
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITARIANISM

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Political science is a discipline in constant danger of fragmentation because of the centrifugal pulls of our subfields and the contradictions in our scientific and humanistic traditions. We are, however, periodically brought together by the need to respond to major developments that are reshaping the political universe. We are today confronted with a unifying challenge in the crisis of authoritarianism that is undermining the legitimacy of all types of authoritarian systems throughout the world, including the Marxist-Leninist regimes. The crisis will not necessarily produce democracies, but rather a variety of part-free, part-authoritarian systems which do not conform to our classical typologies. Although the crisis of authoritarianism stems from profound social, economic, and cultural trends, the outcome in each case will be decided by political responses. Political science, therefore, has the responsibility to lead intellectually other social sciences in analyzing the fundamental change in political life that involves the clash between individual political cultures and the world culture of modernization.

Convention holds that one task of the presidential address of a learned society should be to comment on the state of the discipline, to point where progress may lie, engage in some good-natured scolding for any collective failures, and if self-congratulations be in order, to walk with dignity the narrow line between boastfulness and modesty. My job has been greatly simplified by our ingenious practice of scheduling the awards ceremony right before, so that we need not rely on the president's musings for an evaluation of the discipline's standing; but are given empirical evidence as to exactly where it stands, where solid achievement is taking place. All that is left for the president to do is say, "Behold and marvel at the vitality and creativity of the profession of political science!" There seems to be no limit either to the number of worthy recipients or to the number of

famous names to designate the honors by, only a limit on funds for endowing them. Moreover, we also have a guaranteed audience for the presidential address and have scheduled the presidential reception (with free drinks) right afterwards, a not-so-subtle hint to be brief.

While applauding the accomplishments of those who have been appropriately honored, we cannot help noting that the extraordinary diversity of the numerous subfields that make up our discipline obscures where the core of our discipline may lie and even raises the question whether enough is still shared to provide a common identity for those who call themselves political scientists.¹ In addressing the International Political Science Association, Gabriel Almond (1988) used the vivid metaphor of "separate tables" to warn us that our cliquishness in methodology and ideology has become a major

obstacle to the advancement of knowledge.

In an earlier and more simple era, our collective baptism in political theory and thought gave us a shared experience. I suspect that in spite of current complaints about philosophical illiteracy we are probably still bonded together more than we suspect by that heritage. We then passed through the heady times when the dreams of the behavioral revolution held out the vision that by collectively pursuing the scientific method and adhering to the canons of quantification we would be able to generate cumulative knowledge just as chemists and physicists had long done. But then came the rude shock that although we would have to follow the same laborious procedures of collecting and analyzing data as the physical scientists do, our findings have appallingly short half-lives. The ambition to discover universal and enduring laws like Boyle's law has been frustrated by the realization that human behavior is too sensitive to the fluctuations of culture and the circumstances of history to yield permanently enduring findings. Instead of a need for replication for purposes of verification, our problem has been a need to replicate, because with passage of time social reality inevitably changes.

Thus, today, neither content nor method provides an "essential core" for the discipline as a whole. There are, of course, many reasons why the various subfields have gone off in their separate directions; but certainly part of the current confusion arises from the determination of political scientists to employ both scientific and humanistic approaches without a consensus as to where the emphasis should lie, in spite of the word *science* in our name. Some of the subfields—some of *us*—are convinced that true knowledge can be found only in the rigorous search for invariances, for the regularities we expect to find in nature. In this spirit we like to think of man and

society as having the lawlike qualities we associate with the physical universe. For other subfields—and others of us—knowledge is the search for meaning, for understanding and interpretation, that is, for what is human in the blending of mind and spirit. This is the understanding of phenomena that leads to humanistic learning and wisdom.²

As a part of our confusion over scientific and humanistic knowledge we tend regularly to vacillate between favoring the one or the other. Indeed, the subfields are usually at different phases in what seem to be steady pendulum swings between the universal and the particular, theory and description, parsimony and "thick description."

At one time or another most of the fields have experienced the exhilaration of being in possession of elegant formulations promising universalistic knowledge. But then came the process of amendment, elaboration, and qualification to ever-greater complexity. In the end, the only alternative seems to be to seek understanding through in-depth analysis of particular cases; for, as the novelists say, "God is in the details."

In time, however, "thick description" becomes tedious and the mind craves the power and elegance of generalizable theories. Clear logical theories then have their attractions for a while until they lose their charm for being too simplistic and mechanical. It is said that Niels Bohr never trusted a purely formal or mathematical argument, "No, no," he would say. "You are not thinking; you are just being logical" (Margolis 1987, 1).³

The Crisis of Authoritarianism and a New "Great Transformation"

Fortunately, however, our tendency toward fragmentation is countered by another characteristic of the discipline, namely, our sensitivity to problems and

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developments in the real world of public affairs. Every now and then we are pulled back from going our separate ways and our collective mind becomes concentrated by major current events, for example, by the emergence of the new states after World War II, the beginning of the Cold War, the turmoil of the inner cities, the problems of the governability of the advanced industrial societies, and the like. I believe that political science is today faced with just such a new challenge that is profound enough to unite the discipline because it raises problems that call for contributions from nearly all our sub-fields. This new challenge is that of analyzing and explaining the crisis of authoritarianism that during the last decade has been sweeping the world, bringing into question both the legitimacy and the competence of all manner of authoritarian systems. The crisis has produced a variety of responses. In some cases there have been decisive transitions from autocratic rule toward democracy. In other cases the legacy of failure of the autocrats leaves the new regimes with almost insurmountable problems, as with the debt burdens and the hyperinflation of several Latin American countries. In still other cases the authoritarian regimes themselves seek to initiate reforms and liberalize practices. Finally—as tragically in China—determined hardliners seek to overcome the crisis by increased repression and the adoption of a siege mentality.

