

INTRODUCTION

I

In the largest sense, politics helps determine the quality of the environment in which men live their lives. As Bernard Crick has said: 'Politics can not make men good, but they can make it easier or harder for us to be good.'

In the contemporary world this proposition has a particular meaning. On every continent, in almost every nation, men are caught up with unprecedented rates of change in their domestic lives. This is as true for rich countries as for poor; countries ruled by communist as well as non-communist governments, be they democratic or autocratic. And rapid change is hard for the political process to handle with grace.

It is equally true that the international environment is changing fast and changing in a particular way. The world is in transition from Cold War to something else.

It still contains ample explosive raw materials for chaos and even greater violence than we see every day in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. But it also contains the raw materials for substantial movement towards world order in the next generation. And whatever a man can do to tip that balance in the right direction, he ought to do.

This book contains quite a lot of historical analysis; and for this I do not apologize.

There is a kind of schizophrenia in the endless aphorisms about the usefulness – and lack of usefulness – of history to man. They are reflected in the two following examples, from Coleridge and Namier, respectively:

If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives is a lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves behind us!

A neurotic, according to Freud, is a man dominated by unconscious memories, fixated on the past, and incapable of overcoming it: the regular condition of human communities.

One asserts we ought to learn more from history than we will; the other, we remember the wrong things from history.

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I have tried to use history here in ways which isolate abiding aspects of the human condition in politics, from which we ought to learn something, from current and emerging problems which are special to our times and to the foreseeable future.

II

Since this is an essay in history and the social sciences as well as a tract for the times, I owe the reader a brief account of how I have proceeded.

In *The Stages of Economic Growth* I did not deeply explore the process by which nations made the broad collective decisions which determined the content of their national life at each stage of growth. My concern then was primarily with the pattern of growth itself – as common technologies were diffused to highly distinctive societies – and with certain consequences of those strategic decisions for the timing of industrialization, the allocation of resources, and war, as the stages of growth succeeded each other.

Immediately upon completion of *The Stages*, in 1959, I decided to turn the problem around in my hand and see what happened if politics, rather than growth, was made the focus of analysis. This book does explore the factors deep in history, culture, and the active political process which have shaped modern societies. But politics is clearly a different business than economics, intertwined as they are. And it took some time before I had constructed an intellectual framework with which I felt comfortable.

The essence of that framework is the linkage between a view of politics as the effort to balance and reconcile problems of security, welfare, and the constitutional order, with the stages of growth.

One element within the framework of the present book only fell into place in the course of teaching; that is, the linkage of the three abiding tasks of government to the tripartite Platonic-Freudian view of the human personality.

III

Once the central notion of connecting the three abiding tasks of government and the stages of economic growth was clear, I had to decide to what extent I would concentrate on the elaboration of a theoretical structure as opposed to applying it to history and the contemporary scene. I decided to lean heavily towards application for two reasons.

First, the inherent complexities of politics are such that pure theory can take us only a little way forward in our understanding. Given the roles of culture and ideas, of the accidents of history and human personalities, the unknowns are too many for the equations we can regard as reliable. On

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balance, modern political scientists have been, I think, too anxious to emulate what they believe to be the formal elegance of economics, cybernetics, and other apparently more scientific fields. At best, political science can be only a kind of biological science and an art. It will be strengthened, not weakened, by an acceptance of that fact, which is fully compensated for by its importance and its human richness.

A second reason was more general. It has been my experience with economic and social as well as political theory that the meaning of abstractions – and their usefulness – can best be judged by observing how they applied to concrete bodies of fact. Here I felt it desirable, in presenting a general perspective on politics, to apply it, even if only in broad outline, to the sweep of history and the contemporary scene.

IV

Political development consists in the elaboration of new and more complex forms of politics and government as societies restructure themselves so as to absorb progressively the stock and flow of modern technology which is, essentially, uniform. The ‘stages of growth’ is addressed directly to the process whereby that absorption of common technologies occurs; and it poses automatically a good many of the issues thrown up for the political process to solve as that absorption proceeds, real income per capita rises, and government expands the proportion of the society’s resources it mobilizes and allocates to public purposes. This linkage does not imply that politics is economically determined. The view here is that economic, social, and political forces fully interact. Indeed, the initial impulse to economic modernization is generally seen to arise from basically non-economic motives; that is, a reaction to one form of external intrusion or another, real or feared, by the more powerful on the less powerful.

V

In applying the view of politics developed here, I had, of course, to be selective. In general, chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 were proportioned in such a way as to provide an historical perspective on the specific contemporary issues chosen for attention in chapters 6, 7, and 8. Because they relate to these later chapters, there is, for example, more attention to economic causes of political instability, multiple party systems, the causes of the outbreak of the First World War, and the doctrines of Mahan than in more conventional essays on the historical themes of the early chapters. I would hope that, in the end, the rationale for the emphasis given certain strands in history as opposed to others should become reasonably clear.

