austerity programmes since the 2008 have generated new contradictions between imported institutions and the authoritarian hybrids that had emerged during the preceding era. These transitions undermined the authority of the elites that had dominated the old system, and exposed firms and political and social movements to competition before they had the necessary skills or resources. They worked relatively well in better prepared societies, but intensified conflicts and breakdowns as competing elites exploited existing ethnic and sectarian linkages to build clientalistic political, bureaucratic and economic systems, and exploit often counter-productive donor interventions. (Brett, 20014) This blocked development in the weakest states, intensified antagonistic conflicts, and forced many people into informal economies and segregated trust networks, producing the collapse of public authority, security and justice described at the start of this paper.

### **The Ambiguous Consequences of Hybrid Adaptations**

The violence and institutional failures that devastate the lives of millions of people in failed states can therefore be explained by the continuous but constantly varying interaction between western predatory have deep roots in tensions authoritarian and mercantilist institutions that existed in the West between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were very different from the open systems that exist there now, as were the diverse range of 'traditional' institutions that they encountered across the South. Western states owed their superiority to their early adoption of institutions that encouraged scientific experimentation and technological innovation by giving their economic elites secure property rights and limited controls over their rulers, (Landes, North, Lipsey et al.) but their need to conquer, colonise and exploit the South led them to deny local populations (as well as their own subordinate classes) access to the same rights. They therefore used Christianity and the myth of racial superiority to justify virtual genocide in the Americas, the slave trade in Africa, the appropriation of much of the world by European settlers, and in doing so, to caste 'into outer darkness everything [that the West] it could not identify with itself, thereby shutting out from its thinking any paths that could have given access to universality' as Bessis says. (2003, Ch.1)

These destructive processes were followed by a long period when the European powers consolidated their rule by dividing up the world between them, incorporating disparate local communities into new territories and sending out colonial officials, settlers, traders, plantation and mine owners, and missionaries to build new administrative, economic and educational structures. These changes were designed to serve the needs of the occupying powers, but they also provided local people with access to new

<sup>8</sup> See in particular Kohli's (2004) comparative study of the different impacts of Japanese colonialism in South Korea, and British colonialism in India.

technologies, health systems and state services that they had not enjoyed before, and by political and legal reforms that moderated the repressive nature of many pre-modern patrimonial political orders. However, their need to sustain external dominance stopped them from liberating local people from the constraints of 'traditional institutions' by creating colour coded hierarchies dominated by Europeans who controlled crucial decisions and lived separate lives, and confining local people to inferior roles and segregated communities characterised by categorical inequalities.

Thus the 'traditional' institutions that coexisted with modern ones during the colonial era began in the pre-colonial past, but had already been restructured by the colonial authorities who pursued strategies based on indirect rule that deprived locals of equal political and economic rights by reinforcing the authoritarian traditions inherited from the pre-colonial past. And, this process also encouraged marginalised local people to create what Tilly calls 'segregated trust networks' based on collective loyalties to insulate themselves from external threats and provide themselves with services that their rulers fail to provide. (Tilly: 74; also see Meagher, 2011, Scott, 1996)

These interventions produced complex and contradictory results that not only explain the persistence, but also the fragility of western models in weak states.

First, as Kohli (2004: 409-11) points out, colonialism has been 'the most significant force in the construction of basic state structures' in LDCs, that have been 'highly resilient' in shaping and moulding their long-term futures, 'despite the commitment of nationalist leaders ... to eradicate the colonial legacy'. This continuity is a direct result of the ability of the new institutions to generate higher levels of growth and security than the traditional institutions they replaced, but of their ability produce new indigenous classes – junior administrators, small capitalists, peasant farmers, an urban working class - that had no desire to restore pre-modern institutions, but did want to end foreign domination and the exclusion it entailed. They therefore demanded full control of the new political and economic institutions, and used western norms associated with the need for democracy and economic modernisation to justify their demands.

