

Rethinking Political Development: A Look Backward over Thirty Years, And a Look Ahead

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The article analyzes the rise of the political development approach in comparative politics and the reasons for it. It traces the history of the political development literature and its emergence as the dominant paradigm in the field. It then presents and assesses the critiques that have been levelled against political development. It also assesses the various alternative approaches that came to supplant political development. The article next presents the factors that have led to a renaissance in political development. It concludes by suggesting that while the political development approach was based on some erroneous assumptions in the short term, from a longer-term perspective that approach looks considerably better.

Looking back over the last twenty or thirty years in comparative politics, one is struck by how closely the dominant concepts and models in the subfield are related to actual events and the broad currents sweeping the world of nations, to attitudinal and mood changes in the United States itself (where most, but by no means all, of the comparative politics literature is written), and to intellectual and methodological innovations within the larger field of political science. It is not that comparative politics exactly follows the headlines (although it may do that too), with

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their almost daily and often fickle flights from one dramatic crisis or area to the next; but it does tend to reflect the long-term trends in public and/or elite opinion that help determine which geographic or issue areas, or which intellectual approach, are to receive priority. Such fluctuations in our thinking, attention, and priorities have also affected the field of comparative politics and its changing emphases, research priorities, and conceptual perspectives over the last several decades.

The purpose of this article is to trace in broad, general terms these developments and interrelations over the last thirty years, to show how comparative politics developed from its earlier formal-legal approach to a more vigorous and genuinely *comparative* discipline, to trace the rise of the dominant political development school and its decline, to analyze the approaches that supplanted it as well as the fragmentation of the field, and to assess the current condition of the discipline—most particularly the question of why and how the political development approach may be staging a considerable comeback. In all of these trends we seek to show how the field interacts with and is part of a larger national, international, cultural, and political environment. For as American (and maybe global) politics and policy-making have become increasingly divided, fragmented, and in disarray in recent years, comparative politics has seemed also to follow these trends. Ultimately, we ask, is this new ferment, lack of coherence, and fragmentation a pathetic sign of the state of the field or is it an indication of intellectual health and vigor?¹

Traditional Comparative Politics And the Dominance of the Political Development Approach

Traditional comparative politics is universally thought to have been dominated by a parochial, formal-legal, and institutional approach. That is the charge that Roy Macridis, in his tub-thumping, flag-waving, and very influential little book, raised against it in 1955.² Macridis, representing a new generation of comparativists who were more influenced by the recent approaches in political science than by the older approach that had been heavily dominated by lawyers and legalists, wanted a comparative politics that concentrated on informal and dynamic aspects: public opinion, interest groups, political parties, process variables, input functions, decision-making, and the processes of change.

That approach, which soon became the prevailing one in comparative politics, corresponded to others that we might call global. For our purposes, the most important of these were the emerging Cold War in the 1940s and 1950s and the sudden emergence in the late 1950's and the early 1960's of a host of new nations onto the world scene.

The interrelations between these three events—a more dynamic comparative politics, the cold war, and the new or emerging nations—have yet to be analyzed adequately, in my view.³ Some U.S. officials, and doubtless a few scholars as well, saw the fashioning of a body of literature dealing with the emerging nations purely as a means by which U.S. foreign policy could control and dominate these countries for cold war purposes. Other scholars saw the constructs of development theory as purely an intellectual approach, a way of understanding and probably of encouraging

development, but not a means of manipulation. Still others—a majority I would guess—saw some (maybe varying degrees of) interrelations between U.S. cold war strategies and a theory to analyze and help shape the politics of the developing nations but generally saw no incompatibility between the two, perhaps thought of them as complementary, or thought both goals were worthy of pursuing at once.

By the 1960's the political development approach had emerged as the dominant one in comparative politics. Some scholars continued to labor in the vineyards of the more traditional institutional approaches and others continued to write first-rate books on Western Europe. But the developing nations were clearly where the action was, particularly so with the election of John F. Kennedy, the creation of the Peace Corps whose mood was carried over into the effect to *bring* development to the emerging nations and not just to analyze it, the growth and new programs of the U.S. Agency for International Development which sought to put development into concrete, realizable programs, and—among other events—the Cuban Revolution and then the Alliance for Progress which focused enormous attention on Latin America and the Third World and reemphasized powerfully the cold war considerations that undergirded the U.S. government's development efforts.⁴

Considerable variation existed among the several leading writers and approaches to development—differences that have been blurred in our memories over the years or that have been purposely subordinated to the goal of lumping all “developmentalists” together for the sake of more easily critiquing or discrediting them. First, there are disciplinary differences: the more deterministic approaches of economists such as Rostow⁵ or Heibroner,⁶ for example; the more sociological—but in their own ways also deterministic—approaches of Deutsch,⁷ Levy,⁸ Lipset;⁹ and to my mind the more sophisticated, subtle, and nuanced political science approaches of Pye,¹⁰ Apter,¹¹ Weiner,¹² and others.

