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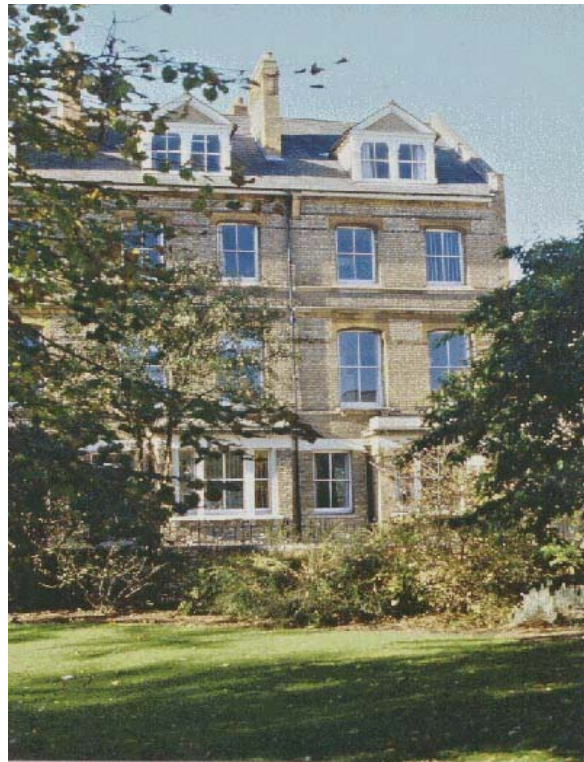
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Coming to a standstill?

A New Theoretical Idea of East Asian
Welfare Regimes

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Abstract:

This paper aims to establish a new theoretical tool which can provide a systematic comparison both between different East Asian Welfare Regimes (EAWR) and between EAWR and western welfare-state regimes. Its basis is Esping-Andersen's welfare-state regime framework and Gough et al's vertical framework including informal security and welfare-state regimes. This paper consists of two parts. In the first part of the paper, I will provide a critical analysis of existing arguments on EAWR and explain why these are not satisfactory. In the second part, I will propose a new preliminary framework with which to understand current EAWR and discuss key issues including the borderline between informal security regimes and welfare-state regimes and other factors interacting with welfare regimes. The paper concludes with a section that includes further issues and implications for social policy reform in East Asian countries.

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s there have been an increasing number of academic comparative studies on East Asian welfare regimes, many of which have adopted Esping-Andersen's welfare-state regime framework. While some argue that East Asian welfare regimes (EAWR) form a distinct 'fourth' welfare-state regime as 'Confucian' or 'Developmental/Productivist' welfare regimes in addition to three western welfare-state regimes (liberal, conservative and social democratic), others identify EAWR as one or a hybrid of the three regime types. Despite the significant contribution of these studies, it can be argued that the proliferation of EAWR discussion has already come to a standstill as these studies suffer from theoretical and empirical drawbacks in many respects.

Against this background, this paper aims to establish a new theoretical tool, which can allow researchers to carry out a systematic comparison between EAWR as well as between EAWR and western welfare-state regimes, on the basis of Esping-Andersen's welfare-state framework (1990) and Gough et al's vertical welfare regime framework (2004) including informal security regimes and welfare-state regimes. In the first part of the paper, I will provide a critical analysis of existing arguments on EAWR and explain the reasons why they are not satisfactory. In the second part, I will propose a new framework to understand current EAWR and discuss key issues including the borderline between informal security regimes and welfare-state regimes. This paper concludes with a summary and discusses the implications of the new theoretical framework for social policy formation and reform in East Asian countries.

2. East Asian welfare regimes literature

Context: Why East Asian welfare regimes?

For years social policy had not been in the spotlight either inside or outside of East Asian countries because their social conditions were under the shadow of their remarkable economic growth. The economic growth and low unemployment had mitigated the urgency of addressing social risks or problems. In fact, the absolute

poverty rate in this region has dramatically decreased together with maintaining the low level of inequality in newly industrialising economies, e.g. South Korea and Taiwan. There have been numerous studies concerning the miraculous economic growth of this region, not only about Japan and the 'Tigers' (Northeast Asian countries) but also the following 'Little Tigers' (Southeast Asian countries), whereas there have been relatively fewer studies of social policy, partly due to the lack or the immature stage of welfare programmes and partly due to a lack of interests and concerns since economic growth and democracy issues were always prioritised over welfare issues.

Yet, the interest in EAWR began to increase in the late 1980s and the 1990s. This rising interest has two different chronological causes, i.e. before and after the late 1990s. Initially, many scholars investigated the conditions enabling East Asia to achieve both ceaseless economic growth and improving and stable social conditions such as a decreasing poverty rate and inequality rate together with very low social spending, in contrast with the 'welfare-state crisis' situation in western countries. Western scholars and politicians as well as international organisations started to seriously look at East Asian welfare regimes with the question: how is it possible to attain high welfare outcomes and high economic growth with very low social spending? (Doling and Catherine 2001:298-9) For example, some called it the 'East Asian Miracle' (World Bank 1993), and others an 'East Asian Secret' (Jacobs 2000).

Interestingly, the second cause is very different from the first one. Around, but not after, the financial crisis in 1997, the 'East Asian economic or welfare model' has been challenged by many factors despite variances from one country to another, including economic restructuring, ageing, and household transformation (Lee 1999; Peng 2000; Chan 2001; 2004; Chen and Chen 2003). Rapid demographic change, a lowering retirement age, and decreasing family support make old age life less economically stable in the absence of adequate public support (Chen & Sun 2001; Choi 2006). Furthermore, an increasingly flexible labour market seems to threaten job security and stable earnings (Hanami 2004; Cho 2004; Pan 2005). In the meantime, the recent economic recessions including the 'lost decade' in Japan and the 1997 financial crisis in East Asia have brought a range of social problems and made them rethink their social protection schemes (Uzuhashi 2003; Lee 2004). Since around this time, there has been rapid social policy development and reforms in these high income East Asian countries. Again, many scholars have been intrigued by these rapid social pol-

icy changes and developments in spite of various pressures, not least from globalisation and post-industrialisation.

