Progress and Mimes: Political Ideas, Imitation, and Development

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Introduction

Recent difficulties in constituting stable and effective governments in Afghanistan and Iraq following America's overwhelming battlefield triumphs have highlighted an important lesson of politics: The major problem in the establishment of a political regime is settling the basis of authority. The experience of post-World War II decolonization, the transitions from authoritarianism of the 1970s and 1980s, and the collapse of the Soviet experiment in the 1990s have or, at least, should have revealed that for states undergoing a fundamental transition from one regime to another, this problem of authority is complicated by the fact that institutions must be created and legitimacy developed or recovered. Comparative political science has tended to ignore the central role played by political ideas and models in the creation and development of institutions. During the periods of behavorialist and structuralist dominance within political science, ideas were neglected as explanatory variables, but with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the intellectual ferment that accompanied this event, an opening was created in which the effects of political ideas on political development could be pushed to the forefront in comparative politics.

One way to approach this problem is to examine how ideas are adopted, adapted, and assimilated by political actors, specifically, those politicians who also articulate ideas within the political elite to argue for or against particular

political models. Insofar as ideas articulated by political thinkers guide action, reflect dominant understandings of reality among elites, or provide the basis for the critique of those dominant understandings, the study of such ideas will reveal something of the efforts at constituting a regime, at least at the level of how actors understand what they were doing. This is especially true as the apparent triumph of the North Atlantic model of state and society generated a renewed (and revised) interest in how the development of the advanced industrial democracies can be reproduced in the developing world, at the same time that this model has also provoked a strong backlash against its very principles.

As in the 19th century, the liberal, constitutional regimes of the North Atlantic world are the preeminent models of development for those areas of the world that seek to "develop" but are, also, the target of vigorous critique and open hostility rooted in "traditional" ideas, that themselves are often modern adaptations of the traditions they purport to represent. The institutions of the North Atlantic community are being copied, their practices imitated, and their values adopted in both the former "Third World" and the "transitional economies" of the former Soviet Bloc. The acceptance of the North Atlantic states as developmental models will have great significance for the states which seek to emulate them, so the way that the ideas which undergird and legitimize these models are understood, adapted, and acted upon will be important, just as their failure will doubtless engender reactions against these models. However, imitation of a model is no guarantee that the product of imitation will be recognizable as the original. There is a process of adaptation and assimilation accompanying imitation, which may transform the ideas. The result may differ greatly from the original, making it incumbent to understand the process of imitation, adaptation, and assimilation of ideas and models drawn from the North Atlantic world as a longstanding pattern of political development.

Political Development without Ideas

Although the claim that ideas matter in politics seems so obvious as to be banal, it is worth noting that, generally speaking, political science since the "behavioral revolution" has relegated the role of ideas to (at best) a secondary level in the study of comparative politics. While political scientists of the post-War era extensively investigated the necessary preconditions of political development (understood basically as the creation of a "political system" that implied a liberal-democratic regime) much of this work operated under the assumption that its subject matter was essentially behavior, that is, concerned with the objective social reality underlying identifiable repetitive patterns of acts that could be correlated with certain beliefs or values. The beliefs and values identified by the investigators were characterized by the degree to which they supported the political model desired, and were themselves a product of objective social conditions. This approach systematically excluded ideas from the study of politics by relegating them to the realm of subjective belief, amenable to change and manipulation but secondary to objective conditions (Taylor 1979; Wolin 1973). In a similar fashion, institutions and institutional arrangements were treated without reference to the political ideas they embodied or implied, but simply as functional arrangements for articulation, aggregation, and adjudication of interests (Almond and Verba 1963). Whatever the value of the behavioral revolution in political science, behavioralism and its particular manifestation as modernization theory slighted both ideas and history in the attempt to create a scientific approach to political development (Tholfsen 1984, esp. ch. 6).

The reaction to behavioralism that rose in the 1960s and found expression in structuralist approaches to the study of politics, especially in the Third World, also denied the role of ideas in shaping politics. Theories of dependency, underdevelopment, and bureaucratic authoritarianism all ignored ideas except in the guise of ideology, an epiphenomenon of the economic base of society.