Among the political scientists, considerable and important differences also existed. Gabriel Almond, who employed the structural-functionalism and pattern variables of Talcott Parsons,¹³ was by now the chairman of the Social Science Research Council Committee in Comparative Politics; his and James S. Coleman's 1960 book, *The Politics of the Developing Areas*,¹⁴ was a pathbreaker in the field and perhaps the most influential of the genre. The SSRC/CCP was the dominant group in the comparative politics field,¹⁵ producing during the 1960s a series of volumes through the Princeton University Press that charted new ground in such areas as political culture, political parties, and so on.¹⁶

But not all development-oriented political scientists shared Almond's views or his approach, and even within the SSRC/CCP not everyone was so enamored of structural-functionalism and Parsons' pattern variables. In addition, many area specialists believed at that early time that the use of a common set of categories for all nations was like comparing apples and oranges and that the effort to stuff all the world's culturally diverse political systems into one overarching scheme was artificial and false. They also read the area-specific chapters, which followed Almond's long and theoretical introduction in *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, as an attempt to impose supposedly universal categories on areas where they didn't fit very well and did a disservice to a better understanding of these regions.

At the same time that there was a sniping from afar, in graduate seminars and other less public forums, other close-up members of the SSRC/CCP were pursuing their own research agendas in ways that did not seem to owe so much to the Parsonian-Almondian approach. Still others—and one thinks particularly of Guy Pauker in this regard —began the study of developing nations as a committed Parsonian but after actually spending time in Indonesia came back convinced that the pattern variables were not very useful. Some members of the actual SSRC/CCP have said that to their recollection Almond was the *only* one of their group who really accepted and was enthusiastic about the pattern variables. It may be that the reason Almond remained so committed to this intellectual shame, as distinct from many of his colleagues, was his later admission that prior to his writing of *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, he had never visited any of the developing nations.¹⁷

Nor should one discount the possibilities for change, growth, modification, and amendment within the developmentalist approach. For example, the Cambridge scholars who were members of the Joint (Harvard-MIT) Seminar on Political Development (JOSPOD) continued to explore new development-related topics every year for over twenty-five years, and to grow intellectually and develop new concepts or refine old ones in the process.¹⁸ Other members of the SSRC/CCP continued to expand their understanding of development as well.¹⁹ In addition, a whole new generation of graduate students, fortified with the developmentalist ideas and conceptual armature, went out to the Third World in the early-to-mid-1960's and came back with dissertations that often obliged their mentors to modify their views. Finally, critics from within the establishment such as Samuel P. Huntington (though not a member of the SSRC/CCP) published a devastating critique of the earlier developmentalist approach, challenging the view that socioeconomic modernization and political development went hand in hand, were mutually supportive, and that the latter was somehow automatically produced by the former.²⁰

What is required, first of all, therefore, is a considerable disaggregation of earlier development theory. There is a rich body of literature "out there" which deserves to be read and considered anew. It is not a monolithic "school" nor were its principal advocates all of one mind on these issues. Rather, right from the beginning there were nuances, diverse views and approaches, and a wealth of scholarship and ideas. Far too often the developmentalist approach has been dismissed with a blanket condemnation. Its principal figures have been all lumped together in one amorphous category. While certain of its intellectual thrusts seem in retrospect to have taken us in some wrong directions, this early focus on the developing areas yielded rich insights and a vast literature. It is a shame that this literature is not paid more attention than it is at present, because the wealth of information contained therein is still a marvelously fertile ground for the student of developing nations.

The second, related point to remember is that the criticisms of development theory (analyzed in the next section) were not necessarily applicable to the whole body of thought and research—although that has been the practical result—but only to some of its (I would say) most vulnerable published work. That is, the criticisms have been most strongly leveled against the writings of Almond, Lipset, and Rostow.

These are taken as the paradigm writers in the developmentalist school. But it seems to me these are, in some of their particulars, the easiest works to straw-man or to criticize; further, I am not sure that their writings are—or were—representative of the entire development approach. The field is far too rich, varied, nuanced, and diverse for us at this stage to dismiss (or smear) an entire body of work only because a few of its leading spokesmen went too far, said some things that can easily be criticized, or exaggerated the universality of their model.

Criticisms of Developmentalism

During most of the 1960's the "developmentalist" approach was the dominant one in comparative politics. Although other comparative politics scholars continued to write in different genres and from other points of view, the political development paradigm became the prevailing one. That appeared at the time to be the most intellectually stimulating approach; that was where the money was, in the form of research grants and opportunities; that was where the most prestigious publication outlets (*World Politics*, The Princeton University Press) were; and, since political development had also been accepted as a major goal of U.S. foreign policy toward the Third World, that was the route through which the opportunity to influence policy lay.

But eventually the criticisms of developmentalism and the developmentalist approach began to build.²¹ The criticisms came from the diverse directions; eventually the cumulative impact was devastating — so much so that today's graduate students, while acquainted with the criticisms, hardly know the original literature at all, no longer read it, and tend to treat it (if at all) dismissively in their seminars in one brief session. A listing of some of the main criticisms follows.