Indeed, the crisis of authoritarianism reached dramatic heights in the Beijing Spring of 1989 when China shook the world, first with the heartwarming spectacle of the students demonstrating for democracy in Tiananmen Square and then with the horrors of an autocratic regime flaunting its power by massacring its citizens and hypocritically pretending that the nonviolent demonstrators were “thugs” and “hooligans” and that the casualties were mainly the heavily armed soldiers. Concurrently in the Soviet

Union the unthinkable was happening. In a one-party state the Party’s candidates, even when running unopposed, were defeated in elections to the new Congress of the People’s Deputies; and the winners dared attack the KGB as an “evil” service that was a “threat to democracy.” The deputies to the new Supreme Soviet stopped being rubber stamps, boldly rejected the candidacy of a deputy premier, and refused to confirm three ministers nominated by the Party. And as though to prove that wonders never end, in the last week of August 1989 a non-communist government replaced the communist dictatorship in socialist Poland; and we now await the historically profound consequences.

These are astonishing events, but behind them are historic forces at work today causing acute crises for all types of authoritarian regimes. The stigma of failure marks every form of tyranny, whether of the one-man or the one-party variety. As a result, profound changes have occurred in once-static authoritarian regimes, from those of generals and old-fashioned autocrats to the most advanced of the Marxist-Leninist systems. Dictatorial rule has failed to deliver on its promises of purposeful efficiency in all the regions of the world, from Southern Europe to Latin America, from Eastern Europe to China, from the Philippines to South Korea and Taiwan, and most significant of all, perhaps, in the Soviet Union, the system that was once the archetype of totalitarianism.⁴

We are witnessing a “great transformation” that is probably more profound than the one Karl Polanyi (1944) described with that phrase. Polanyi wrote of the “great transformation” that came with the collapse of nineteenth-century European civilization and the emergence of a world capitalistic system based on the idea of a self-regulating world market that, in his judgment, was destined to erode the traditional bonds of European

society. Are we not possibly today at another great turning point in history when, contrary to Polanyi's predictions, transnational forces involving a dynamic world economy and revolutions in technology and information are compelling authoritarian governments to open up their economies and relax their political controls?

At present what seems to be at work is a complex interaction between a much more dynamic, but not yet clearly institutionalized, international system and the individual nation-states that we have traditionally viewed as relatively autonomous. Sovereignty still prevails in some domains, but a host of international or transnational forces are simultaneously at work, affecting how people act in what were once considered to be domestic affairs, and above all, impinging on the priorities of government. All governments are put under pressure by the increasingly significant flows of international trade, finance, and communications; by the effects of contemporary science and technology; and by all the other elements that make up what we imprecisely call modernization. But the authoritarian regimes are the most vulnerable and are therefore being seriously undermined.

It is true that in some respects we live in a more nation-bound, less internationalized world than did the Europeans of the nineteenth century. It is, for example, astonishing that it was not considered odd for the tsarist government to raise the funds for fighting the Crimean War by floating bonds on the London market, the same market that the British government was using to cover its own expenses in the same war. Possibly if the Vietnam War had gone on longer and the polarization had become greater, critics of the war might have tried to sell bonds for Hanoi on the New York market. But in the case of the Crimean War it was done without rancor or passion, simply because that

was the proper way to do such things.

Intellectually, however, we have not advanced far in integrating the analysis of domestic developments with the transnational processes that are shaping our new world. In reporting on an attempt of the Social Science Research Council to confront this problem of foreign area studies and comparative and transnational research, Frederic Wakeman observes that "periods of the late 19th century or the 1950s and 1960s, in which we have had clear conceptualizations of what the social sciences ought to be doing, have been periods in which the world itself appeared to be much clearer, at least in terms of architechtonic world structures. As these structures lose their clarity, so do the categories of social science lose their limpidity and rigor. We are in a period today, both conceptually and structurally, that is characterized by imprecision and amorphousness" (1988, 87).

Part of our difficulties stems from forgetting Tocqueville's prescient insights about political modernization. Viewing the U.S. political scene, he declared that the inexorable forces of history were on the side of democracy and that rule from above would inevitably give way to the sovereignty of the people. The nineteenth century gave promise to Tocqueville's prophecy, as constitutional republics seemed to be the wave of the future; and political science responded with buoyant optimism as scholars prophesied Progress and Enlightenment. But with the twentieth century and its violent sequences of wars, revolutions, and repressions, Tocqueville's prophecy was brought into doubt as the future increasingly seemed to lie in the choice between authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Both fascism and Marxism-Leninism hypocritically mocked Tocqueville by pretending to be acting in the name of the "people" and the very label *people's republic* became the code word for repression. The conventional wisdom of the 1950s and 1960s held that

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communist governments and authoritarian rulers had certain advantages over democracies in speeding economic development. Indeed, as late as the early 1970s it seemed likely that any crisis of an authoritarian regime would probably open the way to a harsher and more totalitarian system. The 1973 coup against the enfeebled strong man Haile Selassie brought the radicalized Marxist Derg; Samosa's dictatorship was replaced by the Marxist Sandinista revolution just as Batista was followed by Castro; and the coups in Afghanistan brought Soviet-backed rule.

However, by the end of the decade history seemed to be teaching a new lesson. The presumed advantages of totalitarian practices for economic development have apparently evaporated. Now the spreading belief is that progress depends upon liberalization and deregulation. A benchmark for charting this historical trend was 1975, which saw the Portuguese revolution, the death of Franco in Spain, and the fall of the colonels in Greece—developments that brought democracy to all of Western Europe. As scholars analyzed these developments, along with the military's return to the barracks in much of Latin America, we were early on presented with theories about the processes of transition from authoritarian rule, challenging the earlier assertions that the international capitalist system was a principal cause of authoritarianism in the Third World.