Confucian and Developmental/Productivist welfare regimes

In this background, the argument of the 'Confucian welfare state' (Jones 1993) has provided a starting point for later studies. It is supported with a slight difference by subsequent studies (e.g. Goodman and Peng 1996; Sung 2003; Rieger and Leifried 2004). According to them, Confucian culture is a key explanation. The social role of family and kinship is strong so that the socially weaker primarily rely on their family networks. Also, paternalism in family as well as company enables the family to take care of their elderly and the company to look after their employees. Taking the role of Confucian values, particularly filial piety, in Northeast Asian countries throughout history into account, it seems that it helps in understanding the characteristics of the belated welfare development and low social spending with a small number of welfare bureaucrats. However, it is dubious how much and how consistent explanatory power it has in the study of EAWR.

Firstly, since there is no clear conceptualisation of 'Confucian values', the term can be used arbitrarily. The relation between economic performance and Confucian values is a good example. Once 'Confucianism' was blamed as 'the heavy constraint on economic progress because of its stress on the importance of preserving tradition, its reinforcement of a social structure which despised and restricted commercial and industrial pursuits, and its hostility to technological innovation and entrepreneurship' (White and Goodman 1998:7). In contrast, after economic growth, it was praised as the driving force of East Asian development in that 'it instilled, one, a willingness to place the needs of the nation or the society above oneself and, two, the habit of seeking a consensus' (White and Goodman 1998:8). By the same token, if paternalism in Confucian values had been realised in the relationship between the state and its people, this value should have been a driving force for extending the development of the state welfare, while in fact it has been used as the explanation of the laggard development.

Also, some researchers (Esping-Andersen 1997; Jacobs 2000) cast questions on whether filial piety is a reflection of a culture of solidarity and respect that is independent of economic need, or a forced dependency for lack of alternatives. Further-

more, if extending the focus from Northeast Asian countries to Southeast Asia and even current Korea, this approach appears to be of little use for the explanation. For example, Thailand is a Buddhist country, and Korea which used to be a Confucian and Buddhist country has now become one of the strongest Christian countries in the world, which distinctly differs from Japan and Taiwan. According to this approach, this fact should have resulted in conspicuous demarcation between them. Although each religion has different influence on its culture, society, and politics, and imposes a different amount of obligation on individuals to some extent, the static difference between cultures and religions has very limited explanatory power in recent dynamic changes, e.g. household transformations or social policy developments. Walker and Wong (2005:215), in their edited book, conclude that ‘the main importance of Confucianism to an understanding of the nature of East Asian welfare regimes lies in its ready (often heady) rhetorical use by political leaders, past and present.’

The developmental state/productivist welfare regimes approach appears to offer a more systematic explanation. Its foremost focus is on developmental strategies driven by the state, often labelled as the ‘developmental state’ (Johnson 1982; Deyo 1992; Lee 1999). It argues that welfare development has been driven by the imperatives of nation-building and regime legitimation (Gough 2004b). Tang (2000) and Kwon (2005) label these countries as ‘developmental welfare states’ where welfare state programmes are ‘predominantly structured for facilitating economic development’. While the state that plays a strategic role in social and economic development lies in the centre of his argument, social policy is formulated and shaped by the overarching goal of economic development in these countries. In spite of socio-economic changes and democratisation, Kwon (2005) argues that these developmental states have not deviated from the ‘developmental welfare states’, even though they have been shifting to ‘more inclusionary’ ones than before during the last decade.

In a similar vein, Holliday (2000) and Gough (2004b) assert that EAWR should be called 'Productivist welfare regimes' in that social policy is subordinate to economic policy, which can mean either that social policy is sacrificed to economic/industrial objectives or that social policy can directly contribute to economic objectives¹. Holliday classifies Japan, Taiwan and South Korea (hereafter Korea) as a

¹ However, their research target countries are slightly different in that Holliday focuses on Japan and high income East Asian countries including city states, Hong Kong and Singapore, but Gough embraces Southeast countries with Korea excluding the two city states.

type of developmental-universalistic mode where universal programmes are partly allowed, mainly for the reinforcement of productive elements. As he classifies Korea as a pure form of developmental-universalism, he shows the example of the Korean pension act in 1973 the purpose of which was to accumulate funds for industrial investment. As another instance, Japan's retreat from 'Year One of Welfare Era' in 1973 after the oil shock shows the subordination of social policy to economic climates. Finally, he concludes that East Asian countries are highly unlikely to move beyond productivist welfare regimes in the foreseeable future, which is supported by his recent work (2005). Gough (2004b) supports these arguments by examining the social policy and welfare mix in East Asian countries, though he is in doubt whether productivist welfare regimes will be maintained intact after the crisis.

Aspalter (2001; 2006), a strong advocate of the actor-centred approach, argues that EAWR including China and Malaysia are Conservative welfare regimes, seeing this as a fourth type welfare regime in that welfare state development in East Asia has been developed and shaped by conservative political parties and conservative social forces until now. In his framework, he insists that European conservative regimes in Esping-Andersen's framework be named as Christian Democratic. The characteristics of conservative welfare regimes, however, are almost identical to developmental/productivist regimes: a strong emphasis on productive, economy friendly welfare programmes; employment-based welfare and social security programmes; a strong family and market with a weak state. He (2006:300) concludes that 'social policy in East Asia is marked by its inherent support for the economic system'.