However, second, the fact that colonialism entered the South as a system of dominance and exploitation that destroyed the autonomy, appropriated the resources, subordinated local people and disrupted the socio-cultural systems of local societies leaving behind a profound ambiguity about the claims of the western institutions that the colonial authorities had been attempting to create. As Fanon, (1967: 252) said:

it is very true that we need a model, and that we want blueprints and examples. For many among us the European model is most inspiring. We have therefore seen in the preceding pages to what mortifying set-backs such an imitation has led us. European achievements, European techniques and the European style ought no longer to tempt us and to throw us off our balance.

When I search for Man in the style and technique of Europe, I see only a succession of negations and an avalanche of murders'.

The liberation movements were therefore committed to retaining the strong states and modern economies inherited from the past because their dominant elites 'discovered that they could pursue their own interests through them' (Kohli, 2004: 411), but were either opposed to or unable to create the liberal or social democratic institutions that were inscribed in their initial constitutions. Thus almost all of them made a rapid transition from democracy to dictatorship during the first post-colonial era, and adopted state-led economic policies that worked successfully in East Asia, but managed them so badly elsewhere that most LDCs were forced to seek assistance from the donor community and create another "big bang" involving radical changes in the authority, incentive and accountability mechanisms governing their political, economic and social institutions. These neo-liberal institutions have also produced some gains in some countries, but have produced major failures in the weakest states, and the need for new interpretations and policy agendas, we have seen.

Tilly (2007: 75; 118) shows that the categorical inequalities' existing in pre-democratic and colonial societies produce 'differences based on 'nobility, religious status, gender, race, and property ownership' as well as 'kinship and ethnicity'. (118) They deny subordinates their freedom by confining economic and political power to slave owners, feudal lords, landlords, superior castes, superior races, or command planners. They are incompatible with open political and economic markets, but guaranteed stability and survival in closed orders and are hard to challenge because they incorporate subordinates directly into authoritarian systems of rule by creating systems where economic inequalities depend directly on political power. Hence any regime that incorporates elites like



coercion-wielding warlords or labor-exploiting landlords' directly into its system of rule ... simultaneously builds in the everyday inequalities around which people organize social life. Such a regime exercises power through the very people who have both the means and the interest to block the populations they control from resisting tyranny. It builds in obstacles to broad, equal, protective, mutually binding consultation. (Tilly, 2007: 116)

Further, these societies legitimated these inequalities by creating appropriate cultural, religious and knowledge systems in closed societies as Fortes and Evans-Pritchard point out:

There are ... innumerable ties which counteract the tendencies towards political fission arising out of the tensions and cleavages in the social structure. An administrative organisation backed by coercive sanctions, clanship, lineage and age-set ties, the fine-spun web of kinship' existed in African societies, backed by coercive sanctions, clanship, lineage and age-set ties, the fine-spun web of kinship-all these unite people who have different or even opposed sectional and private interests. Often there are common material interests .... Always there are common ritual values, the ideological superstructure of political organisation. (1940/1970: 17)

They also show that these shared values and the collective obligations that sustain them, not only 'make these social systems 'intellectually tangible', but also endow them with 'mystical values which evoke acceptance of the social order that goes far beyond the obedience exacted by the secular sanction of force.' (Ibid.) Violations were often met with draconian punishments, but these operated within normative systems based on principles of justice that had to be obeyed by rulers as well as subjects in order to control abuses of power and as a 'means of constraining political functionaries to perform their administrative obligations as well as their religious duties. (19) These systems survived because there were no viable alternatives, but introducing new constitutions and markets based on individual freedom and equal rights into societies where most people were still locked into collective attachments to family, clan or tribe. The people drawn into these systems should have produced new patterns of behaviour but, as Elias, points out, they continue to apply their own rules with contradictory results:

Considered in terms of the ethos and conscience of more developed states, the preferment of relations in filling state posts is a form of corruption. In terms of the pre-state conscience it is a duty, and, as long as everyone does it in the traditional tribal struggle for power and status, a necessity. (1987/2001: 79)

Hence introducing new institutions based on different, and in the liberal world, individualistic cultural values, into pre-liberal societies, rarely eliminates the power structures on which they were based or the inequalities or normative codes that sustained them.