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In chapter 2 certain examples of pre-Newtonian political experience were chosen, many others put aside. The brief historical notes in chapters 3 and 4 cover only eight nations. They were selected because of their importance in modern history, the spread in time of their coming into take-off, and the range of their cultural and pre-industrial historical backgrounds. They are a device to recall and suggest certain historical sequences, not an effort to provide full historical documentation of the argument. Within the headings of constitutional change, growth and welfare, and security policy, many possibilities for illustration of the central propositions were set aside. My aim was to make clear the possibilities of this kind of analysis for those who found the general approach congenial. I could, evidently, not exhaust them in a book of this kind.

The sweep of American political history is presented in chapter 5 for three reasons: to illustrate the persistent elements of uniqueness as well as generality in the story of American politics; to show how the first experience of high mass-consumption flowed from the American experience; and to set the stage for the exploration of the politics of the search for quality in chapter 6.

I am conscious that each of the eight chapters, including those addressed to problems of the contemporary world, could easily have been elaborated into book length. They are each a compressed mapping of a complex terrain. The particular balance chosen between concept and empirical application is designed to make it easier for the reader to make his own assessment of the approach to politics developed here and its relevance to his own perspectives and concerns.

VI

In writing this book I had one thought in mind which should be made explicit.

As an economist I have been privileged over the past generation to share in helping create the remarkable consensus among economists concerning economic growth and economic development policy. There are, of course, debates among us, differences in emphasis and technique; but we have built a more or less common theoretical framework and a common vocabulary. This has permitted sustained international discourse on economic development policy; an exchange of good and bad national experiences; and a wide area of agreement on how to go about the business of economic growth. Economists and cabinet members can talk to each other with understanding and profit in almost every nation of the developing world. There is a powerful kind of freemasonry among those dedicated to the study and practice of economic growth.

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There is no equivalent dialogue – no common language, no agreement, even, on how to pose the questions – among those concerned with the theory and practice of political development.

Perhaps it can be brought about. For we know that there are ways in which men and nations can learn from each other in politics – and not merely from the Mother of Parliaments or the American Constitution or the French Revolution. From, say, the Japanese constitution of 1889 (which reflected much of Bismarck's Germany) to the Korean young officers' coup of 1961 (which was shaped, in part, by study of Atatürk), men have tried to learn and adapt from abroad in politics as in technology. But little effort has been made to take stock of our experiences of the past generation, and of history, in ways which might assist such adaptation of general political experiences to unique circumstances. For while every nation, like every individual, is unique, there are common problems and common types of solutions.

The 1970s ought to be the Decade of Political Development in something like the sense that the 1960s has been the Decade of Economic Development: something like the sense because political development is both a more difficult and more intimate experience than economic growth.

Despite the greater difficulty, three situations argue that the time has come to take a fresh look – backward, around us, and forward – at politics in general and democracy in particular.

First, the grave difficulties encountered in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America by those who have tried to make government by consent of the governed operate. We have seen in the postwar generation many earnest democratic efforts break down; and, where forms of democracy have taken hold, evidently they are precarious. Why? What lessons can be drawn from the many cases of failure and the fewer but significant cases of success? What accounts for the endemic political turbulence of the developing nations which yielded some sixty-seven irregular changes of government in the years 1961–8: Latin America, 16; Africa, 26; Near East and South Asia, 14; East Asia, 11?

Second, the searching political problems faced by democracy in richer nations of the world with deeply rooted habits and institutions of democracy. Why have we not learned to reconcile relatively full employment with price stability? What of the dangerous schisms in the United States, Canada, Belgium, Japan, and, indeed, the United Kingdom? Can they be managed within the democratic process? Clearly, high per capita income is no guarantee that democracy is secure: indeed, mass affluence itself is beginning to pose major problems for the democratic political order.

Third, what of the political future in the Soviet Union and in other nations gripped by Communist rule? Is there a road that can and will be found to

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more responsive forms of government, as levels of industrialization, education, and sophistication rise? Are these peoples doomed to the constraints of rule by a single party whose prime object of policy must be the perpetuation of its monopoly of power? Or is this what those thus ruled prefer to the strains and anxieties and strivings of democratic responsibility? The answers may effect the prospects for war and peace in the world.