Lee and Ku (2007) empirically test the thesis of developmental welfare states in order to see whether East Asian welfare regimes, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, are distinctive from the 'three worlds'. This study is meaningful as it is one of very few empirical studies. They introduce 15 variables developed for factor and cluster analyses of 20 countries. The variables include governmental social expenditure, social investment, non-coverage of pensions, gender discrimination, family support, and contribution from employers. As a result, they conclude that Korea and Taiwan establish a unique fourth model, different from Esping-Andersen's three worlds, though they share features of liberal (low-coverage) and conservative regimes (welfare stratification). By contrast, Japan contains various characteristics of different regimes, but can be located between developmental regimes and Esping-Andersen's conservative regimes.

In sum, although there has not been a strong consensus, it seems that there is a tacit agreement that EAWR are different from western ones and can be classified, more or less, as developmental/productivist welfare regimes. Then, are these regime types satisfactory for understanding contemporary EAWR? I argue that there are significant weaknesses in them. According to Kim (2007) who challenges the argument of productivist welfare regimes, firstly, it is questionable whether some of the EAWR are still productivist or not. For instance, recent social policy developments in Korea, including the new public assistance scheme or advanced form of health insurance, have been motivated and implemented by civil society movements and pro-welfare politicians, which does not accord with the productivist feature, i.e. 'social policy subordinated to economic policy', or Aspalter's argument, i.e. 'developed by conservative politics'. Also, while he does not deny the fact that there are productivist elements, he questions how one can differentiate productivist elements from current retrenchment or economy-friendly welfare reforms in western countries. Further, he also points out the weak empirical bases of the argument.

Apart from these, there are further arguments. In particular, some try to find EAWR inside Esping-Andersen's three worlds, rather than as a fourth world. For example, Esping-Andersen (1997) himself asserts that Japan can be called a hybrid case of liberal and conservative welfare regimes, yet we should postpone our conclusion since the Japanese welfare regime has not yet arrived 'at the point of crystallisation' and has not yet cultivated powerful institutionalised interests. Also, there was a huge national welfare regime debate in Korea (Kim 2002) although it is less known to western world. From around 2001 to 2004, many social policy experts took part in a series of debates in conferences and journal articles. Some argue that the Korean welfare regime should belong to the liberal regime because of neo-liberal economic reforms and an increasing market role, but others still believe that family is still key in welfare provision and thus it should be identified as conservative. Some, including Kuhnle (2001), even argue that Korea is, possibly, heading towards a social democratic model after the recent social policy developments whereas other scholars still support the theses of Confucian and developmental welfare regimes. Yet, without reaching a consensus, this debate has come to a halt.

3. Why standstill?

Despite all efforts to identify EAWR by a number of scholars, arguably, we have come to a standstill, perhaps at a very early stage of EAWR research. What has been observed in the last few years is that the number of comparative EAWR studies have not greatly increased, colliding with general expectations and in contrast to the remarkable increase in social policy case studies in East Asia. Moreover, recent studies discussed in the previous section have neither provided a satisfactory tool to understand current EAWR changes nor offered new and meaningful insights. There seem to be a number of important reasons behind this. The following points show both the limitations of current research and challenges for future research.

Firstly, one of the striking points from current studies is their efforts to embrace all East Asian countries as a single category. In other words, many studies neglect the heterogeneities between these countries. Looking more closely at East Asia, one could find a great deal of differences across these regimes from their political systems, economic/industrial structures, to their welfare systems (Takegawa 2005). It seems that existing studies recognise them (White and Goodman 1998; Walker and Wong 2005), but most of them pay much more attention to similarities than differences, intentionally or unintentionally, and try to compare them as a group to western welfare states. Yet, in line with remarkable but different recent social policy developments, it is increasingly difficult to ignore distinct institutional differences among EAWR. For example, in health care systems, Thailand has developed a universal flat-rate health care system, the so-called '30 Baht', Japan has an occupationally fragmented health insurance system, Korea has recently changed its structure from a Japanese-style to an integrated health insurance system and Malaysia still retains a primitive form of the NHS. Although they all are still low social spenders except Japan, it is highly difficult to come to a conclusion that they are identical welfare regimes or heading towards identical welfare regimes.

In relation, broadening the research perspective from Japan and other high-income Northeast Asian countries to China and Southeast Asia has added a further significant challenge to EAWR research. While the first group is commonly classified as one group under the names of 'Confucianism' or 'developmental states', embracing the second group results in much more profound diversity in terms of different socio-

political-economic levels between countries, e.g. differences between Japan and Vietnam, religion and culture, e.g. Islamic influence in Malaysia and Indonesia or Catholic in Philippines, and the mode of development. While one, e.g. Gough (2004b), can propose an overarching regime-type across these countries, it is unavoidable that the explanatory power of this categorisation markedly decreases. Also, embracing China as one of the East Asian countries makes comparative studies even harder. Although many scholars still use 'East Asia' in their research with different connotations, it is increasingly obvious that 'East Asia' is not homogeneous.

Secondly, studies tend to assume or argue that each East Asian regime has retained an identical trajectory from the past to the present (Yang 2003; Kwon 2005; Lin 2005; Hwang 2005; Holliday 2005; Aspalter 2006). This assumption seems to have been influenced by the new institutional approach (Pierson 1994; Bonoli 2000; Natali and Rhodes 2004). This has been one of the powerful theoretical tools in explaining welfare reforms with the accounts of credit-claiming/blame-avoidance politics and also path-dependence, arguing that existing institutions persist with increasing returns. It should be remembered, however, that the new institutional approaches in welfare reform literature are based on western experiences of well-institutionalised welfare policy in the retrenchment era. Thus, care is needed in using it to explain transformations of EAWR where the roots of institutions are still shallow and electoral politics has not functioned effectively in many cases or has not taken a firm root. In other words, institutions and regimes are vulnerable to various influences and shocks.

