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Plenary session: the Future Prospects of Development

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that problem. I doubt it. We need continuing investment, more creative ways, certainly, of considering this question. Whatever macro policies we have, dealing with finance and the debt crisis, we need always to trace back what impact it is likely to have at the micro level. We seldom do that. Most people are divided into macro specialists or micro specialists; they rarely get together. I think we have to take a look at this if we want to look at the human dimensions of development policies.

CLIFFORD GEERTZ: I think the reason I was asked to comment briefly was that I was accidentally present at the creation of the Old Testament times that Frank Sutton talked about. I went out, as some of you may know, on an MIT project of anthropologists to Indonesia in 1951, under the auspices of the as-yet-unformed, though forming, Center of International Studies. It seemed to me at the time there was a rather characteristic course of development for economists going to Jakarta. When they first arrived from MIT or wherever, they were extremely technically minded. After a time, it became apparent that they did not quite know whom to give their advice to. The political structure was somewhat different than it appeared to be. Inevitably, they began to become a little interested, beyond their technical economic concerns, with how the political system worked or did not work in Indonesia. After gaining some sense of that, they became intrigued with the fact that the society from which the people manning that system came was different from any they were used to. They did not understand how the class system worked, how education worked, the intellectual background of most of the ministers with whom they were dealing. So they began to be interested in how society, at least at the upper echelons, worked. Then, finally, as they became even more bewildered, they noticed that people perceived them with quite different cultural assumptions, that they were dealing for the most part with Javanese, that Javanese were not exactly the same as Sumatrans, and so on. They began to be concerned with this, having started off with strictly economic perspectives.

At this point, they were confronted with three choices. Some simply went back to MIT and a clean, well-lighted room, where they could build their models and not have to worry about all this messy reality. Others went more or less out of economics altogether and started investigating child naming or searching for the mystical quality of the mysterious East. Some of their work was interesting, some not, but it tended to exclude them very quickly from the development economics community. The best hung in, trying to relate their expertise to a foreign setting, culturally, socially, and politically, making pragmatic adjustments as best they could. This is the group out of which was built development economics, as Frank Sutton described it, with all its strengths and weaknesses. It was pragmatic, policy oriented, and a bit ethnocentric. A good deal of public learning took place.

The question is what has happened to it since. Like McGeorge Bundy, I have been away from it for quite a while. My impression of what has passed is that not all that much has changed, though there have been some changes. One change has to do with a greater interest in distribution issues. Another is that some of the numbers today come from surveys, in Indonesia at least, that are not the work of the state bureaucracy. Those who were anthropologists in the field in the beginning saw how bureaucrats "gathered" their figures and why they gathered them that way. The politics of numbers has become much more clearly recognized, and that's a net gain.

On the other hand, it seems to me that despite protestations to the contrary, and the obvious example of Japan, not to speak of the newly industrialized countries (NICs), you have still pretty much the freeway, lots of entrances but only one exit, a view that sees all change as going in one direction. It is now broadened into modernization, into the notion that the movement is toward a situation fundamentally like our own. The differences are recognized now, but they are still rather marginalized. Thus, for example, the new interest in the institution of Confucian capitalism.

There is today a greater sense of the diversity of the Third World; it was always there, but it is now recognized. Singapore, Chad, India, and Costa Rica do not make much of a set. There has been a useful pluralization of interests on the one hand, but this has led also to a certain amount of country-itis on the other. Area studies were just starting up when I first went to Indonesia. Now, we have built up a cadre of area specialists. There are real questions about how you get overall integration.

My impression from these two days is that development thinking has not changed nearly as much as the objects to which it is applied. The political-economic interconnection, for example—the first hurdle that my friends had to overcome—still remains very troublesome. For all the realization of its importance, it is still not as well handled as it might be. I think most development people are still more comfortable talking about technology than they are talking about power. As an example, consider the role in the NICs of what might be called authoritarian liberalism. It seems to me that in many countries, not all in the Third World, but some—Indonesia certainly and others as well—you are getting the rise of a combination of a Smithean idea of how to get rich with a Hobbesian idea of how to govern. This phenomenon, I think, has not been sufficiently reflected upon.

Yesterday, someone mentioned that the state's main objective in most places is not economic development, whatever it may say; its main objective, which needs to be brought back into our theories, and which has always been present, is to preserve the system that brought it to power, that gives it power and keeps it there. Developmental matters need to be assessed in

terms of their contributions to those purposes. The elites' concerns are with matters such as stability—not as an abstract necessity for development but stability for stability's sake. There has not been enough concern with the fact that the local interests of a political elite and the general ones of economic development are not necessarily coincident.

The result of this political imperative—and I think we must be made aware of it—is that it makes development something that is judged in terms of stability by such people. The result of that, increasingly, at least in Morocco as I know it, is the desire to disconnect the politically disturbing effects of development from the welfare-creating effects, somehow or other to get the rewards of development without any of the unpleasant side effects. The appeal of the political elite, in Indonesia, Malaysia, or Morocco, is to an authoritarianism combined with fidelity to a technocratic, economic elite, which is given a good deal of free play in economic matters.

The result, in some cases at least—I do not argue that this is entirely general—is that economic effectiveness, rationality if you will, increases substantially, even marginally, while political rationality does not. The political capacity of the mass of people at the village and small-town level, or even among the urban masses, remains undeveloped in a quite literal sense of that term. In both Indonesia and Morocco, and I think this is true of many other countries, there is a deliberate policy effort to keep it that way.