Orthodox theorists and practitioners treat these deviations from liberal norms as aberrations that can be corrected by public sector reform and better training, monitoring and evaluation. They therefore ignore the structural problems and conflicts generated by the transfers of wealth and power, and conflicting value systems involved in liberal transitions, while their radical 'third world' critics assume that local communities could revert to their pre-modern institutional systems and de-link from the unequal relationships that now subordinate them to the demands of the globalised capitalist economy.

These conflicting interpretations underpinned the adversarial paradigm and policy debates that dominated and almost discredited development studies in the 1970s and 1980s. (Leys; Schuurman; Hoogveld) We have argued elsewhere (Brett, 2009) that our ability to transcend these unproductive debates depends on our ability to recognise that actual developmental processes and outcomes have always been heavily conditioned by the imposition of dominant western models and cultural systems on societies still dominated by pre-modern ones, but their actual impact is y , but are not a simple function of do not depend on

### Back to the Future: Theorising Hybrid Systems and Solutions

We now live in a globalised world that has witnessed fundamental shifts from pre-liberal institutions of various kinds to market based political and economic systems. No societies have remained untouched by this process, and in that sense, are less responsive to purely local preferences and interests than they were before, but the way these external interventions impact on them, and their ability to respond to their demands local depends on the very different local dispositions, knowledge systems, and endowments - what Bourdieu (1980/1992: 52) and Elias 182ff, refer to as their habitus – that determine their capacities available to deal with them at every level from the family and village to the nation state. The institutional reforms generated by these interventions invariably involve major shifts in access to wealth, status and power as we have seen.

However, we have seen that orthodox theorists treat these changes as a technical shift, and ignore the conflicts of interest that they generate and the inadequacies of the local resources available to manage them. Indeed modern development economists

**Comment [FW1]:** Do 'local' institutions still exist in a globalised world? How can a local institution be distinguished from other institutions?

now devote most of their attention to the evaluating the success or failure of local projects, while many anthropologists and local historians focus on the mechanisms adopted by marginalised people to survive in the 'informal economy' without relating these to the external processes that they do not understand but over-determine their over-determine their options.

Instead we have argued that Now these issues are now being actively addressed Malinowski, work has been widely criticised for focussing exclusively on the structural and functional processes that enabled local communities to maintain themselves rather than on the dynamic and disruptive processes engendered by the colonial encounter. contact between seen These approaches that only focus on the technical problems involved in introducing market economies, democratic constitutions, impersonal bureaucracies, or individualistic civic institutions, or ignore the global and national variables like free trade and global warming that threaten their livelihoods must misunderstand the processes that are transforming them because they do not produce 'indiscriminate give and accidental take but [are] directed by definite forces and pressures on the side of the [dominant institutions] and well-determined resistance on the part of the recipients', as Malinowski points out in his seminal study of cultural and institutional change. (1945/61: 17/19)

The result is contingent, but not random change, driven by the interactions between dominant and recipient cultures and institutions that can only be understood using what Malinowski calls 'three-column anthropology' that starts with an analysis of the principles that govern both cultures, but recognises that their interaction will produce hybrid solutions - 'not a mere fusion or mixing but something oriented on different lines with definite purposes, which are not quite integrated with each other, and which therefore do not act in any simple manner; above all do not simply mix or fuse with African cultures but modify them in a much more complicated and dynamic way'. (21) This enables us to treat development as an evolutionary, not linear process that produces hybrid systems that 'are not a mechanical joining of the original influences' but the outcome of asymmetrical encounters that produce 'conflict, cooperation and compromise' and eventually produce 'entirely new products'. (Ibid. 26/25)