Many existing arguments based on the notion of regime stability are unlikely to capture dynamic regime changes. In effect, some of them are still based on the pre-1990s when family and developmental states were still strong. Yet, since the 1990s, the role of family and informal support has been markedly weakened in welfare provision (e.g. Choi 2006). Also, many political economy studies (e.g. Jayasuriya 2005; Peng 2005) argue that the developmental states have come to an end with democratisation and financial liberalisation, which leaves us with a question, 'can there be a developmental welfare state without a developmental state?' In the meantime, some countries, typically Korea and Taiwan, have developed a comprehensive system of social protection within a very short time. The argument for regime stability within the productivist or developmental path seems to derive from their lack of operationalisation. Outside Korea and Taiwan, while some of EAWR have clearly stayed in the

same path, it is in doubt whether path-dependency can explain regime changes in countries where rapid social policy reforms are taking place, e.g. Thailand and China. Unfortunately, current studies do not provide a useful tool to analyse longitudinal dynamic changes, which look to be path-breaking rather than path-dependent.

Thirdly, one of the reasons that the current research is confronting clear limitations is a lack of theoretical creativity. Most studies seem to almost uncritically accept Esping-Andersen's 'three-world' framework (1990) as their starting point, originally designed for comparing advanced democratic-capitalist welfare states. One critical negligent point by many scholars is the usage of the term, 'welfare-state'. Although Esping-Andersen (1999) uses welfare regimes with welfare-state regimes as seemingly an exchangeable concept, as Gough and Wood (2004) rightly point out, these two concepts should be differentiated. Welfare regime refers to a combined and interdependent way in which welfare is produced and allocated between state, market, and family (Esping-Andersen 1999:34-5) whereas a welfare state is a much more complicated and contestable term, not least when we broaden the perspective to developing countries. Welfare regime is an overarching and broader concept, and includes the concept of welfare-state regimes.

When existing studies argue that EAWR is the fourth regime type in addition to Esping-Andersen's three worlds, there has been very little discussion as to whether East Asian countries are welfare states or whether we can compare EAWR to other 'welfare-state' regimes in parallel or not. When some argue that a lack of state commitment to state welfare, the large size of those non-covered by social insurance, and the importance of family or informal support are some of the core characteristics of EAWR, very few call into question whether these characteristics show that EAWR have not yet reached welfare-state regimes or simply are not welfare states. In relation, the work of Hort and Kuhnle (2000) examining EA welfare development in terms of industrialism (modernisation) has a useful implication. Unlike most previous studies, they provide an optimistic view on East Asian- both Northeast and Southeast Asia-welfare regimes, arguing that the countries in this region introduced social insurance programmes at a lower level of modernisation than western countries. In a similar vein, Kasza (2006), implementing various comparisons with western countries, argues that Japan is far from a laggard welfare state.

In fact, it should be noted that there are significant socio-political-economic differences, which I will explain further in the next section. The history of welfare

systems as well as political democratisation in western countries is much longer than in EAWR. Also, socio-demographic-economic levels also show a huge discrepancy. This point also raises a related inquiry as to how unique EAWR are, given that East Asian societies are rapidly heading towards the likes of current western societies. The naïve idea of the static cross-sectional comparison with the western world can be an obstacle to the further development of EAWR research.

Last but not least, together with theoretical weaknesses, current research fails to present effective empirical evidence for its argument. It has been difficult to even structure the central ground of EAWR discussion, let alone to reach a conclusion. For example, how can we measure ‘social policy subordinate to economic policy’ or operationalise ‘developmental welfare states’? Yet, it would be harsh to attribute this weakness only to researchers. There are very few comparable datasets or even variables to test EAWR, and, as mentioned earlier, the history of welfare systems is too short to analyse in a quantitative way. In the western world, when western welfare state research came into blossom in the 1960s, they already had more than 30 or 40 years of welfare-state experiences. By contrast, EAWR except Japan have only a decade or so of experiences. While the prospect of the availability of comparable datasets appears to be bright, without adequate theoretical grounding, it is hard to expect that one can develop a proper empirical design to test EAWR. For example, in the work of Lee and Ku (2007), the factors of developmentalism including low government social expenditure, family supports, non-coverage in pensions, self-reliance in retired life, a high proportion of the labour force in agricultural sector, and a high gender gap, as discussed earlier, are found in low developed capitalist economy/welfare regimes. As many developing welfare regimes share these characteristics, it is highly questionable whether these variables could offer a proper empirical test for EAWR.

4. A new framework for transformations of East Asian welfare regimes

The aim of this section is to provide a theoretical framework to overcome current obstacles and to compare EAWR in a more systematic way. The basic idea is to

combine and develop the frameworks suggested by Esping-Andersen's horizontal idea (1990) and Gough et al's vertical one (2004).

Four sets of tests and crystallising process

The important question for creating a new framework is more 'where are they heading towards?' rather than 'where are they now?' In this sense, it seems that Esping-Andersen (1997) and others who to some extent put their judgment off are right when they argue that East Asian welfare-state regimes have not fully crystallised yet. Then, what conditions could make EAWR crystallise? Does the crystallisation simply mean the status when they become fully-fledged welfare states? To answer these questions, it would be important to look at earlier western experiences. Although many scholars still question the regime stability of the three worlds, they appear to accept the fact that western welfare state regimes are stable and crystallised, particularly compared to others in the developing world.

From welfare state literature, arguably, western welfare-state regimes have successively undergone four sets of important tests in order to obtain their current durable forms. A set of socio-demographic tests is the first one, which allegedly triggered welfare state development (Wilensky 1975). The ageing process and the breakdown of the traditional family form together with modernisation and urbanisation started to take place since the nineteenth century. For instance, most of western countries attained an ageing level of seven per cent² by the early twentieth century, e.g. France even in 1864. Under the pressure of these transformations, states, either liberal or conservative, had to respond and establish welfare programmes in different ways. Secondly, they went through a set of political tests, i.e. full democratisation and steep political competition. While the democracy in the western world has been institutionalised and consolidated mainly since 1945, social rights and embedded interests have been cohesively blended with welfare state institutions. After political tests, welfare state programmes with their positive feedback have become durable against internal and external pressures. States had to respond to these socio-demographic changes by implementing various policies.

