

However, the book provides only a very brief discussion of the substantial autonomy local governments have gained as a result of the decentralization that has taken place in the reform era and how local officials' profit motives may have undermined environmental policy implementation. As policy implementation and enforcement at the sub-national level present a serious challenge to China's environmental management, a more detailed discussion of the implementation difficulties at the local levels seems to be warranted.

Shapiro's analysis of how China's evolving national identity affects the prospect for sustainable development is intriguing and convincing. In addition to presenting an overview of how traditional Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism approach the issue of sustainability from a human-centered environmental perspective, she makes an interesting link between Chinese sensitivity over "face" to the penchant for grand construction projects and development. In light of the modernization ethos that has come to dominate China's environmental discourse since the Maoist years, this part of the book also raises the important question of whether traditional values of nature can be revitalized to guide China's environmental management.

The chapter on the environmental justices of China's economic development is valuable for highlighting the vulnerabilities of the underprivileged groups in China's search for modernization. My only quibble is that this discussion comes somewhat as an afterthought and does not seem to connect that well with the bulk of the book on the sources of China's environmental problems. In addition, the various chapters only briefly touch upon China's role in global environmental affairs. This is justifiable given that this is a book about China's *domestic* environmental governance. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial if the book could cull the insights presented in the substantive chapters together to provide a brief analysis of the implications of the findings for China's role in global environmental governance.

Overall, the book covers a broad swath of the factors that impinge on China's environmental performance. While the book does not address the relative weight of each of these factors in influencing China's environmental governance or necessarily generate any new knowledge, it is nevertheless valuable for illuminating the complexities of China's environmental change and the numerous interconnected forces and pressures that drive this process. It additionally raises important questions about displacement of harm and how China might be best able to meet the challenge of sustainable development in the future. Shapiro should be applauded for leveraging her unusual sensitivity to and superb knowledge of China's historical and cultural complexities to generate a fascinating account of the monumental environmental changes currently under way in that country. The discussion questions listed at the

end of each chapter should further increase the value of the book as a main textbook for students of environmental politics and contemporary China.

The Evolution of Modern States: Sweden, Japan, and the United States. By Sven Steinmo. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 288p. \$100.00 cloth, \$31.00 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592713000236

— Vivien A. Schmidt, *Boston University*

How have advanced industrialized countries responded to the pressures of globalization? It is neither through convergence to a single model of capitalism nor through divergence into two varieties, as recent political economic theories have suggested. Rather, as Sven Steinmo convincingly shows in his masterful new book, *The Evolution of Modern States*, countries' responses have been highly varied and depend upon a wide range of factors. Taking the most different of cases—Sweden, Japan, and the United States—he demonstrates that despite similar sets of pressures, variation over time cannot be explained by any single causal variable in a search for "parsimony" using a covering law model of explanation borrowed from the physical sciences. Instead of reductive simplicity, he seeks to explain the complexity of change over time by way of "evolutionary narratives" that weave together the influence of politics, ideas, agents, policies, interests, economics, and institutions in political economic systems. Steinmo turns to a framework that enables him to theorize about such development in evolutionary biology, the terms of which he uses as a conceptual leitmotif in order to show how the many disparate elements in any country's history—political institutions, economy, welfare policies, and the tax system—can be molded into coherent accounts of the interactive dynamics of change in complex political economic systems.

The main body of the work elucidates the historical trajectories of three very different countries that evolved in different ways over time. Steinmo shows that there is no "race to the bottom" here in response to the challenges of globalization, although there are more or less successful responses to those challenges. Sweden, Japan, and the United States evolved differently over time as the result of a complex interaction of subsystem parts, in which agents with different ideas about policies with different kinds of political and economic relationships in different institutional contexts experience different patterns of development, as part of an "emergent" process.

Sweden is a "bumble bee" that conventional wisdom assumes could not possibly fly, with its high taxes, high social protection, and high levels of income equality. And yet it has adapted remarkably well to the changing world economy, even introducing neoliberal reforms without, thereby, significantly undermining its social-democratic commitments. Sweden's success is due in no small measure to the

development and maintenance of a “symbiotic” relationship between its capital and labor organizations, underpinned by a mutually cooperative relationship among business, unions, and the state. The country’s main challenges today come from the fact that the homogeneous society that facilitated the cooperative relations of the past is diversifying, and with increasing heterogeneity comes the possibility that the society-wide trust necessary to sustain the high-tax welfare state will erode.