Similarly, theories of the autonomy of the state based on the structural characteristics of society, the economy, or the needs of capital also relegated the role of ideas to irrelevance, since what people thought was less important than their relationships as bearers of objective needs and possibilities. Major works in this tradition contain no index entries for ideas, much less a serious discussion of ideas as contributors to political institutions, structures, or activities (Frank 1967, 1969; Cardoso and Falleto 1979). Even Guillermo O'Donnell, who notes the North American training of many Latin Americans who played a role in the development of Bureaucratic Authoritarianism, emphasizes the structural necessity of the technocratic response to a crisis of accumulation (O'Donnell 1979, 53-67, 76-85).

Oddly, however, the lack of concern with ideas is also found in an approach that would seem to require it: political culture. A popular and powerful version of political culture theory frequently applied to Latin America seeks to explain the region in terms of deep cultural traits that have shaped institutions and values over the *longue durée*. This analysis of Latin American culture frequently treats the role of ideas, sometimes merely in passing, but often in a more substantive way, looking to the formative influence of ideas and institutions that derive from medieval Iberia. Howard J. Wiarda, for example, who has long been an advocate of understanding Latin America in terms of its particular development rather than North Atlantic models, emphasizes the importance of the cultural heritage of Iberia in Latin America and insists that hierarchical, authoritarian values have profoundly shaped Latin American politics, but discusses ideas primarily in terms of the deep influence of Iberian Scholaticism and neo-Thomism or Rousseau's organic and corporate democracy, in contrast to the Lockeanism of Anglo-America, rather than examining the political thought of the theorist-politicians who shaped the institutions of Latin America (Wiarda 1973, 1979, 1992). Even Wiarda's latest work, which treats the ideas of Latin American political thinkers far more explicitly and extensively

than in the past, with its chapters on liberalism, positivism, nationalism, Marxism, and corporatism (as well as its extensive references to various Europeans and Latin Americans) is dominated by the idea of the pervasive influence of values rather than on a detailed study of the ideas argued about by Latin Americans and articulated in constitutional institutions (Wiarda 2002).

Likewise, Richard Morse has made the argument that Latin America must be understood in terms of the endogenous forces that have shaped it. But he, too, has tended to treat political ideas as an aspect or reflection of culture, like values, rather than something formulated and manipulated by individuals in specific times and places with specific consequences. Curiously, while Morse's treatment of individual thinkers of various stripes is, often, quite sensitive and nuanced, even here the conscious use of ideas, their role in shaping institutions that were deliberately engineered, and, especially, the explicit borrowing of ideas from foreign examples and sources is treated as an oddity rather than as an important factor in shaping contemporary Latin American politics (Morse 1964, 1989, 1992, 1996). Another version of the political culture approach updates elements of modernization theory, again rendering politics merely a reflection of deep cultural attributes or subconscious attitudes, as was the case with the behavioralists.

In this reading of political culture, certain attitudes or values retard development which can be fixed by getting the right mix of immigrants or educational reforms to foster new social values (Harrison 1985; Harrison and Huntington 2001). Development can, thus, be treated as a product of memes borne by unwitting carriers, to use the new jargon, rather than the product of human intentionality (Dennett 1995) A variant of this, which does treat ideas more seriously, emphasizes the importance of learning experiences and the role of intellectual elites in embracing and diffusing ideas and values. Thus David Landes decries the malignant influence of dependency ideology embraced by the Latin American intelligentsia as being "bad for effort and morale," "fostering a

morbid propensity to find fault with everyone but oneself" and, ultimately, being responsible for "promot[ing] economic impotence" (Landes 1999, 328). While this has the virtue of taking the role of ideas seriously, it does nothing to advance our understanding of how ideas fit into social circumstances, affect them, or change in response to them.

More recently, however, the quarter century-long "Third Wave of Democratization," which has seen the collapse of authoritarian and totalitarian governments throughout much of the world (entirely unpredicted by either behaviorist or structuralist social science) seems to have returned political science to an appreciation of the importance of ideas and intentionality in the shaping of political institutions and actions. This return can be found implicitly in the revival of interest in institutional design and in a general enthusiasm for "civil society" as a support for democracy. In both cases, the role of consciously held ideas in debates over what is to be done, rather than unreflective "values" associated with certain behaviors or simple ideological mystification, has reentered the field of vision of political science. It is not uncommon to find books and articles that examine the performance of specifically liberal democratic institutions, practices, and constitutional arrangements (or the impact of their absence) in developing or "transitional" countries in a fashion that was virtually unimaginable in the days of behavioralist and structuralist dominance prior to the late 1980s (see Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg 1999; Lijphart 1992; Linz Valenzuela 1994; Baaklini and Desfosses 1997; Weimer 1997). The significance of this lies in the importance of intention and conceptualization in the creation and functioning of such institutions, which is at least implicitly acknowledged by authors who discuss the need for careful design. Whether this will lead to significant progress in the study of comparative politics is unknowable, but its mere occurrence signifies an important shift away from conflating ideas, norms, and values and treating them all simply as the unreflective outcome of

socialization or some other "objective" social process that has explanatory priority.