² Takegawa (2005) argues that welfare state spending tends to accelerate from seven percent of ageing level.

The third one is a set of economic tests including economic recessions and crises after they have become a full democratic capitalist economy. The Great Depression and economic crises after the two World Wars, which caused massive unemployment and poverty, harshly tested western countries as to whether their existing welfare arrangements or mix were sustainable enough to cope with these challenges for their citizens. With a wide political consensus caused by the aftermath of such economic tests, western countries could establish a comprehensive set of social protections. The fourth and final test is the gender test. Diverging from a traditional male-breadwinner welfare state based on industrial societies has given rise to various new challenges to welfare states. In particular, as more women have entered the labour market, welfare states have had to cope with new social demands by establishing various new welfare programmes. For instance, although women's labour market participation rate is now high in current western countries, it was below 50 percent in most countries and even below 30 percent in Netherlands in 1960 (Orloff 2002). This is another reason we cannot simply argue that women's low participation in the labour market is one of the Confucian or traditional East Asian characteristics. After these sets of tests, which are important for social changes and human welfare, they could achieve, more or less, the current forms of welfare states, and arguably their regime types and their trajectories have not greatly changed since, as Esping-Andersen (1990; 1999) argues.

Returning our focus back to East Asia, EAWR have not yet fully undergone these tests. Political democratisation is still relatively new to many of them, e.g. it has less than 20 years history in South Korea and Taiwan, and political rights are very fragile in many East Asian countries. Even Japan with the longest democratic history in Asia has an odd experience of one-party domination from 1955 except for eight months around 1993. Also, demographic ageing and household transformation is very new to them, though the speed is remarkably fast. For example, they have just reached an ageing level of seven per cent around 2000, though it is expected that some of them will be as grey as western countries in 2040 or 2050 due to a dramatic fall in the fertility rate. Finally, economic and gender tests have also just begun. It was not until the early or late 1990s when these countries started to be truly tested by economic recessions and crises. Before that time, ceaseless economic growth with a full employment labour market and stable family support has certainly mitigated the necessity of social policy development, but after the economic tests, some of the East Asian countries

endeavoured to restructure and expand their social policy. In sum, many EAWR are now undergoing these important sets of tests in an intensive manner, which can be a process of crystallisation towards welfare states, if successful.

Informal security regimes to welfare-state regimes

As noted before, Esping-Andersen (1990; 1999) offers very important grounds for welfare regimes debates. Despite a series of critiques there is very little doubt that his work is very useful in understanding contemporary welfare states. The concept of his welfare regime consists of welfare mix and welfare outcomes, i.e. de-commodification, the stratification effect, and de-familialisation (1999). Also, the stratification effect of welfare regimes produces positive feedback, i.e. increasing returns to use Pierson's term (1999), which tends to create path-dependency (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1999; Gough 2004). Accordingly, he identifies three welfare-state regimes: social-democratic regimes, Nordic countries, where welfare states are fully committed to full employment and generous universalistic welfare benefits with a strong redistributive element; conservative regimes, continental European countries, where occupationally segregated benefits were developed with a male-breadwinner model and, consequently, the stratification effect is very high; and liberal regimes, the Anglo-Saxon countries, where the role of market is highly important and labour is least de-commodified.

Turning our attention to the developing world, surely, there are many countries which do not meet the definition of welfare states or even capitalist-democracy. Even if we clumsily try to apply his typology to the developing world, we immediately realize that the components of his typology seem less useful or that many cases could be classified as a hybrid of liberal and conservative welfare-state regimes at best. Beyond the simple division between not-welfare-state regimes and welfare-state regimes, Gough et al (2004) provide a new framework which divides welfare regimes into three ideal types, not horizontally but vertically. In their work (Gough 2004a:33-4), the first welfare regime type is a welfare state regime where people can reasonably expect to meet their security needs via participation in labour markets, financial markets, and the provisioning role of a 'welfare state'. The second one is an informal security regime where 'people rely heavily upon community and family relationships to meet their security needs'. The final one is an insecurity regime where a set of condi-

tions 'generate gross insecurity and block the emergence of stable informal mechanisms'.

I will explain further differences between the first and the second regime types, which are the main concerns of this paper. One of the crucial differences between the two is that the welfare state regime is built on 'capitalist economies, formal labour markets, relatively autonomous states and well-entrenched democratic institutions' whereas the informal security regime is permeated by uneven development, a large size of informal labour markets, and a strong patron-client relationship (Gough 2004a:32-34). In terms of path-dependent development, in welfare state regimes, path-dependent development takes place in liberal, conservative, and social democratic regimes whereas less autonomous path dependency occurs with some regime breakdown in informal security regimes. As mentioned earlier, without stable political and economic institutions, it is likely that informal regimes are vulnerable to internal or external shocks.

This welfare regime framework is highly useful in that it extends our narrow western-centric social policy theoretical attention to the wider world by shedding light on not-welfare-states with systematic explanations. However, there are still issues to be discussed, not least when one analyses transforming EAWR which have been seemingly moving around the boundary between informal security regimes and welfare-state regimes. To be more precise, one may well ask when we could label one country as a welfare state regime. If one researches two extremely different welfare regimes, e.g. Sweden and Indonesia, it would be quite clear with Gough et al's framework. However, if we look at East Asian countries from Japan to China, and from South Korea to Vietnam or explore various Latin American countries, one of the immediate questions is whether they are welfare state regimes or not, and what criteria are to keep them apart as different types of welfare regimes.