When I first went to Java in 1951, economic rationality was hard to find, locally or centrally. The level of economic literacy was very low and economic fantasy very high. But the political capacity, especially at the local level, where I knew it very well, was often quite astounding. Local government in Indonesia at that time was perhaps better on average than it was in the United States. Now, as some of you know, I went back a year ago. The situation is now reversed. Economic rationality is widespread. The economy is highly commercialized; in ideal Western terms, it makes sense. Political life, especially locally, is stunted and, in fact, in some degree of disintegration. One finds a disjunction between marked economic advance (more in Indonesia than in Morocco) and equally marked political stasis.

So, I do not see that people in development communities are giving much thought to this sort of problem, the long-run implications of increased economic rationality coupled with political centralization, authoritarianism, or whatever. Yet, as Professor Chowdhry's paper brought out, local sophistication, if that is indeed the word, is critical, even to central government activities, if they are to be effective.

The civil rights issue, as I see it in the United States, for example, rests on the fact—surprising to most people and certainly surprising to me—that there was such a very high level of local political leadership among blacks in

small southern towns, mainly centered in the church. That was why the federal government could do something to displace reactionary local white elites, why indeed it could be moved to do so. I think that if we were still waiting for the federal government to move without pressure from that direction, we would still be waiting today.

The point I want to make is that the working of politics on the local and regional levels is as important as the working of politics on the national level. The disjunction of the two is proceeding in at least some of the new states. It is something that we ought to think about rather more than we do.

Another area where I think Old Testament thinking has not changed enough concerns what I choose to call the tunnel-vision view of development problems. We still tend to divide things up conceptually in terms of our own particular academic genres and to stay within those artificial confines. This is of course partly necessity, which cannot be avoided if specialized professional skills are required. Some, however, is caused by calculated blindnesses or, at least, serious omissions. Allow me to cite a number of examples to illustrate this, dwelling principally on education, because it has been much discussed here, but realizing that matters are similar for health, trade, and other areas as well.

It is apparent to everyone, or at least should be, that the school system that has emerged almost everywhere in the Third World is the main mechanism of the system of social stratification. The older mechanisms—birth, family associations, and cultural style—have all greatly weakened. The main sorting mechanism is now education. That is the principal reason for the fierceness of the dispute over education's distribution, why schools proliferate so, and why the system tends to be the cockpit of social conflict. Yet the discussion of education tends to proceed in purely "cognitive capacity" terms, with almost no analysis of the other, what I think to be its dominant, function. There is too little discussion of stratification systems, how they work, particularly or generally, and the problems they pose when the educational system is at the center.

The result is a somewhat unrealistic cast to the discussion. What is at stake and what is going on have to do with status and power—privilege, to put it bluntly—and not a simple yearning for knowledge, for greater cognitive capacity. It is not out of a sudden upsurge in the thirst for knowledge that East Java, one province in Indonesia, has now 300 universities. Morocco has a university in virtually every city in the country. Something is going on there that involves a struggle for power and status.

My point is not that cognitive capacity does not matter, or that it is not what an educational system should be about, but that attempts to understand why this or that system is shaped in this or that way is not going to get us out of the tunnel view of the matter. The multifunctionality of social

institutions and the tendency for secondary functions to displace primary ones—as I think has happened in this instance—is almost a sociological cliché. Yet I cannot see that the cliché has entirely sunk in. I use education as an example. Health and trade are very similar.

Well, I could go on, but I had better not. That we have today a more differentiated notion of the Third World countries is incontestable, but a thorough-going reflection on the implications of that differentiation for developmental theory is still uncommon. Everyone says that it is the case, but issues of comparison—what sort of comparisons need to be made—appear to be more settled than they in fact are. Their difficulty is enormous, especially to someone like me who is trying to compare the apples and oranges of Indonesia and Morocco. The role of general theory, the lack of it, and the problem of differential change in various parts of the single system—all these things seem to me to be not sufficiently reflected upon.

Having been away from development for a few decades, and now listening to our debates, I do not argue that development thinking has not changed, only that though it has changed, it has done so less than I had imagined it had. It still seems that we reach out of technical economic matters toward politics, beyond them to social structure, and beyond that, to cultural issues. This reaching out remains as it was in the 1950s, tentative at best; it is still a very nervous-making enterprise for development people. Old Testaments die hard.

GEORGE ZEIDENSTEIN: I want to rise to the point that Gelia Castillo made, that there has been insufficient attention paid to population concerns. Why has the subject been so thoroughly omitted from the papers, the program, our discussions? Is it because we think the problem has gone away? After all, what some people today think of as the heyday of population concern coincided with different fertility rates. In one sense, one can say that the globe is witnessing a fertility transition; therefore, there is less need to talk about it. Or, turning it the other way, is it that the problem is just too intractable? Does it resist any sort of policy intervention, simply going its own way? If, in fact, fertility has gone down, can the people who have been working on population problems claim credit for that? It may be due to all sorts of other factors.

Or, is our omission of the subject a comment on the large proportion of economists among us? In many economic models, fertility change is often taken as an externality. It is one of the givens from which we leap off and design the things we wish to do; therefore, there is little reason to talk about it. Or, again, is it an extreme reaction to what in some quarters is thought to have been the extreme stridence in the past by those who were concerned about population issues? I do not know, but I admit to some perplexity.