Yet another approach which looks to the decisions of political actors as the subject of study is strategic choice. This approach, whose advocates argue that political development is the contingent outcome of the competition among various interests, has the virtue of taking the agency of political actors seriously, considering them rational in their calculations, and treating political positions as conscious articulations of interest and desire, rather than mere attitudes (Ames 1987; Geddes 1994; Schneider 1991). Authors working in this approach seek to understand how actors have consciously sought to develop policies and, often, institutions in response to their situations. However, the effect of political ideas in creating the rules of the game or the structures within which the actors act is often ignored or treated as a given rather than studied in itself. That is the case with Schneider's work, where he notes that "The 'tracks' of Brazil's development strategy were laid long before the 1970s; interests and preferences then clashed over how to move forward along them." He is unconcerned with who laid the "tracks" or how or why, though he acknowledges that "ideological preferences" may "help in explaining differences between Brazil and other late industrializers" (Schneider 1991, 200, 202). Again, the relegation of ideas to expressions of interest or ideology risks shortchanging the impact of human thought on life.

Finally, there is what might be called the study of politics "from below." This bears a resemblance to the approach to history which sought to move history away from the study of elite affairs to "the history of ordinary people in the past...written from the point of view of ordinary People" (Burke 1996, 368). In political science, this development has expressed itself as an approach that seeks to explain political development as the outcome of "unpredictable outcomes of struggles among societal and state actors." (Addis 1997, 135) While a great deal of good work has been done on mobilization of previously marginalized groups

and their entry into the political arena (transforming them from objects into subjects of history), much of this shies away from the investigation of the historical role of ideas in the construction of political institutions (Seidman 1994; Wolfe 1993, Alvarez 1990). Much of the early literature on the so-called "new social movements" and "civil society" is of this sort, noting ideas as inspiration or claiming that struggle has brought about a transformation of consciousness. But they fit ideas, unproblematically, into a narrative of democratization and progress with little concern for how these ideas are understood or manipulated by the actors, themselves. Those who wrote on the subject, especially on civil society, frequently seem to have projected their own ideas on the mass movements they saw developing in the Third World. They saw them as purer than political parties and interest groups (Cohen and Arato 1992; Keane 1987, 1988) without examining either how these groups understood the ideas they supposedly bore, disinterestedly (often quite self-consciously using the rhetoric of First World "idealists" to advance a fairly standard interest group agenda) or the actual role of such groups as fairly conventional political actors.[1]

None of the various approaches in the contemporary literature on political development in the so-called "transitions" actually focuses on the historical role of ideas in shaping institutions or political action. Instead, the history of political ideas is allowed to exist in its own compartment, isolated from discussions of how political institutions develop or why people act politically, except in rare cases where it is treated as a residual category to cover what cannot be fitted easily into the dominant approaches. So participants' reflections on actual experiences go neglected while theorists of development formulate new theories with little awareness that there may be historical ideas produced in analogous periods from which to learn. The oddity of this shows up in the contrast with

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[1] The tendency to fetishize supposedly apolitical and disinterested natures of civil society and the associated "new social movements" is criticized by Kumar (1993) and Seligman (1992).

writers from the countries that escaped from authoritarianism or Soviet totalitarianism in the 1980s for whom the power of ideas is a central theme.

A particularly noteworthy example of the serious treatment of ideas and their appeal to intellectual and political classes is Jerzy Jedlicki's *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (1999). Originally written in the late 1970s, this study of the attempts of Polish intellectuals to import Western ideas to develop their society and to preserve its identity against Russian rule was suppressed by the Soviet-backed regime in Poland until 1988 for obvious reasons. At its core is the effort to appropriate Western ideas and reconcile them to the particular situation of the Polish Kingdom in Russia after the partitions of the late eighteenth century, an effort that set "progress" through the imitation of foreign examples against "tradition" in a pattern of repeated oppositions. This confrontation of progress and tradition in the Polish elite and the collision of the ideas of progress with the realities of the Polish condition led to adaptation and reformulation of the ideas on both sides, which influenced future actions. Of course, Poland's occupation and domination limited the possibility of action by the Russian Empire, so the potential richness of the "Polish approaches to Western civilization" was limited by the lack of political power to implement the programs of imitation, which limits the Polish case. However, the problem of "progress," the confrontation between "progress" and "tradition" or "cosmopolitanism" and "national culture," and the collision of ideas and models with social and economic realities are common experiences, and all are found in Brazil's experience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