Unfortunately, these inquiries are not clearly answered in this framework. For example, Gough (2004b) himself notes that East Asian productivist regimes have been moving to productivist welfare state regimes, e.g. South Korea and Taiwan, but it is not clear whether they are moving from informal welfare regimes or not. Elsewhere, he (2004a) implies that South Korea and Taiwan already belong to welfare state regimes whereas Thailand is classified as an actual or potential welfare state regime. This ambiguity is also revealed in the Barrientos' chapter on Latin American welfare regimes. Gough and Wood (2004) summarise that these regimes are trans-

forming into conservative to liberal-informal welfare(-state) regimes in which characteristics of welfare states, 'liberal' regimes, and also 'informal' regimes co-exist. Although their work does not cover Eastern or Central Europe, this question will be equally essential in understanding their welfare regimes.

Obviously, as the authors note, 'the reality is more complicated than such a classification, in the sense that regions or countries within them can combine elements of all three 'families'..... Thus, different categories of a country's population can experience different primary regimes' (Gough and Wood 2004:5). Yet, in our typology, the unit of analysis is not a social group, but a country. Just as we classify one advanced capitalistic democratic country as one of the three welfare state regimes, although it contains different elements of the characteristics of the three worlds, work needs to be done to classify countries standing around the 'line' between welfare state and informal security regimes. For example, is a country a welfare state regime in which a set of social policy programs exists whereas half the population in informal sectors is excluded from it? This issue seems to stem largely from the overly stretching attempt to generalise one region, e.g. East Asia or Latin America, as one type of welfare regime.

Then, what are the conditions to become a welfare state regime? While this paper accepts Gough's view of dividing the two meta-regimes with nine elements including the dominant mode of production and a set of class relation (Gough 2004a:26-32), we need another criteria to draw a line between them. In this regard, investigating a welfare state rather than market or informal sources provides a few benefits. Above all, the state is the central concern in welfare regime research. Also, while the state is much more visible and measurable, it is more often than not extremely difficult to measure market or informal sources such as family and community in welfare provision in developing countries. Although there are a number of definitions of the welfare state, which I will not discuss here, I will adopt the three modified sets of criteria suggested by C. Pierson (1998:103): introduction of a set of social protection schemes; growth of social expenditure; the extension of citizenship together with the depauperisation of public welfare.

The first condition is the basic but fundamental one. It is widely agreed that the welfare state carries out social protection schemes, health, work injury, pensions, unemployment programs, public assistance, social services, and employment protection policy to protect its citizens against various social and economic risks. Yet, this

condition alone is not sufficient to be a welfare state in that some countries, e.g. Philippines, have these programs, but they are more or less nominal. Thus, secondly, it is important to look at whether these programs actually generate spending for beneficiaries. As C. Pierson (1998) mentions, there is no clear threshold figure at which one country starts to be seen as the welfare state, but spending of three to five per cent of GDP with a set of social policy programs can be one of the sufficient conditions for being the welfare state. Yet, there is one more essential condition. Although a welfare regime satisfies the two previous conditions, it is possible that social protection is offered only for civil servants, military personnel, and employees in large enterprises. It is contestable, as seen in the Latin American study (Barrientos 2004), but it is still difficult to name such a country as a welfare state when there are a large number of people excluded from mainstream social policy. Therefore, finally, as the third condition, the state should accept the responsibility of securing minimum livelihood for all citizens with a sense of social right.

Using these sets of criteria, although a number of empirical studies are essentially needed to sophisticate them, we can roughly classify whether East Asian countries are welfare-state regimes or informal security regimes³. Japan is the first welfare state in East Asia, fulfilling three conditions in the early 1970s. Though public assistance in Japan is still highly stringent, a comprehensive set of social insurance schemes offset the weakness of public assistance, which has not been seriously tested in Japan due to the effects of solid economic and labour market performance. However, as Japan has undergone a dramatic demographic test and a severe economic test, some scholars, e.g. Kasza (2006:111), anticipate that retrenchment reforms of active work policies and pension schemes together with the rise of unemployment will lead to a major overhaul of public assistance in the near future. Regardless of whether there will be a major reform or not, it seems that Japan coupled with the four sets of tests is on the way towards crystallisation.

³ The reason why the division between informal security regimes and welfare state regimes is important is that it offers a better comparison between countries. For example, some authors argue that strong social insurance with weak social services is one of the important features in EAWR. However, this feature in informal security regimes or East Asian welfare state regimes where there is a dynamic crystallising process is fundamentally different from the entrenched feature in conservative welfare state regimes, e.g. Germany. This seemingly similar but different feature between in EAWR and in conservative welfare state regimes should be understood in the context of the two vertically different meta-regimes.

South Korea and Taiwan also joined the club during the 1990s. They have not only developed comprehensive social insurance schemes, but also upgraded their public assistance schemes in different but modern forms, e.g. the National Minimum Livelihood Security Act in 2000, Korea. Also, in line with demographic change and economic recession, social expenditure has considerably increased well over three per cent since the late 1990s (Ko et al 2002; Chan and Lin 2003; BLI 2006). In other words, pre 1990s, these countries were informal security regimes or potential welfare-state regimes rather than welfare-state regimes. The importance of informal support in welfare provision highlighted by existing arguments is seen to be a characteristic of an informal security regime rather than one of the welfare-state regime characteristics. Apart from these, there are many Southeast Asian countries and China in which the three conditions have not yet been fully met. However, some of them can be classified as potential welfare-state regimes, as two of three conditions except the last condition are, or are soon expected to be met.