First, the political development literature is criticized as biased and ethnocentric, derived from the Western experience of development and of doubtful utility in non-Western areas and only limited utility in the incompletely Western ones. For societies cast in traditions other than the Judeo-Christian, lacking the sociopolitical precepts of Greece, Rome, and the Bible, without the same experience of feudalism and capitalism, and not having experienced the cultural history of the West, the argument is, the Western developmental model is either irrelevant or of meager usefulness.²²

Second, it has been argued that the timing, sequences, and stages of development in the West may not be replicable in today's developing nations. With regard to timing, it can be said that countries whose development is occurring in the late-twentieth century face different kinds of problems than those whose development began in the nineteenth century. In terms of sequences it appears, for example, that rapid urbanization may precede industrialization in the Third World whereas in the West just the reverse occurred; and when one speaks of stages, rather than capitalism following feudalism as in the West, in the Third World the two have most often been fused. The result is that virtually all our interpretations based on the Western developmental experience—ranging from the political behavior of the middle class, the

presumed professionalization of the armed forces, the demographic transition, and other key indicators of modernity or the transition thereto—need to be rethought and reconceptualized when applied to the Third World.²³

The international context of today's developing nations, third, is quite different from those of yesterday. That factor also was ignored in most of the development literature, which in the 1960s focused almost exclusively on domestic social and political change. Few countries have ever developed autonomously and in complete isolation; but it is plain that today's developing nations are caught up in a much more complex web of dependency and interdependency relations, cold war conflicts, alliances and blocs, transnational activities, and the "world culture" (Lucian Pye's term) of tastes, communications, and travel than was the case of the early modernizers. These international connections need to be factored into any theory of political development.²⁴

Fourth, the critics argue, the political development literature often misrepresented the role of traditional institutions. In much of the literature traditional institutions were treated as anachronisms, fated either to fade away or be destroyed as modernization went forward. But in most modernizing nations, traditional institutions have proved durable, flexible, and long-lasting, adapting to change rather than being overwhelmed by it. They have served as filters of modernization and even themselves as agents of modernization. A much more complex understanding of the interrelations between tradition and modernity is required.²⁵

In the developing nations, fifth, the sense is strong that the early political development literature raised false expectations and created unrealistic goals for these societies to achieve. Almond's original functional categories seemed reasonable and nonethnocentric enough; but in actual practice "rule adjudication" was taken to mean an independent judiciary, political parties and an independent legislature were required, and countries that lacked these institutions were too often labeled, "dysfunctional." Hence the development literature frequently skewed, biased, and distorted the political processes working in the developing nations, forced them to create Potemkin village-like institutions (such as political parties) that looked wonderful on paper but proved to be very ephemeral, or, alternatively, obliged them to destroy their own traditional institutions which might have been viable within their own contexts.²⁶

A sixth criticism is that political development was part of a larger cold war strategy fomented by the United States to keep the Third World depressed and "in chains." Two distinctions need to be pointed out here. The first is between those who did have such a blatantly cold war strategy in mind,²⁷ and those who more simply wanted to analyze development and, often in addition, wanted to help the emerging nations to achieve it. Frankly, most of the scholars who wrote on political development preferred both goals and saw no contradiction between them: that is, they favored development and thought that in the same process both United States and Third World aspirations and interests could be achieved.

And that leads us directly to the second distinction. Many of those who wrote the early development literature shared the general United States attitude of that time of the need to contain the Soviet Union and prevent the developing nations from going

Communist. But the way to do that, they all but universally agreed, was not to keep the Third World countries depressed and in chains; instead it was to help stimulate their development, to help make them viable, to promote economic growth and political institutionalization by which they could themselves be in a condition to resist communist appeals. So there was, clearly a cold war motive behind much of the early development analysis, but it was emphatically not to keep these nations depressed but rather to build them up socially, economically, and politically.²⁸

Seventh, the political development perspective has been criticized as wreaking downright harm on the developing nations. The focus on political development sometimes had the effect of helping to destroy or undermine indigenous institutions within the Third World that were often quite viable, provided some cultural or social "cement," and might have helped these nations bridge some transitions to modern forms. Instead, because many intellectuals as well as government leaders within the Third World accepted the developmental perspective and the seemingly inevitable progression from "traditional" to "modern", these traditional institutions (family or patronage networks, clan or tribal groups, etc.) had to be eliminated for development to occur. The result in many developing nations is the worst of all possible worlds: their traditional institutions have been largely destroyed, their modern ones remain inchoate and incompletely established, and they are hence left not with development but with a political and institutional vacuum.²⁹

One final criticism of the political development approach needs to be made, and that is that its early leaders were themselves not always sufficiently adept politically. There were rivalries for leadership within the political development movement as well as resentments by members of the SSRC/CCP against the leadership; some of these rivalries and bitter feelings are still alive and strongly felt even thirty years later. More important from the point of view of the receptivity of the political development approach was that the SSRC/CCP which dominated the field for at least a decade failed sufficiently to broaden its base, bring in adequate numbers of new members, and incorporate the research findings and concepts of comparativists other than themselves. Year after year, as the SSRC/CCP volumes came out over the decade of the 1960s, they had the same editors and, for the most part, the same contributors. Very little fresh blood or fresh ideas were introduced, a fact that stimulated resentment among many other comparativists who also had important and worthwhile things to say. Later, quite a number of these persons would turn out to be among the foremost critics of the developmentalist approach.