A product of European colonialism located on the periphery of European culture and consciousness, Brazil's development over the century and a half between the French Revolution and the onset of the Cold War provides an example of how the imitation of liberal political models from the industrializing states of the North Atlantic affected and was affected by the context of a less

developed country. The various attempts to modernize Brazil through imitation of North Atlantic political and economic institutions or through selective adaptation of features of the North Atlantic models involved an intellectual process. It was, often, expressed self-consciously in works of political theory and much may be learned from the manner in which certain ideas were picked up from Europe and the United States, altered and, then, used by Brazilian political thinkers and actors.

Such an approach falls within the political culture tradition to the extent that it is concerned with beliefs, values, and ideas held by members of the Brazilian political elite "ideas on which they acted and which shape the way that they acted." But it is not the same as arguing that Brazilian politics is the product of a deep-rooted hierarchical, authoritarian, and corporatist culture, which exercised its hold over Brazil from the colonial period to the present. Such authoritarian culture arguments are misguided for two reasons. In the first place, that approach to culture actually denies the importance of ideas because they lose their status as conscious articulations of peoples' perceptions and become cognitive structures of implicit values, attitudes, and beliefs that shape action without conscious consideration. Second, deep-rooted cultural determinants have proved hard to test empirically and do not stand up well to the empirical tests that have been suggested for them. In fact, if survey research is to be trusted, cultural values, operationalized as attitudes toward certain key terms given in response to survey questions, vary widely within Latin America and in this variance are indistinguishable from the spread of values around the world (Turner 1995).[2] Political institutions are human constructions and political ideas are conscious articulations of desires, values, preferences, and the like.

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[2] Of course, the value of public opinion surveys as a source of knowledge is open to dispute. For a scathing criticism of comparative politics and cross-national survey research in general and the Civic Culture project specifically, see Alisdair MacIntyre (1978).

This is not to deny the role of objective conditions, of structures, or of implicit values and attitudes, merely to argue that ideas are worth considering as causal factors in the course of political development. The link between the history of ideas and comparative politics lies in the impact of ideas during periods of political restructuring and in the role of discourse in legitimizing or subverting political order (Held 1996; Cerny 1990). Without necessarily ascribing primary causal power to ideas, it is important to give consideration to the intellectual content of political struggles. The Brazilian situation is one in which the transplantation of European political theories and ideologies to a country dominated by a highly bureaucratic state on one hand and a powerful landed oligarchy on the other has resulted in various mutations, transformations, and adaptations of the original ideologies (Schwarz 1992).

For instance, the appropriation of liberal and democratic vocabulary has been important to the articulation of new political relationships, demands for representation, and claims to legitimacy by the holders of power and their opponents. In the process, new meaning has been given to old terms and apparently incompatible means and ends have been harnessed together in strategies of political transformation. This process goes beyond simple imitation and involves the creative reconceptualization of established models. As Fernando Henrique Cardoso claimed about the creativeness of Latin American thinkers in the post-World War II period when they reinterpreted orthodox economic ideas: "The restatement of ideas in new contexts, far from being a merely repetitive process, implies enrichment. ...[T]he trajectory of the "same" idea in another historical and cultural context makes it into something else" (Cardoso 1977, 44.). In this way, the study of Brazilian political thought makes it possible to explore the discourse of political development through a case in which the boundaries of the state and society have undergone negotiation and re-negotiation. By focusing on the major trends in political thought, it is possible to determine what was at stake, intellectually, ideologically, and normatively in

debates about the articulation of state and society. It is a topic that is increasing in importance as the difficulties of establishing liberal democracy on the North Atlantic model become clearer in various parts of the world.