VII

There is a further reason for stocktaking, especially with respect to democracy. In 1976 the United States of America will be two hundred years old. The United States was almost uniquely blessed – even in colonial times – with the possibility of experimenting with democratic political methods. The large meaning of the coming anniversary is that for two hundred years, despite many vicissitudes, including a bitter civil war, the democratic process has worked in continuity. It would seem a good occasion to take stock not merely of the American experience but the experience of others who have tried, with greater or lesser success, to make democracy an effective and stable form of government.

In the end, the glory of America has been not its relative material wealth but the sense of its transcendent political mission in reconciling liberty and order. However imperfectly fulfilled, that transcendent mission has been recognized, in the end, by Americans and by peoples in every part of the world. It would seem proper to carry forward that strand in the sentiment of the world community by examining critically and dispassionately and drawing lessons from two centuries of experiment with government of the people, by the people, for the people, in the United States and elsewhere.

If the 1970s is to be a Decade of Political Development, it will become so not because it is decreed by parliaments and congresses. The job will be done by the private effort of students, crystallizing what they have learned, finding their way into dialogue with the practitioners of politics. Such an enterprise will require many minds. In politics, for certain, each of us has hold of only a small piece of the elephant. Nevertheless, I would hope that this book might help stimulate such a convergence of reflection, stocktaking, and prescription in the decade ahead.

CHAPTER I

A WAY OF LOOKING AT POLITICS

Politics is here taken to be the exercise of power, within a defined territory, through government. This book examines the kind of power that goes with the concept of sovereignty – in particular, the power to deal with other sovereignties; to mobilize and expend resources for growth and welfare; and to dispense justice, on the one hand, enforce law and order, on the other.

Behind sovereignty is man himself whose nature is defined in three hypotheses which underlie the whole argument that follows.

THREE HYPOTHESES ABOUT MAN

Man: A Balancing, Not a Maximizing, Unit

The first hypothesis is that man is caught up in an effort to balance different and often conflicting impulses and aspirations, in the face of the environment he confronts. His actions represent a choice among the realistic alternatives he perceives to be available; and man must allocate his scarce time and energy, talent and physical resources among these perceived options. Or, in Freud's phrase: 'Happiness . . . is a problem of the economics of the individual's libido' – a problem man solves mainly below the level of full consciousness.¹

In dealing with consumers' demand, the economist has provided an elegant mechanism for reflecting and summing up the net choices unique human beings make as they set their priorities among the market alternatives before them, at given levels of real income. Only occasionally do economists probe beneath the process of choice by which the consumer equates relative marginal utility among his options.

In dealing with the entrepreneur the economist has provided an equally elegant formal mechanism for reflecting the producer's effort to maximize his profit in the face of given technologies, costs, and market possibilities. But even in the theory of production the simple, abstract market mechanism requires modification. As Keynes once said of investment: 'If human nature felt no temptation to take a chance, no satisfaction (profit apart) in constructing a factory, a railway, a mine or a farm, there might not be much investment merely as a result of cold calculation.'²

A way of looking at politics

In the sovereignty it accords to individual tastes and relative valuations, economics provides for the complexity of human motivations without exploring them deeply. In the market-place of politics one must be more explicit; for the exercise of political power through government touches the individual, in fact or potentially, at many more points – and more sensitive points. It is not merely his income that may be at stake in the exercise of political sovereignty, but his life and property, his freedom and his status in the society; the underlying ideas and concepts which give shape and meaning to his round of life. Man brings relatively much more of himself into politics than into narrowly economic relations; although, again, man does not come into the market-place as pure economic man.

I am led to begin with this hypothesis about the individual because a good deal of sociological analysis, rooted in the concept of human ‘roles’ in society, has found its way into political analysis. Role analysis is, for certain purposes, useful and clarifying; but the human being, thus disintegrated for analytical convenience, is sometimes never reassembled again. One is reminded of Harold Lasswell’s *bon mot*: ‘Political science without biography is a form of taxidermy.’³ What is at stake at this point is not biography, although the role in history of the unique individual is real and inescapable. What is at stake is a steady awareness that politics is ultimately shaped not by ‘the masses’ or ‘elites’ but by the interplay of complex but whole human beings, acting in different functional settings, but bringing to those particular settings the full, usually conflicting elements of their unique personalities.

The Tripartite Nature of Man

For the purposes of this exercise I am prepared to accept as a second hypothesis a powerful simplification of man as a balancing unit: the tradition that runs (or jumps) from Plato to Freud that man’s nature can usefully be conceived as made up of three elements. Plato defined them in terms of the ‘spirited’ side of man, ‘appetite’, and ‘reason’. Freud’s id, ego, and super-ego can, for these purposes, be regarded as roughly analogous.⁴

Plato moved directly and systematically from his three parts of the soul – from the state within us – to politics and government. He did so by presenting a series of marginal cases, in his famous sequence of timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny. Each is associated with the political triumph of one side of man’s nature: timocracy, the dominance of the soldier’s ‘spirit’, the others representing the successive dominance of various human ‘appetites’ – for money, freedom, and order. Plato’s argument has helped stimulate in our time analyses of ‘democratic’ and ‘totalitarian’ personality types.