These criticisms of the literature of political development were powerful and quite devastating. Eventually, by the end of the 1960s, not only were these criticisms widespread but other factors were operating as well. So many case studies of developing nations had now been written in which the developmental approach itself was found wanting that eventually the assumptions of the approach itself were questioned, no longer so much the countries themselves and their "dysfunctionality" in terms of the developmental criteria. Samuel Huntington weighed in with his powerful critique, suggesting that socioeconomic modernization and political development, instead of going forward hand in hand, might well work at cross purposes. The Viet Nam war provided another blow since in some quarters the war was

presented as a disastrous consequence of a misplaced emphasis on political development by the United States. In addition, some of the early writers on development were viewed as supporters of the war or even its "architects."

A generational factor was also involved: the political development literature was largely fashioned by one generation of scholars and by the end of the 1960s that generation was beginning to pass in favor of a younger generation who were critical of their forebears or who simply had other ideas. And that gets us to the final reason for political development's demise: fad and fancy. Political development was in part a product of the early 1960s, of the enthusiasms of the Kennedy administration, of the Alliance for Progress, and of "the Peace Corps mood of the times" (Almond's phrase). But by the late-1960s both that era, that fad, and that body of literature had largely come and gone. By then other fads and fashions had come into existence: dependency theory, corporatism, political-economy, bureaucratic-authoritarianism, a revived Marxism, others. The analysis turns next to a treatment of these new approaches.

New and Alternative Models

The decline in the consensus undergirding the political development approach had brought a variety of other approaches to the fore. In part these changes were related to logical and/or methodological flaws in the developmentalist approach itself; in part they were due to broader changes within the larger society. One is tempted to draw parallels between the decline of the developmentalist approach in the 1960s and the decline of the American societal and foreign policy consensus, and to relate the rise of multiple approaches in comparative politics in the decade that followed to increasing divisions, even fragmentation, in American society as a whole. But it may be that such "cosmic" conclusions are larger than we are justified in reaching at the present time.

The decline of the older consensus in the field need not necessarily be lamented. As set forth in the previous section, there *are* major problems with the political development approach. And the new approaches have, for the most part, made a contribution to the discipline. The trouble is, as with development theory, that there are "vulgar" as well as more sophisticated versions of most of these newer approaches which need to be sorted out; and furthermore many of these newer approaches have now in the 1980s also, like political development, run their courses and begun to be supplanted. By what, we must ultimately ask, and what therefore is the future of the field?

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory grew directly out of dissatisfaction with the developmentalist approach and specifically out of the criticism that development theory ignored international or "dependency" variables, such as international market forces over which the Third World had little control, multinational corporations, and the machinations of U.S. embassies abroad.³⁰ Now of course there are dependency relations

in the world as well as complex relations of interdependence, and I think we all recognize that U.S. embassies (as well as others) and various transnational actors such as the MNCs do sometimes muck around in the internal affairs of other nations. The trick is utilizing dependency theory, therefore, is to distinguish between those writers who use the theory pragmatically to shed light on the role of international actors operating within the borders of Third World nations, or otherwise controlling their destinies,³¹ and those who would use the theory as an ideological weapon, usually from a Marxist or Marxist-Leninist perspective, to flagellate the United States.³² A sophisticated dependency theory can be a useful tool of analysis, but the more vulgar ideological kind should be viewed as purely a political instrument.

Corporatism

The corporatist approach similarly arose out of discontent with development theory and was meant to shed light on political phenomena which both developmentalism and dependency theory only inadequately explained. Two schools of thought within corporatism emerged early on: one which viewed corporatism as a general pattern of political cognition like liberalism and Marxism and which, because of that area's particular history and traditions, seemed to have had an especially strong impact on the nations of the Iberic-Latin (including the Philippines) culture area.³³ A second view took corporatism as a general model of the political system, without particular regional or cultural affinities, implying a certain kind of relationship between societal structures and the state, and therefore present in a wide variety of regimes.³⁴ These views need not be seen as incompatible; indeed the two perspectives can be used fruitfully in conjunction with each other rather than as polarized approaches.³⁵

Corporatism has now been found to be present, in different forms, in virtually all political regimes. Its very ubiquitousness, however, has diminished its utility as an explanatory device. The result is that the corporatist approach has suffered a different fate than dependency theory: corporatist features, it is now acknowledged, may be found in varying degrees almost universally; the utility of corporatism as an explanatory device is widely recognized among scholars; the corporatist approach has been accepted in the literature as a contributing but not a complete or sufficient explanation; and meanwhile the field has now gone on to other things. The corporatist approach has been superseded not out of controversy anymore (although some still goes on from time to time) but out of acceptance and, hence, a certain boredom.³⁶

Political Economy

The early writings on political development largely ignored political-economy variables. In part that was because in the 1950s when the theory was first formulated, the barriers between the social science disciplines were sharper and interdisciplinary work was less appreciated than is the case today. In part also, it was because development studies had previously been dominated by economists and sociologists, and in the new development literature a conscious effort was made to

emphasize the autonomy of the political variables. It further seems likely that, given the cold war origins of some of this literature (recall Rostow subtitled his classic 1960 book, "A Non-Communist Manifesto"), a conscious effort was made to stay away from political-economy explanations that could too easily be confused with Marxism.