Malinowski makes a crucial contribution to our ability to conceptualise and investigate the effects of institutional dualism or pluralism generated by these encounters between what are now referred to as western and traditional institutions, and he refers to as European and Native cultures.<sup>9</sup> He shows that these processes can only be understood by recognising that these 'contact situations' are reshaped by conflict as well as cooperation between 'a higher, active culture upon a simpler, more passive one'. (15) He rejected the dominant view that this produced a well-integrated community because it ignored the fact that 'European agents' dominated these exchanges and were using the superior power and authority of their institutions to subordinate African institutions to their needs. (15/6) He therefore recognised that 'ordinary anthropological field work' that only delineated the internal in surviving traditional communities could not understand the forces that were changing them because 'the subject matter of culture change differs from that of stationary cultures, ... [since] there are two cultures to deal with instead of one; the modifications wrought on the recipients by the aggressors, and also *vice versa*.' (17) Thus change does not simply involve 'indiscriminate give and accidental take but is directed by definite forces and pressures on the side of the donor culture and well-determined resistance on the part of the recipients.' (19)

This has crucial structural implications, because the end result of these interactions is not 'a mixture of cultural elements or of complexes, so loosely knit together that the main theoretical task' ... consists in disentangling 'the elements or traits' that have originated in different cultures and showing 'whence they came'. (18/9) Instead he argues that 'culture change is determined by factors and circumstances which cannot be assessed by the study of either culture alone, or of both of them as lumber rooms of elements. The clash and interplay of the two cultures produce new things'. (25) The result:

is not a mere fusion or mixing but something oriented on different lines with definite purposes, which are not quite integrated with each other, and which therefore do not act in any simple manner; above all do not simply mix or fuse with African cultures but modify them in a much more complicated and dynamic way. (21)

This also has crucial methodological implications, demanding a synthetic methodology that he refers to as 'three-column anthropology':

The study of culture change must take into account three orders of reality: the impact of the higher culture; the substance of Native life on which it is directed; and the phenomenon of autonomous change resulting from the interaction between the two cultures. Only by analyzing each problem under these three headings, and then confronting the col-

<sup>9</sup> He uses culture in the broadest sense, to include language, technologies, beliefs, and rules, which he also refers to as institutions. He defines the latter 'as a group of people united for the pursuit of a simple or complex activity; always in possession of a material endowment and a technical outfit; organised on a definite leger or customary charter, linguistically formulated in myth, legend, rule and maxim; and trained of prepared for the carrying out of its task'. (50) The parallel with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is very clear.

umn of European influence with that of Native responses, and of the resulting change, do we arrive at the most useful instruments of research. Far from being a mere mechanical joining of the two original influences, European and African, the two impinge on each other. The impact produces conflict, cooperation and compromise. (26)

This approach enables us to investigate the dialectical processes that emerge in all contact situations and produce 'entirely new products' (25) or *what we have called hybrids*.

He also makes clear that these institutional transformations can have beneficial consequences for the weaker party, but are usually dominated by the interests of the stronger since 'the European takes as much, in fact a great deal more, than he gives', so induced change does not involve costless shifts from less to more rational mechanisms, because when:

corresponding institutions in two cultures satisfy analogous needs in different ways with different techniques; ... they have to use the same human and natural resources: land, capital, labour, politically organized force, the impulse of human reproduction, and also the standardized emotions specific to each culture. This means that institutions cannot be replaced rapidly, piecemeal, and without considerable sacrifice on the part of the community which has engendered the change and is carrying it on. (71)

Hence these processes are not driven by rational technical choices, and programmes can be modified in response to the findings of objective post-project evaluations based on rigorous econometric techniques. Instead he recognises that the crucial variable is 'this clash of interests and greeds, as well as the intrinsic difficulty of piecemeal and institutional change, [where] the real dynamic issues of contact and change reside'. (71) And he was only too well aware that these conflicts, and coercive nature of the mechanisms being used to impose new cultures on existing societies might not 'bring about a common existence of harmonious cooperation', but produce instead 'lead to temporarily suppressed but powerful forces of coming disruption, upheaval and historical catastrophe on an unprecedented scale'. (3) 75 years later we can only regret that history has validated his worst fears, but recognise the value of his pluralistic approach that does produce better explanations for positive and negative consequences of developmental transitions that either neo-liberal development theory or inductive anthropology.