The Vindication of Modernization Theory

There are, of course, multiple forces at work shaping the current "great transformation." The key factors were all identified as critical variables by the early modernization and political development theorists. Where we went wrong in the 1950s and 1960s was in grossly underesti-

imating the magnitude these factors of change would acquire in the decades ahead and the extent to which they would become part of closely knit international systems. Modernization theory predicted that such developments as economic growth, the spread of science and technology, the acceleration and spread of communications, and the establishment of educational systems would all contribute to political change. We cannot here document all the ways these factors have brought about the current crisis of authoritarianism, but we can note briefly the extent to which we failed initially to appreciate the orders of magnitude they would reach.

For example, the exponential growth of the world economy in the last decades greatly exceeded the predictions about world trade implicit in both neoclassical and Marxist theories. International trade has grown at a compounded rate of 13% per year over the last 25 years, whereas before it never grew at more than 3%. Even more impressively, international banking transactions have compounded at an annual rate of almost 28% per year; and during that period the Eurocurrency market alone mushroomed from seven billion to 3 trillion dollars.

To the astonishment of the world—especially ideological Marxists—the leaders of the "socialist" countries have swallowed their words of condemnation about the once abominable "capitalist-imperialists" and have sought to outdo each other in seducing their one-time foes into joint ventures and even direct investments. In the exuberance that followed Deng Xiaoping's "opening" to the outside world, the United States alone in one decade has put more capital into China than the total of all the European, U.S., and Japanese investments in the 1930s, when China considered itself a victim of Western imperialism.⁵ Of course, it is true that historically the scale of all economies was smaller; but this is not a telling

objection because before World War II foreign trade and investments affected barely 2% of China's GNP, whereas just before the Tiananmen Massacre over 27% of China's GNP was so traceable.

The revolution in science and technology has pushed these dramatic changes in the world economy. It has estimated that the generation since World War II has "added seven times as much to the world's producing power as was added during all the previous millennia of *homo sapiens* existence" (Norman Macrae, "The Next Age of Man," *Economist*, 24 December 1988, 20). With scientific knowledge more than doubling in each of the last four decades the pace of technological change has accelerated at a comparable rate. Although it is true that technology has no ideology, this growth of knowledge has had a profound impact on the character of education, which in turn has brought new generations of technocratically skilled specialists into all governments, including the authoritarian ones. These are people who see governing as technical problem solving. Thirty years ago the governing elite in Taiwan had no Ph.D.s and more hadn't completed high school than had graduated college, whereas now there are more Ph.D.s than people with only a high school education. Forty-five percent of the current Thirteenth Central Committee of the Kuomintang have postgraduate degrees, and only 2% have merely a high school education or below (Li and White 1988.) The drama of the spring of 1989 in Beijing was in part fueled by the frustrations of a generation of better-educated students confronting an elite dominated by aged leaders with little formal education beyond elementary school.

The revolution in communications has gone far beyond the impact of radio, which Daniel Lerner (1958) saw as a key instrument for modernization. The invention of microchips and satellites has meant not only that authoritarian rulers find it

harder and harder to isolate their countries from the intellectual and cultural trends sweeping the world but that their own actions are instantly played back to them and to their people. Thus, Ferdinand Marcos made his politically fatal mistake of promising an election while on U.S. television. The Chinese leaders were initially inhibited from taking instant action against the demonstrating students in Tiananmen Square because of the worldwide television coverage of Gorbachev's visit to Beijing. The Chinese students demonstrating for democracy were receiving each day faxed copies of the editorials and news reports of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* only minutes after they reached the streets of U.S. cities. Indeed, the miracle of satellite television made the dream of Tiananmen Square a superspectacle that enthralled and then dismayed a worldwide public for nearly two months and made the Deng-Li clique's attempt at the Big Lie so obscene, so impossible to get away with.

In the last decades the exponential growth in all of the variables that energize the modernization process has stimulated a lot of imaginative speculation. Some have sought to encapsulate what has been taking place by theorizing about a knowledge, or information, revolution. The study of advanced industrial societies has been pushed to the point of theories about postindustrial societies. More specifically, there has been speculation about the "end of communism." Clearly, the long historical trend that favored the strengthening of centralized state power has seemingly come to an end, and the trend now favors the pluralism of decentralized authority. The dramatic increase in the availability and the importance of information, made possible by the ability of computers to store huge quantities of information and retrieve it almost instantaneously, has changed first the nature of economic ac-

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tivities and secondly governmental processes. The revolution initially took place, of course, in open societies; and it quickly accelerated the gap in the pace of modernization between open and closed societies. As a consequence, the costs of repression for authoritarian rulers rose sharply, causing most of them to seek at least half-way measures of liberalization. Indeed, the information revolution calls for decentralization and a diffusion of power throughout the society incompatibly with centralized authoritarian rule, thereby sharpening the crisis of authority.

Let us repeat that what is happening does not mean that we have seen the end of authoritarianism or of Marxism-Leninism. Of course, there will be new dictatorships, for the instincts that produce tyrannies will not easily disappear from the human spirit. And the peculiar appeal of Marxism-Leninism, which was able to overcome the Moscow show trials, the Gulag, and the worst famine in human history caused by Mao's Great Leap Forward, will no doubt continue to attract some faithful followers. The repression in China after Tiananmen provides sad warnings that during periods of surface liberalization the secret police and the thought control apparatus can still remain in place, quietly going about their work. There is no guarantee that democratic yearnings will produce true democracies in the newly industrializing countries that have taken the first steps away from authoritarian rule. Nor is it certain that market forces will win out over the bureaucracies that are well entrenched in centrally planned, command economies. On the contrary, there are good grounds for questioning whether the Chinese economic "reforms" will work and for skepticism about whether *perestroika* will "succeed."

