

Political Development: The Missing Dimension of U.S. Policy
Toward Developing Nations

It is my deep conviction that political development is the missing dimension in American policy toward the developing nations. By political development I mean the fostering, stimulation, and guidance of fundamental social structures and behaviors that make effective self-government possible.

We proclaim as basic public policy our intention to get new nations to stand on their own feet as stable and responsible members of the international community. Yet we usually treat those nations as though they already have the capacity to run their own affairs, if we only give them a substantial addition to their material resources.

Our present international policies have largely relied on economic and military aid — analogous to the food and security needed by a growing child. I suspect that we have assumed these measures would allow the recipient young nations to mature politically by some automatic innerdirected process toward stable, responsible nationhood.

But we know far too little about political development of societies to rest our hopes on such an assumption of automatic political maturation. I am convinced that we must take a far more deliberate and more comprehensive role toward developing nations. We should systematically try to trigger, to stimulate, and to guide the growth of fundamental social structures and behaviors among large numbers of people in other countries if we are to insure political development

commensurate with the technological and defensive military prowess we are already striving for.

Although U.S. interest in political development includes a wide range of considerations, including a better understanding of the effect of what we are already doing, I am taking a narrower, more specific approach. I stress the importance of working with people and ideas and attempting to exert influence from the bottom up instead of from the top down.

In discussing the policies we should adopt in the political field, I anticipate several objections:

Some might ask whether I am proposing to transfer the sophisticated concepts of American political democracy to the developing nations. This is not what I am proposing.

I am proposing that the U.S. become involved with the people of the developing nations and work with them as they shape their own future. This future is bound up in political values and political action.

Some will object that I am proposing to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations. Of course we need to be circumspect and avoid interfering directly in political decision-making.

But there are many ways to become involved in the political development of another nation. We are already working overseas with the consent of governments in areas related to political development;

The campesino leadership training program - run by the Farmers Union and funded by AID; credit union and cooperative development - run by cooperative organizations and funded by AID; training of trade union leadership - through the AIELD with joint labor-management support

and AID funds; community development projects under AID; Educational programs under public and private sponsorship; the Peace Corps; U.S. military training with its emphasis on democratic values given to military personnel of the developing nations; sister relationships between institutions such as states, cities, universities, etc; and training of citizen leadership by groups such as the League of Women Voters.

Another reason our activities are not felt to be interference is that our political aims are consistent with those of the developing nations. They hold self-determination as one of their highest principles. We seek to advance and protect that right.

Self-determination is closely linked to the idea of self-government. This is America's great heritage. By exploiting and promoting this principle, we can be more potent than the Communists in influencing political development.

I hope these objections can then be laid aside.

My recommendations^{SEEK} to answer two questions: Who should take the responsibility for an increased effort, and what direction should these efforts take?

The urgency of gaining competence in political work is underscored by Vietnam. As we are reminded so frequently, the problem there is primarily political. Where do our leaders turn for operating competence in the political development field?

A country with the stresses of Vietnam requires a highly integrated effort in which the lead is taken by those charged with the political problem. A first class political effort in such a country requires the same careful planning, training, and organizing as our military efforts.

We must give some agency this operating responsibility. The State Department should not take this assignment. Its role is to deal with existing governments and provide reports and analysis. The State Department, of course, would continue to set over-all policies within which increased political development activities would operate.

The CIA should not be that agency, despite its current activities in the political field.

If this responsibility is to be given to an existing agency, it should be AID which is an arm of the State Department. It should become a primary mission of AID.

Here are some suggestions for AID in assuming this major commitment. These suggestions are tentatively made:

First, the agency should create a top-level political study and research staff.

Second, the agency should bring political development concepts to bear on the formulation of economic programs.

Third, it should develop an operating capability in general political development.

Fourth, it should undertake intensive preparation for accepting operational responsibility for U.S. political efforts in countries threatened with insurgency, where sensitivity to U.S. involvement is displaced by more urgent considerations.

Fifth, AID should sponsor a new institute to be termed a Center for Democratic Development to carry on those activities which the government finds difficult to do directly. This Center might have a small, full-time board which includes at least one representative from each of

the two major political parties. Political party representation would contribute useful understanding of political dynamics and help insure within this country the acceptability of the Center's work.

I re-emphasize: these are tentative suggestions. If a major responsibility for political development is fixed somewhere, the possibilities will readily unfold.

What are some of these possibilities?

First, and perhaps most urgent we should provide an institutional framework to absorb and retain the knowledge, experience and personnel who are now engaged in political development efforts in the crisis areas of the world. What we learn in Vietnam must be preserved and expanded upon. At present we have no means of insuring that we build on the lessons of the past. One of the simplest lessons, for example, seems to be the value of language training. We should have many, many people in training now learning native languages and the skills which would add to our ability to be of help to a country.