Japan is a “hybrid” system struggling to adapt, with low taxes, low social protection, and traditional social relations that impede adjustment to the liberal capitalism adopted in bits and pieces since the 1990s. Since that time, it has had major problems that can largely be attributed to a weak political system unable to engage the reforms necessary for the country to meet its many challenges, be they related to the faltering economy and high debt, falling demography and resistance to immigration, continued income and gender inequality, or poor quality of welfare provision.

The United States is unique, having developed via an “allopatric” evolution—defined as what happens when a population splits into different geographic zones—that has enabled it to flourish despite, or perhaps because of, low taxes, low social protections, and increasingly high levels of income inequality. Its “strong nation, weak state” is the result of the coevolution of ideas about a limited public authority and an individualistic and entrepreneurial ethic in a vast and rich geographical expanse. This has enabled the private sector to flourish, supported by a government that, because of an increasingly fragmented political system, has hidden its extremely detailed regulation of business, its remarkably interventionist tax system, and its extensive but highly inefficient welfare state. The challenges for the United States today have mostly to do with the political fragmentation that has largely crippled the state, making governing the economy and the polity increasingly difficult at a time when America’s historical dominance in a more and more globalized world is waning.

The Evolution of Modern States is an ambitious book. It proposes nothing less than a new way of explaining change endogenously that gets beyond the stasis of traditional rationalist and historical institutionalist approaches to political economy. Its evolutionary narratives of the trajectories of change in the economic and social systems of Sweden, Japan, and the United States are models of political historical scholarship. It is a well-written book with a highly accessible style and minimal technical jargon, which means that its potential audience reaches beyond the world of scholars to the classroom, as well as to policy analysts. As an example of an evolutionary development in political science, it is itself a most successful hybrid, having taken historical institutionalism beyond its current limits by merging it with recent approaches that take ideas, dis-

course, agents, values, and culture seriously, including such approaches as the “turn to ideas,” discursive institutionalism, and constructivism.

Yet one lingering question remains: Do we really need evolutionary biology to explain political economic change endogenously over time? This question comes up as a result of the very success of the “evolutionary narratives,” because they do such a wonderful job of discussing the complex development of different countries without much of the language of evolutionary biology in the case histories. This is evolutionary theory *lite*, and deliberately so. Steinmo makes clear that he has no intention of developing a strong theory of evolutionary biology in order to apply politics and society—no sociobiology in this case. There is also no Darwinian “natural selection,” let alone any social Darwinist theory of “progress.” Instead, the concepts of evolutionary biology are largely used as metaphors for the different processes of transformation of politics and society, while evolutionary biology as such serves as an organizational tool.

With the metaphoric use of evolutionary biology, Steinmo provides a comparative political economic history of these three advanced capitalist countries without recourse either to the political scientific theories of the present, whether neoliberal convergence or binary divergence, or to the grand political theories of the past, whether Marxian class analysis, Toynbee’s rise of civilization, Spengler’s descent, or even Polanyian movement and counter-movement. This makes good sense and is in keeping with the methodological turn of political science theorizing since the 1990s, when most political scientists gave up on grand, substantive theories of history. But it may leave some readers wanting more evolutionary biology, others wanting abandonment of the biological metaphors altogether.

Moreover, there may be a certain tension between the very language of evolutionary biology, which makes the processes seem, well, biological, and the substantive arguments, which are all about the ways in which political economic agents are creative, have ideas, communicate them, and thereby intentionally create the institutions that then structure their lives, even as their actions also have unintended consequences and are affected by events, evolving institutional contexts, macroeconomic forces and structures, and more. Leaving this tension aside, however, it is important in closing to note the usefulness of evolutionary biology, not only as a source of metaphors for rich political economic narratives but also as an effective tool to demonstrate the value of detailed historico-interpretive narratives of complex causation, by contrast with the poverty of rationalist modeling, quantification, and simple causation for explaining the long haul of history. In short, Steinmo has produced a highly readable, groundbreaking book that is itself an evolutionary step forward for the discipline.