Figure 1 shows the overall framework for understanding welfare regimes and internal/external influences on welfare regimes. As in the framework of Gough et al (2004), it has three welfare regime types: welfare-state regimes, informal security regimes, and insecurity regimes. According to the research purpose, again, here our focus is limited to the first two regime types. The V-shape triangle represents the amount of embedded interests in welfare institutions: there are much wider and deeper embedded interests in welfare-state regimes whereas these are little and shallow in informal security regimes. Subsequently, more embedded interests mean that welfare regimes are more likely to resist against internal and external pressures and to maintain their trajectory. By contrast, weak embedded interests mean that welfare institutions are more vulnerable to the pressures and more likely to change when there are significant impacts, e.g. economic shocks. Path dependence is less likely to be found.

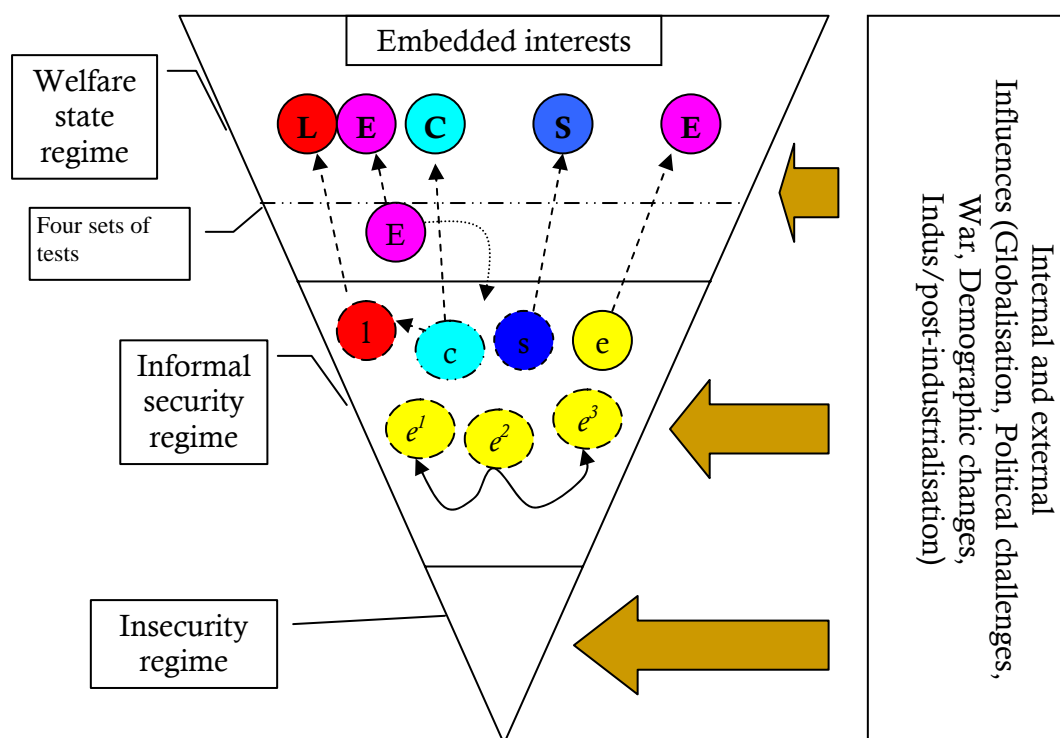


Figure 1. Welfare regimes framework and internal/external influences

From the previous literature, it is found that there are three consolidated welfare-state regimes (**L**-liberal, **C**-conservative, and **S**-social democratic). Existing EAWR literature tends to locate EAWR in parallel with the other welfare-state regimes, i.e. '**E**', either as the fourth type or one of the 'three worlds', whereas Esping-Andersen and some scholars believe that we should postpone our judgment as they are on the way towards the crystallisation, i.e. '**E**→**E**'. These assumptions are based on EAWR are welfare-state regimes, but according to the three conditions discussed earlier, many EAWR have been moving from 'e' to '**E**' or around between them, rather than a clear '**E**'. Earlier, I argued that welfare-state regimes need to undergo the four sets of tests in order to be consolidated (**E**), and in this sense, some East Asian countries just joining the welfare-state group should be regarded as '**E**' rather than '**E**'. Also, while some countries, e.g. Malaysia, remain relatively stable ('e'), it seems that others, e.g. China and Thailand, change their regime characteristics under changing political economic circumstances, i.e. ' $e^2 \rightarrow e^3$ ' or ' e^1 ', possibly on the way towards welfare-state regimes. Surely, it would be dangerous to assume only the linear form of development, one step up after another. There is also a possibility for the primitive form of welfare state regimes, '**E**', to fail to move towards '**E**' but fall down to 'e' again, depending on internal/external forces.

This then leaves us a few important comparative questions. Firstly, in order to identify characteristics of EAWR, should we compare EAWR (from e to E) to current welfare-state regimes (**L, C, S**) or to previous forms of western welfare-state regimes when they had moved from informal security to welfare-state regimes or when they were still in the process of consolidating their regimes, e.g. early or mid twentieth century? Also, it would be an interesting question whether each welfare-state regime was evolved from the informal security regime with its distinctive path, e.g. ($1 \rightarrow \mathbf{L}$, $c \rightarrow \mathbf{C}$), or whether their regime characteristics were formulated as they became fully-fledged welfare states. If the answer is the former one, not the latter, it implies that it would be also possible to classify current EAWR into different ideal types such as e^1 or e^2 . Subsequently, it is important to investigate which factors are crucial for explaining differences across informal security or welfare-state regimes at the early stage when welfare institutions are not well developed.

As seen in Figure 1, as welfare regimes go down from the high to the low level, influences and pressures outside welfare institutions become more important. Although this paper does not aim to answer all these questions, from the previous literature, it is likely that political structure and configuration, i.e. class-coalition, and/or the overall characteristics of production regimes including industrial structure, i.e. ‘varieties of capitalism’ (Hall and Soskice 2001), have a great deal of influence on different formulations of welfare regimes. Yet, it would be implausible to simply compare previous western welfare regimes to current EAWR since there are new influences which are not found in the early or mid twentieth century, e.g. non-governmental organisations and international organisations, not least when one analyses Southeast Asian cases.