And, like dependency theory, that is still the problem with the political economy approach. In subtle, sophisticated hands,³⁷ the political economy perspective can be a useful and insightful one. In less sophisticated hands, or among those who consciously wish to use it that way, the political economy approach has a tendency to tail off into a Marxian interpretation with, again, greatly varying levels of sophistication as opposed to vulgarity.

Bureaucratic Authoritarianism

Bureaucratic-authoritarianism (or B-A) arose out of the self-same disillusionment with the developmentalist approach as did a number of these other schools, and was particularly aimed at explaining the rash of military coups that occurred in Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s. The term *bureaucratic-authoritarianism* was used to distinguish the newer more institutionalized military regimes in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay from the older, more personalistic or *caudillo*-dominated military regimes of the past.³⁸

Bureaucratic-authoritarianism is a good term, for in fact the newer Latin American authoritarian regimes were more bureaucratic, more institutionalized, more "developed" than those in the past. The trouble was that this useful contribution was accompanied by an attempt to explain the B-A phenomenon through a convoluted argument that pointed to the crisis of Latin America's growth strategy of import substitution as *the* cause of bureaucratic-authoritarianism and thus shaded off into a kind of economic determinism which the evidence could not sustain.³⁹ Like so many of the approaches examined here, B-A marked a significant contribution if shorn of its ideological baggage and so long as a useful but still partial explanation was not elevated to the status of a single and all-encompassing one.

Marxism

I know of very few scholars who do not find the general Marxian paradigm of use in providing a map, a broad-gauged explanation, for the transition from feudalism to capitalism. That is what has made the Marxian explanation popular intellectually in the developing nations for that is precisely the transition through which they are presently going. The trouble with this approach comes when it is used to explain the transition from capitalism to the next stage, when it is applied to specific groups where it does not fit very well (the Church or the armed forces, for instance), and when it is used as a rigidly ideological formula rather than as a flexible tool of analysis.⁴⁰

In addition, the socialist countries have found that Marxism is not a very useful guide in providing for an efficient and productive economy; their intellectuals have

abandoned Marxism almost to a person, and many of the developing nations—once enamored of Marxism—are no longer so attracted to it. In the present era Marxism and especially Marxism-Leninism appears to be valued as a formula for gaining, consolidating, and hanging onto power, but as a way to achieve either political freedom or economic efficiency it is no longer valued.

Many of these newer explanations have provided useful contributions to comparative politics. Quite a number have by now been successfully integrated into, and are widely accepted in, the broader field. It should be remembered that they provide partial explanations, not complete ones; and that they too, like the political development approach, have gone through a virtual life cycle of birth, growth, flourishing, acceptability or cooptation, and then a gradual fading away.

In another work,⁴¹ I have suggested that the disappearance of the consensus that used to exist about the political development approach and the rise of these other, competing new ones is not necessarily an unhealthy sign for the discipline. The existence of a variety of approaches has stimulated a healthy discussion and ferment in the comparative political discipline and reflects the methodological and political realities in which we and the field live. In that earlier work, therefore, I suggested three priorities of research: continued refining of these several separate approaches, efforts at building connecting bridges among these “islands of theory,” and continued attempts to fashion larger syntheses incorporating elements from these several theories. To these three I would now add a fourth task: grappling with the revival of the political development approach and comprehending the newer political phenomena emerging around us which may also point back to a revival of developmentalism.

Political Development Revisited

In the early 1960s, when the last major experiment in democratic development in Latin America took place, great hope existed that democracy, development, peace, and security would be closely correlated. Intellectual justifications for such correlations were provided in the development literature of that period, and most particularly in the writings of W.W. Rostow, S.M. Lipset, Karl Deutsch, and others. Using his famous aeronautical metaphor, Rostow demonstrated—based on the European and U.S. experiences—that as countries developed economically, they also tended to become more middle class, more pluralistic, more democratic, more stable, more socially just, and more peaceful.⁴² Lipset and Deutsch in path-breaking articles⁴³ at that time showed the close correlations between literacy, social mobilization, economic development, and democracy. An obvious foreign policy lesson also followed from this research: if we can help developing countries to be more literate and middle class, they will consequently become more democratic and more able to resist the appeals of communism.

But correlations do not imply causal relationships, and in Latin America as well as many other developing areas in the 1960s a wave of military coups swept the civilian democratic governments out of power. Greater literacy and social mobilization did not lead to democracy and stability but to upheaval and, ultimately, under

military governments, to repression. The middle class proved to be not a bastion of stability and democracy but deeply divided and very conservative, often goading the military to seize power from the civilian democrats. By the late 1970s, none of the correlations were correlating very well: democracy had collapsed, seventeen of the twenty Latin American nations were under military authoritarian rule, the developmentalist literature was rejected and in shambles, and the new, postdevelopmentalist interpretations — dependency theory, corporatism, Marxist explanations, bureaucratic authoritarianism — were in their heyday.⁴⁴

But since the late 1970s, nations as diverse as South Korea, the Philippines, and the Republic of China have embarked on some remarkable transitions to democracy. In Latin America the figures of a decade ago have been almost exactly reversed: sixteen of the twenty-one countries and over 90 percent of the population are either democracies or en route to democracy. This transition in so short a time has been nothing less than amazing. Not only has this given rise to a whole new approach and body of literature (“Transitions to Democracy”)⁴⁵ in comparative politics, but it also forces us to reconsider and maybe resurrect the older, discredited developmentalist approach. At least six factors are at work here, demanding our attention.