But what is different is that the forces of modernization have made it harder for political willpower to mobilize and dominate a society. Indeed, at hand is the

end of the time when populations can be easily convinced that sheer political willpower—be it the will of the leader, the party, or the state—is enough to transform societies. Instead, there is a growing awareness that authoritarian rule, whether Leninist or not, can be a liability in achieving progress. The idea that centralized authority enhances the state's ability to shape society has been dealt a devastating blow by the record of performance of the states that have tried to carry the idea to the extreme.

Aside from the potency of coercion, authoritarianism always needs to exploit the legitimacy inherent in proper hierarchical human relationships, that is, the instinctive understanding that inferiors can expect benefits from yielding to the will of benevolent superiors. The modernization process inevitably changes the character of this relationship between subjects and rulers so that the benefits increasingly seem smaller and the costs of forgoing freedom greater. The emergence of a middle class and the growth of a technically educated population create new centers of power, leading to drastically altered attitudes about the nature of authority.

It is unlikely, for example, that South Korea and Taiwan could have put off political reform indefinitely, given their rates of development. South Korea, a war-torn, shattered society only thirty years ago, now has a population of which 61% say that they belong to the middle class. Newspaper readership in both Korea and Taiwan is now on a par with that in the United States, and the sophistication of that readership is such that in both countries the press has had to become more free. In the Soviet Union, behind the strange mixture of failures and pretensions of the post-Khrushchev years of stagnation, profound social changes have in fact taken place. The failures are of course manifest: a dilapidated infrastructure, run-down housing, shortages of

consumer goods, pathetic levels of agricultural production, endless standing in line to buy anything worth buying, declining life expectancies, a budget deficit that in proportion to GNP is three times that of the United States—in short, a Third World country with a nuclear arsenal and men floating in space.

Yet during this era of failures, Soviet society made the great transition from being a predominantly rural people to an overwhelmingly urbanized country. At the end of World War II, half of the Russian people were peasants. Now only 12.5% are peasants; and judging from Gorbachev's continuing problems with agriculture, this residual class of peasants would seem to be disproportionately made up of dullards, people with little ambition and few skills. The levels of education in the Soviet Union have dramatically increased. In 1959, 91.3% of the workers and 98.2% of the *kolkhoz* peasants had only an elementary school education. By 1984 only 18.5% of all manual workers had not gone beyond elementary school (Lewin 1988, 47). Even more significant has been the growth of what the Soviets call their "intelligentsia" or "specialists." In 1941 these technically trained people numbered only 2.4 million. By 1960 they had grown to 8 million, and now they total 31.5 million, constituting some 40% of the urban population. Seweryn Bialer has collected figures to show the Soviet Union to be "a society with a professional class that is, numerically, the largest in the world" (Bialer 1988, 407). Yet there were great deficiencies in the training of technocrats, in that the Soviets failed to produce the full range of modern economists, sociologists, and political scientists who might now provide professional guidance on how to bring life to their stalled economy and their faltering political system.⁶

These and other figures that I could cite point clearly to a basic problem Gorbachev faces with his *perestroika* and

glasnost efforts. A significant middle class has emerged, the members of which demand greater intellectual and cultural freedoms and are contemptuous of the poorly educated bureaucrats and party apparatchiks, that is, most of the *nomenklatura*. But there are also vast numbers of people who don't want to shake things up for fear of losing what they have just gained. These cautious people, combined with the undereducated *praktiki* of an older generation, constitute major obstacles to truly radical economic reforms. At the same time the liberalizing of politics has made people ever more sensitive to their feelings of group identity, hence the explosion of the nationalities problem.

The situation in China is of course quite different. The disaster of Mao's rule and his hostility toward formal education left that country with an appalling shortage of technically trained people. Indeed, the Cultural Revolution resulted in the loss of an entire generation. The universal acknowledgement that things had gone wrong for much too long produced an erosion of legitimacy that made Deng Xiaoping's task of initiating reforms politically easier than Gorbachev's. The Maoist system had undeniably been a failure. After decades of hardship and unmatched sacrifices that had produced only propagandistic glory, China was left with a per capita income that put it among the twenty lowest countries in the world—about equal to Somalia and Tanzania. Therefore, desperate efforts would have to be made to change the economy. The Chinese population was still some 80% rural, and the peasants had not lost the art of skillful farming; so China's initial agricultural reforms came with ease. However, with the shortages of technically trained people and the gross neglect of the infrastructure, China's urban and industrial reforms turned out to be more difficult. By 1988 the economy began to falter, price reform stalled, the leadership

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seemed adrift, inflation took over, corruption abounded, and when professors realized that they were earning less than waitresses and cab drivers, the students knew that the country was in trouble. Worse still, the leadership seemed to be of two minds about the value of modern skills. While sending tens of thousands of students abroad, it also set wage rates in which the ratio between manual and technically skilled labor was less favorable for the latter than in the Mao years. And since Tiananmen it has begun punishing students in ways that can only hurt the country's future development.

The turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent crisis of legitimacy, however, also reinforced within the leadership the deep fears of anarchy and disorder that have been central features of the traditional Chinese political culture. Consequently Deng Xiaoping and his appointed heirs began moving in two contradictory directions. While willing to be bold and experimental in carrying out economic reforms, the "ten years of disaster" made them extremely hesitant about liberalizing the political system. By the mid-1980s Deng Xiaoping's failure to provide a political vision for China produced an increasingly acute crisis of legitimacy that was for a time papered over by a spirit of crass materialism and shameless corruption. As the economy deteriorated and the leadership seemed confused and divided, China became a tinderbox that was easily exploded by the match lit by the student demonstrations of April and May 1989. Deng's false idea that political stagnation could provide a healthy environment for economic growth produced disillusionment and frustration for all concerned—students, citizens, and the rulers themselves.⁷ Yet although societal changes in China have not gone far enough to prevent serious backsliding, they have advanced far enough to compel the regime to proclaim its continuing commitment to the "reforms" and its "open door" economic policies.

The Imperatives of Technology Clash with the Forces of Politics

We cannot here sort out all the differences and similarities in the various crises of authoritarianism, nor can we determine the prospects of success for the efforts at reform, especially among the Marxist-Leninist systems: "It took kings a long time to travel from divine right to constitutional monarchy. How long will it take the twentieth century's claimant to kingly power, the communist movement?" ("Just a Party among Others? When Is a Communist Party Not Communist?" *Economist*, 18–24 March 1989, 46). The process is difficult because in all the crises in authoritarianism there is a fundamental clash between the culture of modernization (what I have called the world culture) and the various national political cultures. This is always a psychologically disturbing clash because it brings into confrontation universal standards and parochial values. The former are essential for economic performance and effectiveness, and the latter are critical for creating national loyalties and distinctive national political styles. Arrayed on one side are the technocratic considerations imposed by the combined imperatives of economics, technology, and the principles of efficiency associated with rational public policy. Confronting these impersonal forces there stands the basic need of every polity for a sense of self-identity, for the dignity that comes from a fundamental belief in the collective uniqueness of the national entity and its spirit of community.

This clash has produced a particularly acute crisis of faith in the Marxist-Leninist systems precisely because their ideology long informed the faithful that there could be no such contradiction for them. They were promised that through their identification with "scientific Marxism" they had been given a political identity that was universalistic and at the forefront of human progress. The parochialism of

Marxism has been its claim to a universal theory of history.⁸ National cultures have, however, proved to be too strong, as seen in the intractable ethnic problems of the Soviet Union, the current Chinese goal of "building socialism with *Chinese characteristics*," and the triumph of Polish nationalism.

The advances of modernization and the spread of the world culture inexorably place constraints on the domain of politics. Before events made it unmistakably clear that progress depends heavily on the knowledge of technocrats, it was possible for leaders in the Third World to proceed as though the thrill of politics would be enough to conquer all obstacles to national desires. Mao Zedong, with his faith in the efficacy of political willpower, accepted Rosa Luxemburg's view that "revolution is magnificent, all else is rubbish." Kwame Nkrumah had his slogan, "Gain ye first the kingdom of politics and all else will follow." Both were prophets of modernization; but both were false prophets, for the truth is that whereas modernization can expand the potential for human growth, it also places limits on the free play of ideology. In country after country ideological politics has had to yield to pragmatic decision making.

We must not, however, exaggerate the constraining powers of economics and technology. The political world is the world of power, and at times all else must yield to the limitations imposed by the imperatives of political feasibility. The rationality of economics and engineering must give way to the realities of what is politically possible and what is politically unacceptable. In every polity there are generally a host of problems that would seem, from a technical point of view, to be readily solvable but that cannot be effectively dealt with because of political considerations. Moreover, the very processes of institutionalization associated with political development give increasing precedence to political considerations.

All of this means that the process of modernization must take place in the context of constant battling between two nearly sovereign forces—the impersonal and universalistic requirements of the world culture and the particularistic passions of politics and of group identity. The outcome of this clash (and hence the outcome of any particular crisis of authoritarianism) will depend on the character of the political culture, and the extent to which it either moderates and accommodates the conflict or exacerbates it. All cultures are to some degree protective of the integrity of their indigenous uniqueness. Some, however, are hypersensitive about perceived threats of foreign ideas and practices while others are more adaptable. The differences are critical in determining the character of the nationalism that inevitably accompanies political development. Indeed, the basic contradiction of political development is that it requires not only the opening of doors to outside influences but also the protection of nativist sentiments of national identity. It is the mark of most late-developing countries that their cultures have great difficulty in managing this contradiction.

U.S. citizens generally find it hard to appreciate the psychological reactions that this clash between the world culture and the national culture can produce in other societies because one feature of "American exceptionalism" is that historically, we were spared this tension because the progressive movement that sought political modernization came as a nativist development and was not seen as a foreign or cosmopolitan influence.

The Search for Theories to Guide and Evaluate Transitions toward Politics

I am arguing that our understanding of the likely outcome of the various crises of

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authoritarianism calls for a breakthrough in theory building so that we can better understand the problems of the interrelationship of the universal world culture and the particularistic national cultures. This challenge lies at the core of the problem of the relationship between theory and description, between the universal and the particular, a troublesome problem for our discipline. Our theory building needs to be directed to finding a basis for comparative analysis that can integrate the descriptions of particular cultures better with the generalized concepts necessary for analysis. We need to realize a closer fit between the vividness of the concrete and the powers of the human imagination that can lead to explanatory theory.⁹

As a first step in such theory building we need finer shades of typologies of political systems between the classical polar opposites of authoritarian and democratic. In the wake of the crisis of authoritarianism we can expect a wide variety of systems that will become part authoritarian and part free and that will fall far short of any reasonable definitions of democracy. The richer typologies should identify types of systems that represent varying states of equilibrium along the continuum from authoritarian to democratic. In some of the cases democratic pretensions will mask latent authoritarian practices, in others there may be genuine tutelage toward democracy. In still other cases efforts at repression will seek to hide a drift toward collapse and conditions of near anarchy. The desperate efforts of both Gorbachev and Deng to cope with their respective crises of authoritarianism makes urgent the need to identify both when reforms have indeed become irreversible and what the sticking points in any downward spirals toward collapse may be.

Although the two polar authoritarian and democratic extremes probably have a higher potential for stable equilibrium

than any of the stages in between, we still, in order to evaluate the prospects of post-authoritarian systems, need to learn more about conditions that can produce relatively lasting equilibrium in a society that is part free and part authoritarian. Through the works of Eric Fromm and Hannah Arendt, among others, we know something about the distinctive human or cultural basis of totalitarianism; and through the works of Almond and Verba, among others, we also know something about the civic culture basic to stable democracy. Now we need to know more about the cultural bases for maintaining types of systems that lie between these two extremes.

Beyond this general challenge for comparative analysis there is a special problem in the comparative study of post-authoritarian systems, which is the need to understand the psychodynamics of the widespread fear associated with political repression and the likely reactions to the lifting of terror. Montesquieu long ago taught us that fear was the key sentiment basic to tyrannies; and while we now, sadly, have abundant experiences with state-induced fear, we are very short of knowledge about the aftereffects of reigns of terror. In some cultures the receding of fear of state power seems to ignite hope, which in turn can open the floodgates to enthusiasm and activism. The resulting state of public mind is one that liberalizing authorities may welcome and exploit, as in Taiwan and Korea, or find threatening, as in China with the Tiananmen incident, when hope and enthusiasm gave way to disillusionment and anger and when, in the words of the Chinese poet Li Shizheng, "we hear again the urgent knocking of red terror" (Li 1989).

In other cultures fear may be followed by cynicism, as for example among many Russian intellectuals of today. At the core of cynicism lies passivity; thus, shockingly bitter criticism may abound without any rebellious actions. As Jeffrey Gold-

farb points out in *Beyond Glastnost: The Post-Totalitarian Mind* (1989) and Miklos Haraszti brilliantly documents in *The Velvet Prison* (1987), cynicism can be manipulated so that the goals of a discredited totalitarianism can be served by seemingly antitotalitarian actions. Intellectuals in particular may be allowed enough freedom that they rejoice over the change, and outside observers can be astonished as they also failed to reflect on how far conditions still are from real freedom. Deng Xiaoping's rule was such a great improvement over that of Mao Zedong that people forgot until Tiananmen that China was still far from an open society.

We need to be careful that extolling honesty in the United States—the value that Montesquieu said was the key to democratic government—does not blind us to the fact that cynicism when combined with institutionalized hypocrisy has historically served as a remarkably durable basis for political legitimacy. Hence it is quite likely that many cultures, such as some in Latin America and possibly the Philippines and even India and the Soviet Union, will be able to combine high levels of cynicism with unexpected degrees of political stability.

A special problem in all postauthoritarian developments is the relationship between the political and the economic systems. It is in the nature of all authoritarian systems to use political power to determine who is to benefit and who is to lose out economically. Hence, in all serious reforms associated with the crisis of authoritarianism there must be new winners and new losers. Therefore, economic decisions will be governed by political considerations. Given the central importance of politics in such situations, we should not as political scientists assume that the economists can lead the way in forecasting the prospects of reform. It is understandable that economists have not developed theories about

the optimum policies to follow in seeking to transform a centrally planned economy into a market-oriented one because the issues involved are essentially political ones.¹⁰

The dominance of the political over the economic can be seen in what the World Bank has identified as "transfer economies," which are different from either market or command economies. These are economies in which the state transfers substantial resources—extracted from the society—by means of extensive subsidies that favor some elements of society at the expense of others but do not add to productivity or contribute to building up the infrastructure. The result is inadequate investment rates, deteriorating infrastructures, and widespread inflation (as in the USSR and China) if not hyperinflation (as in many of the newly democratic states in Latin America).¹¹

Beyond the initial task of establishing appropriate typologies of postauthoritarian regimes, the next step should be the theoretical analysis of the conditions that will bring about transitions from one state of equilibrium to another. This will require reducing the customary gap between our generalized analysis of political change on the one hand and our understanding of the particular, and apparently unique, developments in individual countries on the other. Theory must be sensitive to cultural nuances, while country and regional specialists need to explain in more generalized terms the distinctive features of their specific cases. In terms of Giovanni Sartori's three levels of abstraction, we should stress the high level of universal conceptualization less and seek to generate theories at the medium level of taxonomies and at the low level of configurative conceptualization (Sartori 1970).

If we successfully move in such directions, which would be in line with Lasswell's call for configurative analysis, healthy advances on two fronts should follow. First, we might expect greater

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sophistication in the art of describing particular cases, so that there will be fewer attempts to overwhelm with details and more effort given to fitting the details to theoretical concepts of causality. Second, our theory building would have stronger empirical foundations and seem less artificial to those with detailed knowledge of the concrete situations in the particular countries.

In searching for the most promising variables for explaining dynamic change we probably could do no better than to start with Robert Dahl's theory of polyarchy, more particularly his seven sets of conditions that are most and least favorable to polyarchy (Dahl 1979). These can be combined with the elements of the dynamic model of the processes of change that Dankwart Rustow proposed in one of the earliest discussions of transitions to democracy (Rustow 1970). Additional factors that would have to be included are of course the basic political cultures and historical traditions. There are, for example, significant differences in the reaction to the authoritarian crisis between countries that had earlier experiences with democratic institutions and those knowing only authoritarian rule.

The Shock of Failure and the Importance of Politics

I cannot attempt here to go beyond these preliminary remarks about a general theory for evaluating the transition from authoritarianism, but I do want to note briefly an exceptionally important consideration that might be easily overlooked. This is the question of the intensity with which both the leaders and the general population have experienced a psychological shock in recognizing the failure of authoritarianism. This shock of failure is critical in weakening the legitimacy of authoritarian elites and in raising the consciousness of the public enough to cause

the people to reflect on their country's troubles.¹²

The impact of failure on authoritarian regimes is important for two other reasons. First, the awareness of failure should teach the lesson that leaders are fallible and not omnipotent. Leaders need to know that it is human to err. They also need to learn that out of this first lesson comes a second, namely, that it is thinkable to accept the risks of allowing power to be transferred to others who can then have their turn at being fallible. In the communist world, in varying degrees, the first lesson seems to be sinking in. Faith in the Party's monopoly of truth has faded, but the desire to monopolize power has not. Belief in a Lenin-given right to rule lingers on.

To the degree that leaders and their publics absorb these two lessons of failure it is possible for the society to realize true politics. As Bernard Crick has said, "politics is a great and civilizing human activity" (Crick 1972, 15). By *politics* I mean the activity about which Crick has written so eloquently, an activity that all political scientists should, I believe, instinctively appreciate. It is an activity through which contending interests are conciliated, differences are expressed and reconsidered, the collective welfare ensured, and the survival of the whole community protected (Crick 1972, 22). Politics allows for divisions but it also unites collectivities. In authoritarian systems there is only a limited form of politics, for power struggles among factions in one-party regimes and disagreements among soldiers or bureaucrats are not the same as real politics, which must operate in the context of a civic culture. The movement toward politics calls for competition in adversarial relationships among parties who accept the idea that no one has a monopoly on absolute truth and that there can be no single, correct answer to public policy issues.

After years of authoritarianism it may

be hard for people to accept the uncertainties of a society organized around politics. Moreover, some political cultures are built upon traditional ideals that are disdainful of the spirit of competition and compromise basic to real politics. In some cases it is a problem of exaggerated notions of honor, dignity, and status gradations (as with some Latin cultures); in others it is an elitism based on presumptions of virtue and self-righteousness (as with the former Confucian cultures). In all cases the cultural concepts become obstacles for the development of that ethic of responsibility that Max Weber identified as the key to "politics as a vocation."

Yet with modernization and the inevitable growth in the complexities of societies, the only hope for the long-run stability of any society is learning how to manage the disorderliness of politics. In the Soviet Union we can now see the emergence of politics with the increasing manifestation of actual division of powers between the legislative and the executive, as well as the gradual formation of latent parties among the delegates to the Supreme Soviet.

By making the development of politics the critical test for evaluating transitional systems we can avoid the charge of ethnocentricism that might be raised if we used as the standard the narrow concept of Western democracy. Politics stresses process and cultural orientations, and it is compatible with the values basic to democracy; but it does not rely upon any particular institutions or practices, as is the case with democracy.

Political scientists seeking to learn about the authoritarian crisis need to go beyond the analysis of structures and processes and explore the human meaning of politics. To get at the psychology or personality characteristics necessary for carrying out politics we need to go beyond delineating "political man" as the exceptional power seeker and try to

unearth the personal qualities essential for the civilized activity that is true politics. Politics calls for people who relish the challenge of adversarial relations but who can also control their aggression and manifest mutual respect.

In an odd way, the moral of politics for countries experiencing the crisis of authoritarianism is a moral that is also applicable to us as political scientists with our problem of the relations among the subfields. Thus, in our diversity we should not ignore one another but should engage each other in a competitive spirit, recognizing that we could be wrong but always ready to push to higher levels the potentials of our subspecializations. Diversity based only on toleration will not produce progress. What is needed is engaged diversity and intense interaction if we are to give new vitality and a greater sense of direction and purpose to political science. Events in the world have presented us with a great challenge and we are the discipline with a responsibility to enlighten the world about the current crisis of authoritarianism.

Notes

This essay is the presidential address presented on 2 September 1989 at the 85th annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Atlanta.

1. Farr (1988), in reviewing Finifter 1983 and Weisberg 1986, documents the problems of pluralism and collective identity of political science by an extensive review of the literature, including the APSA presidential addresses of Woodrow Wilson in 1911, Charles Merriam in 1921, Charles Beard in 1927, Harold Lasswell in 1956, David Truman in 1965, David Easton in 1969, Emmette Redford in 1961, Heinz Eulau in 1973, Leon Epstein in 1980, and Charles Lindblom in 1982, and such other reports on the discipline as Somit and Tanenhaus 1967, Crick 1959, Ricci 1984, and Seideman and Harpham 1985.

2. As a discipline, political science often seems to want to have its cake and eat it too, in the sense of wanting to be simultaneously both scientific and humanistic. In our scientific mode we like to pretend that we are engaged in producing cumulative knowledge. Thus, we act as though the latest "paradigm" is also the best. But of course this is not true, especially with respect to humanistic knowledge—for as

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Robert Lowell once observed, "The arts do not progress but move along by surges and sags" (Cohen 1989, 3). The practice of claiming that the latest fashion has demolished all that has gone before constitutes not only a bizarre misreading of the differences between scientific and humanistic knowledge but also a violation of the civilities of science. With embarrassing frequency scholars will seek to advertise the importance of what they call their new "paradigm" by giving the back of the hand to all previous efforts, declaring them to be outmoded or not useful." Valerie Bunce (1981, xii, quoted in Harding 1988) is not far off the mark in observing that "while physicists stand on each other's shoulders, political scientists stand on each other's faces." In physics any attentive freshman will learn more about the nature of the atom than did Maxwell, Milliken, Tompson—whose theories have all been proven flawed; but these pioneers are still revered immortals in physics (Morris 1987).

Although the signs are ambiguous, there are hints, from some of the subfields, of growing dissatisfaction in both the scientific and the humanistic wings of the discipline with the sharp distinction that Kant helped to establish in formulating the mind-matter dichotomy. Daniel Bell (1981) has raised the possibility that all of the social sciences may be reaching a point of exhaustion in our separate searches for scientific invariances and for humanistic interpretations and that progress will call for a new sense of unity. This would be the unity of the learned, the bond that should hold the academy together. But unfortunately, our diversity of subfields makes unity exceedingly unlikely.

3. We are fortunate in political science that the swings between these poles has not produced the kind of intense ideological conflicts that have erupted in some of the other social sciences. In anthropology, for example, there has been near paralysis among younger scholars who agonize over whether any knowledge is authoritative or even possible and who are filled with fears that any concepts they might use in ethnographic research could constitute a form of Western cultural imperialism masquerading as objectivity. One anthropologist speaking of this "crisis of faith" has suggested that his discipline is "in need of a farm subsidy program for Western intellectuals: to avoid flooding the market with ideas, pay them not to think" (Richard A. Shweder, "The How of the Word," *New York Times Book Review*, 28 February 1988).