The actual application of this framework to EAWR is far beyond the scope of this paper. However, as discussed before, distinctive differences are increasingly found in these countries. In pension schemes which most countries have and are the most visible, while Japan and Korea rely much on defined-benefit social insurance schemes to cover all, without expanding non-contributory schemes, Taiwan and Hong Kong have developed non-contributory schemes covering a large number of the elderly population since the 1990s and, on the top of that, they have recently introduced defined-contribution style provident funds. To some extent, it seems that China shares these characteristics. Singapore and Malaysia, which have been quite stable in many respects, stick to provident fund schemes without non-contributory schemes, whereas

Thailand is making an effort to expand social security schemes, with a defined-benefit but no redistributive factor inside, to cover informal sector workers. Elsewhere I argue that business structure together with different socio-economic structure offers a key explanation in the different pension developments seen in Japan/Korea with an export-oriented conglomerate-centred business structure and Taiwan/Thailand with a small-medium sized (SMEs) centred business structure with a limited number of domestic-oriented conglomerates (Choi 2008). Yet, in order to have a comprehensive picture, much research has to be done in future.

5. Further issues and implications

From the previous sections, although the argument and framework here is far from conclusive, it is obvious that EAWR research requires theoretical and methodological innovations to break the standstill and to move up to another level. In particular, I argue that research on dynamic transformations of EAWR should pay more heed to the discussion of two meta-regimes, informal security and welfare-state regimes, in order to understand social policy developments together with recent socio-demographic-economic-political transformations. In addition, I argue that researchers should develop the typology offering a systematic explanation of similarities and differences between EAWR, beyond recognising vague heterogeneities among EAWR. Also, I propose a few further research question with regard to the boundary between welfare-state and informal security regimes and their empirical applications, and to comparative research between previous western welfare-state regimes and current EAWR.

Although this paper mainly deals with theoretical parts, it does not mean that methodological issues are less important⁴. As discussed earlier, a lack of empirical studies deriving from a lack of comparable data and a short history of welfare institutions has hampered the development of EAWR research. Regression methods are not

⁴ For example, one of the prominent issues would be how to operationalise the nature of productivist welfare regimes. One could argue that they could compare the ratio of social spending on health and education with that on cash programmes including pensions and unemployment programmes. Even if there were a comparable dataset, it would be still problematic without considering that their ageing level and unemployment rate has been very low until recently. Alternatively, it could be useful to investigate to what extent social transfers could influence people's economic life with micro datasets, though it would be difficult to draw a comparative conclusion on the nature of EAWR.

easily applicable due to the small 'N' issue. Without substantial theoretical consideration, factor and cluster analysis with western countries does not seem to give the right answer as it provides only cross-sectional and static pictures, which not surprisingly classify EAWR as a unique model compared to western welfare-state regimes. These limitations have resulted in a considerable increase in case studies with a historical qualitative perspective, but it does not seem to overcome a comparability issue as these pay too much attention to the roles of politics and institutions. In order to overcome the weakness and challenges of qualitative and quantitative methods, EAWR researchers may well search new methods beyond qualitative and quantitative, i.e. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), proposed by Charles Ragin and others (1987; 2000).

The QCA based on the Boolean algebra and the upgraded version, fuzzy-set/QCA (fsQCA), offer a few important advantages over existing methods. Firstly, they enable researchers to analyse EAWR with a small number of cases. In other words, in this quantified qualitative method, the issue of a short history of welfare institutions or a small number of countries does not impose limitations on research scope. Secondly, as this type of method can help to figure out systematic combinational conditions to produce a specific outcome, one can reduce its over-reliance on political institutional factors. For example, researchers can combine socio-demographic factors and economic factors with political institutional factors as in quantitative methods. Finding out multiple conjunctural causes is also a crucial difference from quantitative methods which aim to find the relative importance of variables, i.e. 'net effects'. Thirdly, the fsQCA method allows researchers to tighten the link between theory and data (Ragin 2000; Smithson and Verkuilen 2006). As fuzzy sets can be tailored to fit theoretical concepts with researchers' substantive and theoretical knowledge, this can be a tool to overcome the lack of a comparable quantitative dataset. For instance, in fuzzy sets, when researchers take income replacement rates of welfare programmes as a variable, they tend to use sets like 'very generous-generous-less generous etc.' rather than actual figures, e.g. 79, 50, or 23 per cent. In sum, it is predicted that the new methodological application could upgrade EAWR research.

Finally, the fuzzy-set analysis also provides an ideal-type analysis of welfare states, whether welfare state reforms lead to qualitative change, i.e. differences in kind, or quantitative change, i.e. difference in degree. In other words, it allows researchers to simultaneously explore differences in both kind and degree. For example, Kvist

(1999; 2007) shows whether current welfare reforms in western countries with special reference to Nordic countries have pushed them to move from one ideal type to another or within one ideal type, and whether there has been a convergence or divergence trend over time. This analytic skill could offer an important analysis for EAWR research as to whether one EAWR has vertically or horizontally moved from one ideal type to another type or not.

Identifying the precise characteristics of welfare regimes cannot be of concern and interest only to academics. Currently, East Asian governments are very keen to develop social policy schemes to cope with various transformations, not only in high income but also in newly industrialising countries like Thailand, China and Vietnam. Simultaneously, a great deal of vigorous policy learning is taking place in almost every East Asian country and it is observed that policy learning, either from international organisations, western countries, or other East Asian countries, has not always been successful. In this context, it is essential for policy planners and makers to accurately acknowledge their own institutional and regime characteristics. While EAWR research is still at the beginning of development, further theoretical and empirical research will help these countries step into a desirable direction for their welfare development.

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