What Works in Development

By this time we have some thirty years experience with development. Our discussions no longer need to be focused entirely at the conceptual and theoretical level, as they were to a large extent in the 1960s. With the proper qualifications, we now *know* what works in development. We have a three-decade long track record, we have abundant case histories, and we have sophisticated comparative studies. We know what are unsuccessful development strategies and what are successful ones. Overwhelmingly, the evidence now points to the conclusion that what works in development is democracy, security, open markets, social modernization, stable institutions, and peaceful, moderate change⁴⁶ — all the elements that Lipset, Rostow, and the early development literature posited as necessary.

A World Political Culture in Favor of Democracy

The concept of a “world political culture,” first articulated by Lucian Pye,⁴⁷ is and always will be imprecise and difficult of empirical verification. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that in the last decade a remarkable transformation that can be called global has occurred. No one wants corporatist, bureaucratic-authoritarian, organic-statist, or Marxist-Leninist regimes anymore. In Asia, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and in Latin America the sentiment in favor of democracy is overwhelming. Public opinion surveys in Latin America indicate that over 90 percent of the population in virtually every country favors democracy. *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* may have ushered in one of the most fundamental transformations of the late-twentieth century: political opening and democracy within Communist regimes. A host of authoritarian regimes in diverse parts of the world — “friendly tyrants,” as one research report labels them⁴⁸ — have been swept from power. Though the mea-

sure are inexact, few of us can doubt that a revolution of very profound dimensions in favor of democracy has begun to sweep the world.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Most of the transitions to democracy that have occurred have been the products of indigenous forces and only secondarily of external ones. Nevertheless in some key countries at critical times, a U.S. policy in favor of democracy has also been crucial. A strong democracy/human rights agenda has been pursued by the United States both for strong ethical and moral reasons and because it is our history as a nation to pursue such crusades, and for strong practical reasons: it is in our interest to do so. The most recent campaign for democracy and human rights began under President Carter and it continued in somewhat altered form under President Reagan. Carter emphasized human rights and helped begin the process, while Reagan gave it a broader democracy focus and emphasized that human rights tend to flow from American strength, not American weakness. By this point human rights and democracy have acquired a consensus of bipartisan support and it is inconceivable that any future U.S. administration could have a successful foreign policy without these components.⁴⁹

The Decline of the Other Models

By this time not only have the major explanatory models—corporatism, Marxism, bureaucratic authoritarianism—largely run their course and been accepted, at least in their fundamental contributions, into the discipline, but the regimes based upon these models have either been discredited and/or overthrown as well. Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union are no longer viewed as viable models by very many people anymore, while the “Nasserist” (progressive, nationalistic) military of Peru, the generals in Brazil, and the corporatist regimes of Portugal and Spain were thoroughly discredited and are no longer with us. The demise or discrediting of the older “models” along with the resurgence of democracy have given rise to the sentiment that maybe the developmentalist paradigm had (and has) something to recommend it after all.⁵⁰

Changed Political Attitudes in the United States

After Vietnam, Watergate, the relative economic decline of the United States in the 1970s, and Jimmy Carter’s “malaise,” the sense was strong in the United States that we had nothing to offer the world. Our self-confidence had been eroded by events both at home and abroad. But during the 1980s, as the economy recovered and then flourished, American self-confidence began to recover. Contrary to the earlier “ethnocentrism” literature, the sense grew that maybe the United States was not such a bad place after all—at least as compared with most others—that it still had a great deal to offer the rest of the world. There are many criticisms that can be raised against it but undoubtedly Allan Bloom’s book⁵¹ struck a responsive chord.

That book emphasized the democratic and civilizing values in the Western cultural tradition; it pointedly suggested, in contrast to much of the prevailing cultural relativism, that some cultures (the Western one) are in fact more democratic, more humane, and more civilized than others (let us say, the Iranian one).

Development in the Short Run—and in the Long

The democratization, development, and modernization that have occurred in many Third World areas in the last decade force us to reassess the Lipsetonian and Rostowian theories. Lipset, Rostow, and the entire development approach and school were thoroughly discredited in the 1960s and 1970s—and often for good reasons, as outlined in the first part of this article. They and their followers, as well as many U.S. government officials, tended to portray the relationship between development and democracy in ways that proved far too simple, implying a causative relationship that did not exist, basing their theories of development too heavily on the Western and European experiences, and thus for a long time helping lead astray both development theory and the policies that flowed from it.