I would look at Plato’s semi-satirical argument of Book 8 of *The Republic*

Three hypotheses about man

in a somewhat different way: as a sequence suggesting the relevance to politics of the economist's law of diminishing relative marginal utility. In Plato's politics man appears to place a low relative marginal utility on the value he enjoys in abundance and a high relative marginal utility on that which he judges to be scarce. Thus, surfeited with military adventure, political man turns to money-grubbing; bored with affluence, he turns to libertine democracy; in consequent disarray, he bows to a tyrannical restoration of order.

The 'insatiable' pursuit of one human object to the 'neglect of other things' yields these ideal types; and it yields also, through Plato's version of diminishing relative marginal utility, the sequence.⁵

One mechanism Plato evokes in moving through this sequence, in Book 8 of *The Republic*, is the reaction of the sons to the kind of constitutional system and environment of values built by the fathers.

This may or may not be a reading of Plato that would command universal agreement. The argument that follows, however, asserts in its own right that the political as well as private valuations of men are governed by the law of diminishing relative marginal utility. Men appear to try by, at best, a semi-rational process within them to bring their political life back towards a balance which is never quite achieved, the balance Plato thought could be created only by the philosopher king or by weaving together in power men of spirit and reason in ways that would balance the requirements of security and justice so that the people could prosper, pursuing their lesser appetites in moderation.⁶

At any particular moment, then, the citizen viewed collectively appears to want most of what he has least. In the face of invasion, man may seek security at the cost of welfare and even individual freedom. In the face of depression, he may pursue an improvement in welfare at the cost of other objectives, even national security. In the face of security and affluence, he may prize, above all, refinements in his degree of liberty. In the face of a decline in public order, he may elevate its reestablishment beyond any other dimension of the functions of government. These shifting relative evaluations are ultimately rooted in the balances struck by individuals within themselves. They appear to have affected the tides of politics and the performance of governments in both the short run and the long run. In the long run the changing priorities of successive generations have operated, as they formulated their objectives and raised their banners, often taking for granted the achievements of the previous generation, elevating objectives judged to have been relatively neglected or not successfully achieved in the past, or in the world around them.

Politics and the policies of government are seen here not, as in Plato, in

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terms of extreme marginal cases but in terms of ever-shifting intermediate balances determined by the problems thrown up to government for resolution, on the one hand, and, on the other, the evaluation of their environment made by those who could make their judgments felt under different constitutional systems.

Man: A Social Animal

The third basic assumption is that man is a social animal in the quite specific sense that ties to others are an inherent characteristic of his individuality, a proposition that runs from Aristotle to Freud. As Parkinson⁷ explains it:

Human children must be taught (and therefore controlled) for so long that their subordination becomes habitual. And this obedience to those older and more skilled may survive after the child has become an adult. In the social group a certain authority is thus vested in the older members.

The authority of age merges into the parental authority. Although primitive people often fail to recognize paternity, developing communities have all come to see in it a heightening of the authority of age in the special relationship between father and child. It is this relationship which provides us with our basic notions of authority and discipline. Nearly all our common terms of respect are derived from it. We have thus the words 'Sir' (Sire), 'Monsieur', 'Little Father' (in Russian), 'Father' as addressed to a priest or 'Holy Father' as addressed to the Pope. Psychologists break up the idea of respect into the three elements of wonder, affection and fear. The child thus feels for his father some wonder at the ability of an older person to do what the child cannot; some affection for an older person whose intention is at least to ensure the child's survival; and some fear of an older person who may punish the child by smacking its head.

Here – in life with father – are the first rough essentials of the abiding tasks of government; although Parkinson omits the instinct to revolt against, as well as to accept, the values of parents and elders.

But the family provides more, even, than security, welfare, and a balance between order and justice. It provides a sense of fraternity – of ties to others – which, paradoxically, appears essential for human beings to establish a sense of identity. A great deal of political history is shaped by the manner in which men extended their loyalties out beyond the family: to tribe and region; religious and class groupings; to nation and humanity. It is, in part, to one dimension or another of this sense of fraternity that political leadership seeks to appeal: either to soften the harshness of conflicting interests within national societies, or to solidify a more limited constituency, even at the cost of sharpening the lines of conflict.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty has built into it an ultimate sanction over the lives and fortunes of citizens living under it; and sovereignty asserts the right, historically and