Second, we should do more to stimulate organizations based on economic or community interest. Whether the groups are cooperatives, credit unions, campesino organizations, labor unions, or based on some other self-help concept, they give experience in democratic power. In short, these groups can become the source for popularly based political movements.

A man heading our Peace Corps in a Latin American country told me of the Corps' experience in community organization. He said that traditionally Latins use a petition to remedy a community grievance. However, when the Corps stimulated community meetings, the participants

experienced a political awakening. The initiative and organization demonstrated by these meetings were a revelation to the invited local officials in countries where the idea that government is the servant of the people is not widespread.

We often conceive of politics as an expression of individual persons' attitudes, but politics tend more to reflect attitudes shaped and expressed through organized groups and their leadership. And leadership can be influenced far more easily than is commonly believed.

Third, then, we need to encourage democratic leadership. Training opportunities for all levels of political leadership should be created, both in-country training and at U.S. or regional institutes. Such training sometimes may be more effective without U.S. personnel participating. For example, in Latin America there are many democratic political leaders no longer in office. We should find ways through which these elder statesmen can inspire and teach promising young people.

Fourth, we need to establish more on-going, personal links between people and groups in this country, and political and economic groups in the developing countries. These links serve multiple purposes. They provide a two-way communication for better understanding and exchange of ideas. They can be a vehicle for recommending politically oriented youth who would benefit from outside training. They can be a conduit for aid which strengthens political work, such as help in research and communications. (An old mimeograph machine can be essential to political communication.) They can identify problems which are creating political stresses, and articulate the views of non-ruling groups.

A friend of mine who has done considerable lecturing in South Asia

observed that while the USIS personnel in India were quite familiar with university professors, none knew the President of the All-India Depressed Classes Association who, he said, was a lawyer by profession and very influential among the Untouchables.

In this same vein, I spoke recently with an executive director of a local party institute from a Latin American country. He pointed out that it would not be proper for the political officer of an embassy to sit through their political meetings, but that a non-governmental person from the U.S. would be quite welcome.

The means of accomplishing this linkage will vary. A non-government agency is needed, but it may have to be insulated even further, perhaps through a multi-national organization. For example, we might sponsor a Center for Democratic Development for the Western Hemisphere located in Latin America and run jointly by us and Latin Americans.

These links need some permanence even though individuals may come and go. To maintain these links would require money for travel, conferences, bulletins and periodicals and many other activities ordinarily typical of organization efforts.

Fifth, we should encourage the development of local government consistent with local culture. Local control over matters of local concern helps build support for and experience with the idea of self-government. A pluralistic development in government can add stability to a society and encourages leadership to emerge and be tested.

Sixth, we need to greatly expand existing programs of rural and urban development. Literacy, agricultural know-how, public adminis-

tration — all are skills needed for effective government. I would also add those skills needed for the management of private enterprises and simple public speaking, small group leadership, and large assembly management skills.

Much of this, of course, is already being done under the umbrella of economic aid. We need to do more.

Why should we do all this?

Political development work would pay enormous dividends to us as a nation.

I have just suggested several political development activities that we could engage in. Each of these rests upon assumptions about how nations grow toward political stability. If every program were undertaken as a soundly researched experiment, we would rapidly advance our basic knowledge about how things happen in the emerging world.

Perhaps Congress could be brought in on the ground floor of this educational process.

This 89th Congress elected roughly 100 new members. Suppose that our Center for Democratic Development had a program for these new members. Each would take a single developing country, study it intensively and visit it. Over a period of years, we might well get a Congress with a greatly strengthened appreciation of the problems of the developing world and of U.S. policies toward them,

One of the biggest problems we face on the Hill today is winning support for the AID program. A better understanding of the AID program would be a natural by-product of Congressmen's assignments to a developing country.

These educational advances will be welcome. But I emphasize that I am suggesting we go forward with a massive program of political development activities.

We cannot afford to rely on a mystical faith that political institutions underlying stable nations will come into existence automatically or by chance, everywhere in the world.

Our own country has produced able, trained people in vast numbers in civil action groups, labor unions, charitable organizations, political parties, trade associations, social groups, and local governments. With great care we can put this reservoir of political skill to use in other countries. These people can share themselves, and their ideas and skills abroad, as we have already used economic, educational, administrative, and military technicians.

Some may argue that people and ideas are not very tangible weapons in this modern world. I would counter they are the most effective weapons. I ask you to consider why the picture of Lafayette, a Frenchman, flanks the Speaker's dais in the U.S. House Chambers.

People and ideas have made this country the oldest democracy in the world. People and ideas can contribute greatly to the emergence of democratic institutions around the world.

Thank you.