But we now need to face the fact that while Lipset and Rostow (and their schools) were wrong in the short run, they may still prove to have been correct in the long run. That is, while there is no necessary, automatic, or causative relationship between development and democracy—as some of the early developmentalists themselves pointed out—there are tendencies, correlations, and long-term relationships that cannot be denied. It is therefore necessary, I believe, to begin a serious reexamination of the earlier development literature to see what should be saved and what jettisoned. There may well be more worth saving than would have seemed likely ten years ago.⁵²

For example, we learned in the 1960s that there was no necessary correlation between democracy and the size of the middle class; indeed in many countries it was the middle class that plotted to overthrow democracy. But now in the 1980s it is the middle class that has led the opposition to military authoritarianism and is convinced, having tried other models, that democracy is much to be preferred. Employing other indices yields further correlations: the armed forces are now both more professionalized and more in favor of democracy than they were twenty years ago. Literacy is now far greater and so is the spread of democracy. Economic development over three decades has gone forward and so has the desire for democracy increased. The relationships that did not correlate very well in the 1960s now seem to be correlating very well indeed.⁵³

These strong correlations raise the distinct possibility that while Lipset, Rostow, et. al. were too optimistic and hence mistaken in the short run, in the longer term their correlations (and the predictions that went with them) may yet prove to be correct. One decade (the 1960s) was simply too short a period for the developmentalist propositions to be adequately tested. Moreover, the more sophisticated theories of development recognized that these were long-term processes, that the transitional period was almost by definition likely to be chaotic, and that there were bound to be

many setbacks on the road to development. But over the course of the decades now, we have a longer time period to observe, we have a considerable experience with development, and the earlier correlations and assumptions of the development approach have begun to look better and better.

The fact is that the base for democracy in Latin America as well as in East Asia is bigger, more solid, and more promising now than in it was in the 1960s. The middle class is larger, there is far greater affluence, bureaucracies are better trained and more experienced with development, the associational and institutional life has grown and become better consolidated, literacy is far higher, vast social changes have occurred leading to pluralism, the military is better educated and more professional, per capita income is higher, more persons are better educated, the private sectors are larger and more active, and so on.⁵⁴ These changes may well mean that the current openings to democracy in much of the developing world may prove more than just cyclical, popular now but subject to a new round of coups when the next crisis comes. When civil society was weak and development just beginning for many countries in the 1960s, an authoritarian regime might have seemed to some a possible alternative; but as development and pluralism have gone forward into the 1980s a new wave of military coups seems increasingly unlikely—at least in the better institutionalized and more viable countries. It may be that the developmental changes of the last quarter century and more have been sufficiently profound that not only can many countries look forward to a stabler future based on development and democracy, but that the processes involved force us to reconsider the main premises of the development approach in a newer and more positive light.

Conclusion and Implications

The field of comparative politics has become increasingly fragmented since the 1960s. There is no one approach that dominates the field nor is there an approved body of theoretical knowledge on which all or even most scholars can agree. Since the decline, discrediting, and the demise of the developmentalist approach, the field has lost its earlier unity. Perhaps this is a reflection of the increasing fragmentation within the discipline of political science more generally and in the United States itself. Whatever the ultimate answers to those questions, it is clear that what exists in comparative politics is separate subsections within the field, each with its own apostles, theory, and research work, and with usually limited efforts to connect one subsection of the field with another. To employ again the metaphor used earlier, we have “islands” of research work and theory, with often limited attempts to construct causeways and linkages among these diverse archipelagos, and almost no central, overarching structure or theory that would provide unity to the field as a whole.⁵⁵

It seems unlikely any time in the near future that the unity that reigned in the 1960s in the comparative politics field as a whole will be restored. Nor am I at all certain that such unity is desirable. The unity that centered around political development in the 1960s, I believe, while contributing valuable new insights and approaches, also led us down some wrong trails and blinded us to phenomena and

approaches that did not seem to fit comfortably in the developmentalist approach. My own view is that the field has been greatly enriched by the variety of approaches and perspectives that came to the fore in the 1970s.

But those approaches have also largely run their course and their useful contributions have been incorporated into the field. Now we are in a new era, no longer of corporatism, bureaucratic authoritarianism, and organic-statism, but an era of vast social and political changes and of quite remarkable transitions to democracy. These changes have made the once all but moribund developmentalist approach look better and better, and certainly deserving of a second consideration. The developmentalist approach looks far better in retrospect and from a long-term perspective than it looked in the late 1960s and 1970s. Shorn of its ethnocentrism, its biases, and its blindnesses—all critiqued earlier in this article—the developmentalist approach and paradigm contain a rich body of sophisticated literature and a large storehouse of theory and insight from which we can still—and again—profitably learn. The developmentalist approach will unlikely ever recapture the central place in the field that it enjoyed in the 1960s—too much has changed, and so have we and the field—but it certainly can retake its place as one of the major half dozen or so approaches here surveyed—another one of the “islands of theory” from which the painstaking task of constructing drawbridges to other islands and to the mainland can now take place.

