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Political Development

C. H. DODD

Professor of Political Studies, University of Hull

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PREFACE

The concept of political development has gained wide currency in the literature of political science over the past decade, particularly in connection with the study of the politics of rapidly modernising third-world states. When discussing the concept with undergraduates in British universities, I was impressed by the range, diversity, and often the difficulty, of much of the writing on the subject. It soon became evident that a short introductory study was necessary which would indicate at least one possible way of advance through the wood. This study arises out of that concern. It cannot be thoroughly comprehensive; nevertheless, it tries to deal with the major issues that arise, though often of necessity in a more perfunctory way than they deserve.

The aim of this essay is first to sort out the major meanings attributed to the concept 'political development', and then to consider its relationship to the popular term 'political modernisation'. One of the approaches to political development in which undergraduates have a lively interest is the Marxist. Often they find little in the stock literature of American political science to satisfy them in this regard; in particular, the relationship between Marxist and other views about political development is not much treated. Consequently, the theoretical considerations and practical implications of Marxist views about political change are here briefly presented, and related so far as possible to other and broader ideas.

The background to Western approaches to the study of political change in third-world states is the growth of the modern nation-state in Europe. This experience cannot count for nothing; it is

the background from which must emerge at least some hypotheses from which to start. We therefore outline the main features of political change in the Western world. This process of political change took place, however, against a backcloth of tradition not identical to that found in the countries of the third world; and certainly it took place over a long period of time, when the old had an opportunity to adjust slowly to the new. Since our concern is primarily with political change in third-world countries, we therefore go on to examine the broad characteristics of traditional society in those countries and the obstacles they present for political development. There is a quite dramatic flavour about political development in countries where the profoundly traditional life was lived not years and years ago, but only yesterday. When traditionalism is so near, it must be of greater than normal importance for modern politics. In the light of the work chiefly of Apter, Eisenstadt and Huntington, we therefore examine some theories of the influence of the traditional on the modern, with illustrations from rapidly developing countries and particularly from those in the Middle East.

Two principal questions remain. Which persons, or which groups, are actually important for effecting political development in third-world states? (This we discuss comparatively in Section 6, where a classification of third-world political systems is also suggested.) And secondly, is political development in third-world countries going to follow one or the other of the varieties of 'first'- or 'second'-world political development? Another essay would be needed to provide any real answer to this question. In the Conclusion there is no more than a hint or two of the possibilities as they appear to those in the developing countries who think about the problem.

C. H. D.