

TOWARD A NON-WESTERN MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT¹

Since World War-II the Western nations, especially the United States, have taken interest in the development of the less developed countries and have made huge monetary and technical investments in them.¹ The social scientists as part of the technical assistance bureaucracies are finding it hard to keep themselves neutral from the value implications of the technical programs and maintain their neutral scientific position. The fact that the goals of the elite in developing countries are generally in conformity with the technical assistance programs settles the ethical aspect of the question without raising other disturbing questions about the basis of the power of the national elites and the effects of the temptation of receiving huge monetary aid on the definition of the national goals.

The present tendency of social scientists to abandon their traditional position on the question of values, has significant impact on the selection of concepts describing processes of social change and their definitions. Relatively neutral concepts of social change, growth and acculturation are being abandoned in favor of development, modernity, and modernization, although the equally meaningful and probably more realistic concept, Westernization, is still not popular. These concepts are being defined as "the common `behavioural system' historically associated with the urban, industrial, literate, and participant societies of western Europe and North America," "change in the attitudes, the thought values, the beliefs, the behavior of the people who are affected by the material change" (Foster, 1962: 3). The traditional concern of the scientists in optimum use of resources for maximum human gratification as defined by the individual values preference is being replaced by a concern in changing the value system in the underdeveloped countries which are designated as "traditional" and "parochial," terms used almost synonymously with "undesirable."

¹ The author of this paper is aware that his criticism of the current notions of development is rather too sharp; also reliance on fresh thinking on the subject. Surely there is no intention to "abuse the West." However, I do not conceal my reservations as to how far the non-Western world should "use the West." (Author's note.)

This new point of view as to the "proper ends of human life" or development of man is being accepted by the academic world of the non-Western countries without criticism. The romantic interpretation of history, tradition, and culture of the developing countries which intellectuals in these countries held tenaciously a few decades ago has proved inadequate to explain why these countries have failed to grow after the colonialism regarded as the major factor in their decadence has been removed.

The intellectuals, finding their previous diagnosis to a large extent incorrect, hold now their own society and culture responsible for its decadence and are ready to reject it, transform it, change it, and in extreme cases destroy it. The political and bureaucratic elite, forcibly modernized (Westernized?) earlier by colonial regimes and alienated from the traditional society, equipped with powers of the state, unhindered by democratic processes, resting on a narrow political base, comfort their guilty conscience and seek legitimacy for their newly acquired power in transforming these societies into powerful and respectable ones. When political and bureaucratic elites of these countries, as well as the intellectuals themselves, show great concern to modernize their societies, obviously the danger of being charged with cultural imperialism does not exist, and a permissible climate for changing the values and culture of the developing countries prevails.

The contention of this chapter, however, is that this new concept of development and modernization rests on shaky assumptions. First it presupposes that because the "traditional" societies have not risen to the higher level of technological development (since the Industrial Revolution) in comparison to the Western society, therefore they are sterile, unproductive, uncreative, and hence worth liquidating. It measures the creativity of the "traditional" world with a few limited standards such as urbanization and industrialization, like the person who measures the competence of everybody in terms of his own special competence. It ignores (because it cannot measure it with its available instrument) the possibility of existence or (at least the potentiality) of non-material areas of creativity.

This point of view also rests on a unilinear view and interpretation of history. It

presumes that all history is inexorably moving towards the same destiny, same goals, and same value system as Western man has. It presupposes that the range of combinations of technology and values other than the Western (Judeo-Christian?) one is very limited and insists that modern technology could not be adopted without sacrificing the "traditional" values. Marshaling evidence from the period of ascendance of Western society and conveniently ignoring the vast span of technological development before this period which the "traditional" societies developed and transmitted to the Western society, it ignores the fact that technological and material development before this period was not always the product of a "combination of universalism, functional specificity, achievement orientation and affective neutrality." It shows remarkable ethnocentrism by equating modern society with paradise and fails to take into account the "crisis," especially in the realm of personality, which the modern society is facing and which Erich Fromm and other psychologists have aptly located.

The above analysis, of course, is an attempt to make a case for developing a new concept to describe the process of change in a society which helps it build itself. Such a concept needs to be free from unilinear interpretation of history, should not measure creativity only with limited standards, and should not reflect ethnocentrism. Probably for this purpose the concept of development, if re-defined, could be conveniently adopted in preference to modernity. Modernity carries an implicit connotation of being like the one which is currently acceptable or fashionable. On the other hand, development refers to a process. One possible definition of development could be that it is a process through which a society achieves increased control over environment, increased control over its own political destiny, and enables its component individuals to gain increased control over themselves.

In the light of the above definition a tribe which has traditionally believed rain could be controlled by magic but now has a more realistic explanation of it and is consequently working to divert a stream to irrigate its field - this tribe is developing, although this development cannot be measured by an index of industrialization.

Development is voluntary activity on the part of a society in which no exclusive group imposes its own set of values. The process of development is moulded by existence of diverse values in the society which clash, conflict, and evolve into something new but do not suppress other value systems. The second ingredient of this process is innovation rather than imitation. The developing society learns from experiences of others, imports what it considers useful through a process of conscious selection.

Development defined as above will not admit the process of change brought about by a colonial regime as development in spite of a resemblance between the two processes. Similarly, the change imposed by an authoritarian nationalistic regime or modernizing regime will not be considered development because this does not permit a society to make a deliberate choice of ends and means. Similarly the changes in a society which are products of imitation, whether of other cultures and societies or other groups in the society, are excluded from meanings of development here.

It is ironic that, while the West itself has developed through innovation in science, technology, and social organization, providing new responses to new challenges, it expects that the non-Western world should only imitate or adopt Western institutions and should not disturb the creative monopoly of the West. But imitation does not and cannot release the creative energy in the imitator. It only perpetuates his dependence on the model. Even if the non-Western world could achieve some material development by imitating the West, it could only solve its pecuniary problems and could not make any contribution to world culture. This will certainly ensure homogeneity and uniformity of culture in the world, and it may satisfy the godly craving of Western man to shape mankind in his own image, but it will not necessarily enrich the culture of mankind.

APPENDIX: Introduction to a Debate

The question of which model or models of development would be relevant and effective in helping the less developed countries to breakthrough the vicious circle of underdevelopment has become more urgent and important because during the last decade, the models and strategies employed for this purpose have not produced the desired results. The issue was raised in the 1964 Conference on "Communication and Change in the Developing Areas", held at the East-West Centre of the University of Hawaii, and produced an interesting debate, represented by two papers published in the volume resulting from the Conference. (Lerner and Inayatullah 1967, pp. 104-125 and pp. 98-120, respectively).

The controversy was provoked by Professor Learner's remarks about the relevance of the Western model of development to developing countries and the ethnocentric predicament of Asian intellectuals in rejecting it. In this paper he argued as follows:

- 1) That American interest in the development of less developed countries has been increasingly depoliticised, implying that American professional social scientists and intellectuals were not guided by political but by purely professional and objective considerations when they argued the case for the universal relevance and applicability of the Western model of development. This he contrasted with the politicisation of development policy in Asian countries where public leaders have provoked and played upon anti-Western feelings to win popular support and to create an artificial unity, and where intellectuals lacking intellectual and personal freedom have shared the ethnocentric predicament of their public leaders.
- 2) This ethnocentrism, he argued, was "not merely a self-indulgent nuisance but actually a major obstacle to development progress". (Lerner, *op. cit.*, p.110) The Western model, which non-Western intellectuals and public

leaders apparently rejected, incorporates certain values such as material welfare, power, rationality and skill that are universally desired. it exhibited "certain components and sequences whose relevance is global". As demonstrated by Western experience, modernisation occurs when industrialization, urbanisation, a rise in literacy and exposure to mass media occur in a particular sequence, raising popular participation in economic and political life. When this sequential process was disturbed by human choice, modernisation failed to occur.

Implicit in these observations was the suggestion that the range of choice with regard to the ultimate means and ends of modernisation was narrow. The sequential process of modernity was historically determined and could be altered or tampered with only at one's peril. There was room for marginal adaptation and for the invention of "functional equivalents", but not for radical departures.

In sharp contrast with Professor Lerner's position I argued the following:

- 1) That Western social scientists involved in technical assistance programmes tend to adjust their perspectives to the political context of these programmes, and to prescribe solutions which are compatible with the global interest of their own countries. They also reflect ethnocentrism regarding the superiority of their culture and institutions. They exaggerate the relevance of the Western model of development for non-Western countries.

- 2) That the intellectual perspective of Western scholars on the development of societies is conditioned by a narrow and shaky unilinear view of the history of man which implies that societies at a lower level of development were inexorably bound to travel the same historical party through which the

advanced industrial Western societies achieved their development.

- 3) That the relevance of the Western model to the conditions prevailing in non-Western countries should be critically examined rather than presumed, that non-Western societies should make a conscious and autonomous choice regarding the models of development they want to follow and that they should be inventive in developing new models of development.²

Developments during the last ten years have revealed several errors in my arguments, errors that are methodological and conceptual rather than substantive. These errors were first in suggesting a normative model of development which should be followed by non-Western countries rather than specifying the extent of freedom available to them in choosing a model, and in assessing the probability of such non-Western model actually emerging. I also over-estimated the extent of freedom available to non-Western societies, underestimating the constraints imposed by the historical evolution of these societies and their contemporary internal and external environments. Further, I used the blanket concept of a Western model, bundling together cultural and institutional aspects that created the wrong impression that everything Western was or should be suspect and that there was no room for selective adoption.

Secondly, my failure to further explore the implications of the proposed non-Western model exposed it to the charge of being a superficial replica of the Western model. It could be legitimately argued that the Western model was equally concerned with increasing control over nature, stressing self-determination and increasing the individual's self control.

1. In Schramm's introductory chapter it was pointed out that many of the basic decisions behind communication strategy are out of the hands of the communicator and are of a political, economic and philosophical nature, grounded deep in the culture. In Dube's chapter, the point was made that many of the developing countries do not have a clear image of where they are going. "Many of these countries," he says, "have acquired national independence through struggles that were intensely anti-Western. Hatred for Western domination was accompanied invariably by antipathy for things Western. Revival of native traditions - historical or mythical - was an important objective of their struggle for the achievement of national independence. The self-image of many new nations still has anti-Western and nativistic overtones. Even their elite does not clearly know how ultimately the elements of tradition and modernity are to be synthesized in the emerging national pattern." This problem of national identity and goals came again and again into the discussion at the Hawaii seminar, and the dialogue is well represented by the two following chapters.

Inayatullah argues vigorously for a pattern and purpose of development that will not be Western and will not be imposed on the people of the developing countries. He denies that all history is inexorably moving toward the same destiny and the same value system as Western man has. He speaks rather bitterly of the academic world in the developing countries that has accepted without criticism the Western idea of development, and the political and bureaucratic elite who find it to their advantage to go along with it. He does not hesitate to mention cultural imperialism.

What does he want to substitute for development on the "Western pattern? A new concept of development made by the people of the developing countries. It must not accept the proposition that development is facilitated by an given cluster of values or that technological advancement cannot be achieved without sacrificing the integrity of the

individual, he said in the seminar. It will require that the developing societies "innovate new ways" of development. Above all, it must be created by, not imposed upon, the people of a country. It must not be forced upon them by Western aid, or by a nationalistic or modernizing regime. The pattern must be an original one, and the product of deliberate choice by the people of the country.

The author of this chapter was an International Development Fellow, at the East-West Centre, in 1964-65, on leave from his position as Instructor in Public Administration, Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, Peshawar, West Pakistan.

2 . . . It's now apparent that Professor Lerner and I meant different things by "Western model". While I understood it to be a cultural and institutional complex, Professor Lerner meant by it increases industrialisation and urbanisation, literacy, mass media and popular participation. (Ibid, p.114). Thus, by defining "Western model" in this way, Professor Lerner could rightly claim universality for it. But apparently the conference on this issue was the victim of a serious gap in communication.