Notes

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3. A useful but still incomplete effort is Irene I. Gendzier, *Managing Political Change; Social Scientists and the Third World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985).
4. For some reflections on the “political culture” in which political development studies began and flourished see Gabriel A. Almond, *Political Development: Essays in Heuristic Theory* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970) Introduction.
5. Dankart A. Rostow *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).
6. Robert Heilbroner, *The Great Ascent* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
7. Karl W. Deutsch, “Social Mobilization and Political Development.” *American Political Science Review*, 55 (September, 1961) 493–514.
8. Marion Levy, *The Structure of Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952).
9. S.M. Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review*, 53 (March, 1959) 69–105.
10. Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966).
11. David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).
12. Myron Weiner ed., *Modernization* (New York: Basic Books, 1966).
13. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951); Parsons and Edward A. Shils eds., *Toward A General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951).
14. Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman eds., *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).
15. For a brief history see Committee on Comparative Politics, *A Report on the Activities of the Committee, 1954–1970* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1970) mimeo.
16. Social Science Research Council series, “Studies in Political Development”: Almond and Coleman, *Politics of Developing Areas*; Lucian W. Pye, ed, *Communications and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Joseph LaPalombara, ed, *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, eds., *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964); James S. Coleman, ed., *Education and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); Joseph

- LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, eds., *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); Leonard Binder, James S. Coleman, Joseph LaPalombara, Lucian Pye, Sidney Verba, and Myron Weiner, eds., *Crisis and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971); Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of the National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).
17. Almond, "Introduction," *Political Development*.
 18. For a twenty-year assessment and appreciation of this work see Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington eds., *Understanding Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1987).
 19. An especially brilliant collection was the inaugural (1968), Vol. 1. No. 1 issue of *Comparative Politics*.
 20. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).
 21. See, among others, Sidney Verba, "Some Dilemmas in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 20 (October 1967): 111-127; Mark Kesselman, "Order or Movement: The Literature of Political Development as Ideology," *World Politics* 26 (October 1973): 139-153; Philip H. Melanson and Lauriston R. King, "Theory in Comparative Politics: A Critical Appraisal," *Comparative Political Studies* 4 (July 1971): 205-231; Geoffrey K. Roberts, "Comparative Politics Today," *Government and Opposition* 7 (Winter 1972): 38-55; Sally A. Merrill, "On the Logic of Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 3 (January 1971): 489-500; Robert T. Hold and John E. Turner, "Crisis and Sequences in Collective Theory Development," *American Political Science Review* 69 (September 1975) 979-995; R.S. Milne, "The Overdeveloped Study of Political Development," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 5 (December 1972): 560-68; Philip Coulter, "Political Development and Political Theory: Methodological and Technological Problems in the Comparative Study of Political Development," *Polity* 5 (Winter 1972): 233-42; Geoffrey K. Roberts, "Comparative Politics Today," *Government and Opposition* 7 (Winter 1972): 38-55; Ignany Sachs, "The Logic of Development," *International Social Science Journal*, 24, no. 1 (1972):37-43.
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 24. Fernando Enrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
 25. See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
 26. Somjee, *Parallels*; Wiarda, *Ethnocentrism*.
 27. Max M. Millikan and W.W. Rostow, *A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper, 1957); Gendzier, *Managing Political Change*.
 28. This interpretation is quite different from that of the radical critics such as Noam Chomsky.
 29. Huntington, *Political Order*, A.H. Somjee, *Political Capacity in Developing Societies* (New York: St. Martin's 1982).
 30. Cardoso and Faletto, *Dependency and Development*.
 31. Among the better examples would be Theodore H. Moran, *Multinational Corporations and the Politics of Dependence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974).
 32. See Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).
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 34. Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *The Review of Politics* 36 (January, 1974) 85-131.
 35. Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and National Developmental in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981).
 36. A solid, balanced treatment is Douglas Chalmers, "Corporatism and Comparative Politics," in Wiarda (ed.), *New Directions*.
 37. David Cameron, "The Expansion of the Public Economy: A Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 72 (December, 1978): 1243-61; Douglas A. Hibbs and Heino Fassbender, eds., *Contemporary Political Economy* (Amsterdam and New York: North Holland Publishing, 1961).
 38. Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South America Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1973).
 39. David Collier, *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979).
 40. Among the better approaches is Ronald Chilcote, *Theories of Comparative Politics: The Search for a Paradigm* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981).
 41. Wiarda, *New Directions*, Conclusion.
 42. Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth*.
 43. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites"; Deutsch, "Social Mobilization."
 44. Howard J. Wiarda, ed., *The Continuing Struggle for Democracy in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979).

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47. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development*.
48. See the series of reports edited by Daniel Pipes and Adam Garfinkle, *Friendly Tyrants* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, forthcoming).
49. Howard J. Wiarda, *The Democratic Revolution in Latin America: Implications for Policy* (New York: A Twentieth Century Fund book, Hemes and Mier, 1990).
50. For a discussion of the discrediting and demise of the older more radical left and right wing models in Latin America, see the author's *Latin America at the Crossroads: Debt, Development and the Future* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press for the Inter-American Development Bank, 1987).
51. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).
52. Ronald Scheman, ed., *The Alliance for Progress-Twenty Five Years After* (New York: Praeger, 1988); also Howard J. Wiarda "Development and Democracy: Their Relationship to Peace and Security." Paper presented at the Conference on "Regional Cooperation for Development and the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes in Latin America," International Peace Academy and the Peruvian Center for International Studies, Lima, October 27-29, 1986).
53. The outstanding study is Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries*.
54. The most substantial report is Department of State, *Democracy in Latin America: The Promise and The Challenge* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Public Affairs, Dept. of State, Special Report #158 (March, 1987).
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