Further, these processes do not just 'introduce hybrid elements' into 'many' formal and traditional structures, but continuously inter-penetrate and transform all of them, so both formal agencies like states, armies, and magistrates courts, and traditional agencies like chiefs, witchcraft, and local justice all actually operate in hybridised ways, as [Tim Allen's witchcraft paper shows](#). These processes are *all* heavily influenced by, but different from, the principles that are often attributed to them by social theorists who focus on one or the other rather than on the interactions between all of them.

Comment [FW2]: reference?

## Conclusions

This analysis has important political, policy and methodological implications.

First, it obliges us to develop an interdisciplinary and synthetic approach to problems of developmental transitions that not only understands the nature of the incentive and accountability mechanisms that drive the liberal reforms that have restructured political and economic processes in LDCs over the past thirty years, but also those [governing surviving, often invisible \(to us\) pre-modern ones](#) that interact with them and have a decisive impact on all local situations. The emergence of Islamic extremism and its demand for a return to a pre-modern system is only the most striking example of this process.

Comment [FW3]: Is it always 'surviving' institutions or may they also be 're-invented' in some cases (such as ISIS)?

Second, it shows that the way hybrids actually operate is directly conditioned by the generalised shift from authoritarian statism to the democratic and market based institutions that have taken place since the 1980s. These changes have not produced viable democracies or market economies in fragile states, but they have altered the terms on which rulers relate to citizens and donors, and thus also changed the opportunity sets of local elites and subordinated classes. Hence we can only understand how local hybrids have had to change since then by analysing the impact of these liberal reforms on the ability of rulers and businessmen to both serve and extract resources from them. And we can only do this by making use of the crucial insights by the major theorists who have looked closely at these relationships in pre-democratic states.<sup>10</sup>

Third, we can only find out how these change processes are actually evolving in marginalised environments by carrying out the detailed local level empirical studies. Local responses to apparently similar external interventions like elections or administrative reforms often differ because they are shaped by historically and contextually determined differences in cultures, practices and

<sup>10</sup> Notably Linz and Stepan, 1996, *Problems of democratic transitions and consolidation*; Kohli, 2004, *State-directed development*, 2004; Tilly, 2007, *Democracy*, and North, Wallis and Weingast, 2009, *Violence and social orders*.

endowments. We can only understand the implications of the legacies left by earlier generations by using oral evidence, archival records and secondary sources, and use participant observation and targeted surveys to find out what is going on now.

Finally, however, we must combine these attempts to understand particularities and difference with an ability to understand how all local actions are conditioned by very similar external forces and policies - the economic challenges presented by free trade, the impact of democratisation and administrative reform on their politicians and officials and the ability of donors and NGOs to improve their access to infrastructure, and social services. These external interventions and policies sometimes expand their options, sometimes compound their exclusion and poverty. These external relationships operated very differently as these societies moved from colonialism to authoritarian statism, and most recently to partial democratisation and liberalisation. Thus our case studies must not only enable us to understand how each local community responds to local problems, but how they help us to understand the general implications of these wider policy changes by developing a comparative methodology that also allows us to evaluate the adequacy or inadequacy of these wider global processes.

**Comment [FW4]:** Bibliography is missing

**Comment [FW5]:** This paper offers an exciting new view on hybridity. I would, however, recommend:

- going beyond the strong focus on Malinowski and also referring to other strands of the contemporary literature on statehood, social order and hybridity (see suggestions above),
- clearly defining key terms such as hybridity (vs. non-hybridity), local (vs. national/global) and authority,
- adding a brief abstract with a summary of the argument,
- and adding a bibliography.

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