Innovation, Recovery, and Imitation as Strategies of Development

The problem of developing the political institutions for a new state can be addressed in one of three ways. First, institutions can be created through innovation, breaking with tradition and formulating either entirely new institutions or drawing on historical precedents available to the creators but far beyond their own experience or traditions. This was the case in the use of ideas of the Classical "mixed regime" by the American founders as the model for institutions of the new American republic, which went far beyond the colonial experience.[3] Second, institutions can be developed out of indigenous historical experience and traditions.   This has been claimed for "traditional" authoritarianism, the so-called "Burmese Way of Socialism," or the various attempts to base politics on African traditions of consultation and consensus as a way of avoiding competition and conflict among ethnic groups. Third, they can be imitations of foreign examples, such as the "Westminster Model" bequeathed by the British Empire to its former colonies.

The first approach is limited by the practical problem of creating something both new and effective in the context of immediate political problems. If the basic concern of those making decisions about political forms is establishing effective authority, the radically new offers neither proved effectiveness or the legitimacy of familiarity. Even the possibility of innovation based on historical precedents is hindered by these problems, though appeal to history may shore up the legitimacy of institutions that possess a well-regarded pedigree. Success appears to require a degree of fit between institutional design

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[3]   The classical model was also influential in Revolutionary France and Latin America. Simón Bolívar held up the examples of Rome, Athens, and Sparta in his "Angostura Address" of 1819 and explicitly modeled the institutions of his Bolivian Constitution of 1826 on features of these regimes. Lecuna and Bierck (1951), 192, 194, 596-606.

and the actual conditions that involves good fortune as well as good planning. Indeed, the Anglo-American experiment with institutional innovation demonstrates not just the possibilities that are open, but the importance of fortune in striking out in new directions. (Although the Dutch Republic and Poland's monarchic *Rzeczpospolita*, were contemporaries of the new American state, neither appears to have had any influence on the founders of the United States.) Part of this fortune may have to do with the place of the United States on the periphery of the North Atlantic world at the time of its experiment.

As one observer has noted, institutional and ideological innovations appear to arise in states of the second rank, rather than the great powers. The reason for this may be an incentive for breaking with the *status quo* generated by the intersection of pressures to keep up with the leading powers and the opportunity of advance that is lacking for the poorest and weakest states in the international system (Markoff 1999). Other examples of attempts to create new institutions through innovation or under the influence of historical precedents distant from indigenous traditions include the various collective executives of the French Revolution, the soviets of the Russian Revolution, the Italian factory councils of 1920, and the anarchist organizations of the Basque and Catalan regions of Spain in the inter-war period and the Civil War. In contrast to the American experiment's stability over two centuries, the success of these other experiments must be judged limited, at best.

Among the limitations of the second approach is the difficulty in reclaiming indigenous experience. In the first place, traditional institutions of political authority may rely on social conditions that have changed and forms that have been displaced by the processes that make necessary the establishment of a new political regime. A further difficulty is that experience with exogenous influences change the framework of knowledge within which traditions are interpreted.

The meaning of and acceptability of traditions may be changed by this fact, which complicates the reclamation of indigenous forms. This is especially

true to the extent that such reclamation requires the rejection of exogenous influences, for knowledge of and experience with outside influences cannot be undone except at great cost. A particularly tragic example of this is obviously the case of Cambodia under the *Khmers Rouges*, whose ambition to efface outside influences in an effort to purify and reconstitute Cambodia resulted in the deaths of a million or more Cambodians and have been widely documented (Burgler 1990; Chandler 1991; Etcheson 1984; Kiernan 1985). Another example may be the Peruvian *Sendero Luminoso*, which some observers claim linked Maoism to apocalyptic Andean traditions (Anderson 1987; Ansion 1984; Koppel 1993), though this interpretation is vigorously disputed by other observers, who argue that the Sendero's viewpoint was entirely foreign to Peruvian tradition, being a reaction to capitalist penetration of highland agriculture (Poole and Renique 1991) or the product of a hypertrophied Enlightenment rationalism and infatuation with Mao's Cultural Revolution (DeGregori 1997).

In many cases, it must be said, the "traditions" that have been reclaimed have served as window dressing for various forms of authoritarian rule, often relying on less acceptable traditions mixed with rather up to date forms of political control. The Burmese regime's claim to be creating a path to socialism based on traditional Burmese communal values, for instance, was a sham. A rather conventional military dictatorship, based on control of those most modern political institutions, a centralized bureaucracy and the armed forces, looted the country under cover of tradition (Silverstein 1977; Chirot 1994). The Iranian Islamic Republic may be another example, with the cloak of religion and tradition drawn over a charismatic authoritarianism based on a combination of mass mobilization, ideological and physical coercion, populist economic policies, and compromise among various elements of society (Dabashi 2000; