

Current Issues in Political Science: Discussion

DR. GABRIEL IGLESIAS: It is difficult to do justice to a paper on current issues in political science within the short time available. I would just select a few items which I think are important in terms of our current problems of development as well as of the teaching of political science and the research in the field.

Contrary to you, Dr. Solidum, there is a view that power is relative and having relatives is power. I would like to pose to you the idea that political science in the end is concerned with power, the sharing of power, and how to organize power for some ultimate ends. Without meaning this to be a critique, I was rather struck by the paper in the sense that there was no mention of a purpose of political science by either Agpalo, Nemenzo, or Solidum herself. I'm intrigued by this because I thought there was already an ongoing science of politics in the Philippines and that our president simplifies this with his scholarly output.

I would like first to look at the liberation of political science from the suffocating molds of Western writings and western formulations. The reason for this is that our country's development is somewhat unique and there are serious and severe limitations as to how far certain universal principles or concepts are applicable to our problems of ordering society for the betterment of our people.

One area I would like to talk about is the liberation of the discipline itself without ignoring the contributions of excellent writing in our field. To me a mind that is still enmeshed or steeped in other formulations may be somewhat limited in defining new areas, or in looking at new perspectives. Somehow, reading more books or tracts of political science invariably affects or influences our own thinking, despite our awareness of this. So that in the end we might be beholding some of the great names in the field and ignoring some of the lesser known ones

who may be just as exciting in their formulations.

Our legacy is Western — mostly western models of political science — and this invariably reflects the needs and interests of Western societies, and part of this legacy is the maintenance of our dependence on such models, both in material and intellectual terms. The first task of liberation is to demand that our minds be free and independent of external control. We cannot deny our Western legacy's usefulness, but we must examine its important parts which are most appropriate or relevant to our needs of development. I call this the internationalization of national development.

Recent studies have been concerned with systems (framework, analysis, etc.), and we cannot ignore the fact that the study of development must take into account external and powerful forces. But invariably we try to maintain their ascendancy and dominance over the direction and flow of our own development. It is to the interests of these forces that our development is paralleled, promoting dependence on our part. Thus our notion of development or underdevelopment is not our own but springs from a relationship between the developed and underdeveloped countries. There are those who say, "you are not aware of how underdeveloped you are; you wouldn't know how underdeveloped. We have been brainwashed — convinced that we are inferior.

I think there are many Filipinos who have proven that this is not so. We are coming out with ideas that may even revolutionize the practice and study of political science. The first need, I think, is to domesticate our foreign models or even develop native models. I'm not saying that there are no universal ideas about freedom and so on. These are all anchored in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and some of them are indeed beyond question.

Regarding the idea that development follows some kind of ideological path — as though there is no opportunity or possibility of regression or retrogression — the real problem here is "What is political development?" We do not have precise theories to teach us how to develop politically. There is no formula for success in political development.

The declaration of martial law was the most profound change in our country. Now there are as yet no studies as to the implications of this development. Does it encourage through its

technocracy and bureaucracy the idea that development is something we should discuss, especially the fundamental thrusts and direction of development? Are we studying the dynamics of decree-making? Who participates in its formulation? Are we providing assistance on how the government could avoid defective and arbitrary decrees that just suddenly appear without much public discussion?

That means that we are now in *terra firma*, and this is a wide open field with not too many guideposts to fight our governors who do not govern sensibly with justice and with reason. Is our political development now accessible to all possible competitors in the field in terms of demanding interests or certain benefits from the system?

We must also look at how far the idea of technocratic planning affects the need for wider consensus in society, even the idea of participation in terms of sharing power and of decision-making. There remains the particular problem of how many should participate in the decision. How far and at what levels? Sometimes it is this question that needs empirical verification as to the level of efficiency of participation which leads to a wider discussion of the fundamental issues of development. In the end, our study of political science and the teaching of it would be much enriched if we look deeper into some of the problems confronting our present government and into how far it reflects the problems of most developing societies.

PROFESSOR LOURDES GOMEZ: Socrates said that "the unexamined life is not worth living." Now certainly students or observers of political science are not guilty of this. In her paper, Dr. Solidum ably massed the problems of the current state of political science as a field of study. But in reading her paper, the individual, whether he is an observer, a scholar, or a practitioner of politics, invariably finds that in certain ways we do become a prisoner of our conceptual egos.

Now by looking at the current state of political science, we do see that the intellectual horizon has been considerably broadened, so that we are now more than ever dependent on the cognate discipline of the behavioral sciences. But still, we have to answer a very important question as to what we will be as professionals, whether we choose to become general practitioners or whether we intend to be specialists in our own particular field of interest. There are various theories which have

proved true that man in the past, as well as in the present, concerned himself with the two basic questions when studying politics, that is, the manner with which to approach the study of politics or concentration on what is said to be ways of understanding the present political realities. With the growing contributions of models either from the West or from developing countries, we see the need to reconcile or integrate the massive information that we have thus gathered. And so we see that in looking at the conceptual theory and ideas, invariably there seems to be a communication gap between those who are interested in the theory of knowledge against those who are actively involved in the practical application of knowledge. So we see that the dichotomy is largely dependent on whether we are interested in theories to expand our knowledge of politics or whether we are interested in examining and evaluating the theories which help to explain our present political reality. So we now place the problem of how to avail ourselves of this information. We shall look at it according to the roles which we will take—whether as professionals, private citizens, or consultants to policy-makers. So that invariably we would find a reordering of our hierarchy of values and this would be reflected in our teachings or in our writings. I think that the current writings in political science do show that political science is certainly an exciting and challenging field. Because as students direct their attention to the affairs of men, they are also trying to manage the future state of affairs that is to come. So as students of politics, we should try to expand our intellectual horizons so far as the writing of political science pertains to the Philippines.

PROFESSOR AVELINO TENDERO: I suppose that by way of summary there are three basic issues. There is the issue pointed out on the matter of methodological approach, the second I will label as the substance factors of the issue, and a possible third, perhaps, is a question of objectives: what is it that the writer proposes to achieve?

Now as we review the literature of political science, there is no discernible progress, no sequential development as a discipline starting with the writings of Plato, Aristotle, etc. It seems that there is no pattern of evolution, neither is there a continuum, although of course we have attempted to distinguish schools of political science and again the criteria for the

determination of a school may vary from one political science group to another. This involves of course the question of approach and sets up the objective that it wishes to achieve. In view of this, I think we have to distinguish the approach as a methodology on one hand from the approach as an objective on the other. Certainly this is not an easy task. Many writers of political science, and there is a galaxy of them, may use a particular approach distinct from the other — the criteria varying in large degree even among ourselves. But the current trends today seem to have been basically derived from the so-called behavioral approach. This jibes with the idea that, for a study to be meaningful, it has got to have not only a meaningful structure or form but also functionality. But I do agree with the commentator and reader herself that even the method of political development as an approach seems not to have a definite criteria with which the concept of development could be linked.

Some of us may be aware of the Lucian Pye model and many varieties seem to have a prejudice in favor of its use. There has come out what is known as the development syndrome which postulates three basic criteria — equality, capacity (I think) and differentiation.

Such being the case, it does not relieve us from the responsibility of giving meaning to these criteria, which have been used by Pye himself, and to see whether they are relevant to developing countries. I refrain from using the distinction between undeveloped and developing countries. Equality in reference to mass participation was adequately covered by the speakers before me which would perhaps connote the change from subject status to increased popular participation. But again we are not so sure as to the degree of participation.

Capacity or the ability of the political system to manage public affairs has been touched upon also. This would involve the question of general system performance, action, works on the part of the government, and implementation of policy.

The third criterion is differentiation. It would seem that political development would simply imply structural differentiation. It may imply functional differentiation. In other words, we are not in agreement here as to the structure of any polity and we are not so sure whether we are again in harmony among ourselves as to what the function of the political system should be. And even on the matter of integration, the reader mentioned

the integration of political institutions which continues to pester us now and then. Even as the proponent of this syndrome attempts to provide a workable solution to this never-ending predicament we are falling into in political science, I would suppose that there are division scales. The concept of political development here must be able to present at least a criterion by which it could move about. Perhaps we would continue being in a state of predicament as to what procedure, mechanism, or methodology ought to be used.

Now with respect to the second substance approach, I think there are basically two areas which political scientists would like to touch upon. One is the traditional concept of state-centered political science which some of us may find easy to manage. I didn't say at all that it is an obsolete subject matter to be dealt with. And of course the other is to take into account the activities of the society over which that developmental structure is to operate. Dr. Solidum has made mention of symmetric and asymmetric sets of relationships in terms of what to consider as the area concerned. I will agree with the use of the asymmetric set of relationships for a more meaningful subject matter in political science, since we are not supposed to deal only with the organizational structure, but we have to expand the horizon, the field, so as to include the whole range of human activity, not confining ourselves within the prison walls of the political only because politics draws inspiration from the economic, social, cultural and other values in society, such that your focus, perhaps, would be one which tends to look upon those symmetric relations, but it doesn't mean here that there are no problems. Harold Ekstein, looking into this problem of substance of the field itself seems to have noticed a number of laws using the asymmetric relationship itself and maintains that that is not everything to it. He even suggests the use of authority patterns as a sort of a compromise between the structure and the functional by maintaining that, whereas structure determines or influences functions, functions do influence structures and frameworks. Such is the result of the issue — to provide that kind of happy compromise.

Perhaps we go by the concept of authority patterns. This brings us to the question of theory. The field of political theory has been consigned to a useless piece of commodity—a discredited field. Now my stand is that the theory has its pur-

poses. Plato had his purposes for us, and so did Aristotle and all the rest. A recent writing by Gurthrie seems to have contended that a writer in political theory must take cognizance of the fact that his audience is not a thing that he can easily control—unlike the lawyer defending a case in court who knows, perhaps, his audience more. But in the case of a political scientist, they have to contend with any audiences in a crowd. To be impartial about the whole issue on political theory, we have to operate on the assumption that the postulate is supposed to be addressed universally and that within this postulate are little proofs which cannot cater to all, such that there is a double meaning to this theory.

If we consider Hobbes, for example, we cannot dismiss ourselves by saying that he is a spokesman for royal absolutism. We have to interpret him in accordance with the situation at the time of his writing only to show the fact that the main thrust of his writing was directed towards the Puritans whom he wanted to convince or win to his side in accepting the monarchical regime of the time. And I think that it is in this light that we have to consider the theory as such without prejudice to other further investigations as to the real objectives offered by the political writer.

I suppose that these three areas have been covered in a summary fashion and I think that all three are relevant to the matter of current issues because to me an issue is current not only in the perspective of time and environment but also in the sense that they are materials with which I would tinker, talk about, argue and discuss. So, current to me is something that is not rooted within the frame of a sectoral concern only or within the frame of "periodizations" as some historians would have it.

PROFESSOR SEGUNDINA NAVARRO: Though the issues discussed by our speaker are current ones in political science, one notices trends which can be made as bases for future action. Being a systematic student of political science, Dr. Solidum classifies these issues into three: methods and theory, political ideas and international relations, and foreign policy. These points are well taken.

I found out that the above issues are well discussed, but it leaves me with some feeling that something is lacking. I feel that political dynamics should have been considered as one of the issues which would be of interest to students of political

science. And this is left out or omitted by the paper reader. Now it seems that there is a common basic interest in knowing the issues of political dynamics as well as identifying the indicators. Since this is particularly relevant to development, such topics like political parties, pressure groups or interest groups, political socialization and others would be of interest to students of politics. A review of the issues discussed would also seem to give us the impression that the second issue of political ideas could easily be identified with methods and theory since this is nothing more but a study of concepts like democracy and Marxism. It also leaves me wondering whether Dr. Solidum has come across issues other than those discussed in the paper.

In conclusion, I agree with the excellent and very informative paper presented by my professor and colleague. Apart from the few questions I have mentioned, I endorse her method of presenting the subject matter.