The epistemological doubts that have produced this crisis of faith among anthropologists stem in large measure, according to Earnest Gellner, from the antiintellectual, "thick description" school of hermeneutics, which sees the use even of clarity and logic in analysis as a dangerous form of Western ethnocentrism. As Gellner notes, "It is not obvious to me that, because the world is a diverse, complex, and tortured place, which it is, that only cumber-

some and ambiguous sentences can do it justice, and that clarity is some kind of intellectual treason" (Gellner 1988, p. 302).

4. An equally conspicuous trend toward economic liberalization and greater respect for the merits of market forces has accompanied these political upheavals and even been a driving force propelling them forward. Ideologues of the Right should, however, be cautious about proclaiming the victory of capitalism and democracy. It is precisely the relationship between economics and politics that needs to be reexamined in the light of current developments and in a spirit that is as neutral of old ideologies as is possible in a scholarly environment.

5. The most detailed studies of pre-World War II foreign investments in China set the figure at about 3.4 billion dollars. See Carl F. Remer 1933 and Chiming Hou 1965. Before Tiananmen U.S. involvement in the Chinese economy was about 3.5 billion dollars.

6. At the July 1989 Round Table meeting in Moscow of a delegation from the APSA and representatives of the Soviet Political Science Association (SPSA) Georgii Shakhnazarov, president of SPSA and member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, declared that political reforms called for the development of a kind of "politology" (as they call political science) that would be "deideologized" and "value-free and objective." In short, out with Lukacs and Gramsci and in with Max Weber.

7. Theorists in both the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and some of China's leading universities briefly came to the support of the official orthodoxy in 1988 by trying to develop what they called the theory of "neo" or "new" authoritarianism and which they thought might legitimize China's economic "reforms" under conditions of political restrictions. They argued that China could and should follow the examples of Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, in which rapid economic development took place under authoritarian governments that sought progress and were not backward looking, as were traditional, or "old" authoritarianism. They even sought to support their analysis by citing U.S. scholars who in the 1950s and 1960s suggested that dictatorial systems had some advantages in modernizing. What the Chinese scholars seemed to misunderstand was that Samuel P. Huntington and the members of the Social Science Research Council Committee on Comparative Politics, in stressing the importance of the institutionalization of government authority for political development, did not have in mind the arbitrary ways of China's personalized government and its rule by men rather than by law.

8. At that same Moscow Round Table meeting, a Soviet academician stated, "We Russians are backward because we have always clung to illusions. For a long time we lived with the illusion that we were at

the forefront of history because that was what our Marxism-Leninism taught us, but we actually lagged far behind the rest of the industrial world. And now we are living with the illusion that *perestroika* will work."

9. Alasdair MacIntyre (1978) has drawn attention to the problem caused by the uniqueness of cultures by raising the shocking question whether a science of comparative politics is theoretically possible. He argues that because political institutions and political cultures are inseparably interrelated and since cultures are by their nature unique, this means that at a fundamental level all political systems are idiosyncratic. MacIntyre seeks to get around his problem by stressing, in much the same manner as Karl Popper, the role that purpose or human will plays in providing a degree of order and predictability in human affairs. Comparison of different systems becomes possible when they share the will to achieve the same ends—such as modernization and development. There is some validity to MacIntyre's position, as can be seen from the fact that comparisons about economic development are easier to make because the goals of such policies are less ambiguous and more universally shared than is the case with political development in which the guiding purpose can vary from country to country according to sense of national identity. My case is arguably similar to MacIntyre's solution, in that the common need for all countries to respond to the universal character of the world culture provides a political equivalent to the goal of economic development. Yet I am not prepared to accept MacIntyre's view that culture belongs totally to the domain of "thick description." Basic to cultures are the generalizable characteristics of human nature, especially the universal features basic to personality development in the socialization process. As Henry Murry once remarked about individuals, "Every man is in certain respects like all other men, like some other men, like no other man" (Kluckhorn and Murry 1953, 53). It is the same with nations.

10. We have to acknowledge as students of government the somewhat embarrassing fact that the main obstacle to human progress is all too often stubbornness of political individuals and the follies of governments. Yet take heart: The best and the brightest of the young Cambridge economists, who are queued up for future Nobel Prizes, now say that the popular idea of the early 1980s, that of perfect competition of markets, is now *déclassé* and that at times there is a need for (and they say this with a straight face) the "rationality of governmental policy" to solve problems caused by market failures. As political scientists we can be bemused by this charming faith in the rationality of the political process.

11. The World Bank reports that during the 1980s the newly industrialized countries of Asia reinvested nearly one-third of their total output, whereas in

Latin America and Africa the comparable figures were only 14% and 12%. Investment in Latin America in the maintenance of highways, water systems, electric power, and telephone systems was so low that by the mid-1980s deterioration had brought all these below their 1950s levels; while subsidies fueled inflation, which in Brazil has exceeded the 1923 hyperinflation in Germany. The story of China is also that of a "transferral economy," as the state has been unable to maintain the appropriate infrastructure of power, transportation, and communications for a growing economy because over 60% of the resources have been devoted to subsidies that grossly distort prices, thereby encouraging "irrational" investments.

12. In the year preceding the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square Chinese intellectuals were engaged in some profound soul searching about the reasons for China's failures at modernization. The Chinese public was also caught up in wondering why China, which had once been so great as to be the "center of the world," was now so backward compared not just to the West and Japan but also to its immediate neighbors. The level of self-criticism reached a high point with the publishing of several critical books and the showing on national television of a six-part series called the *River Eulogy*, which graphically portrayed the sorrow of Chinese backwardness, the shame of its cultural traditions, and the need to become more a part of the world. The three young men who wrote and produced the series were quietly arrested in the repression that followed the Tiananmen Massacre, and we do not at this time know their fates.

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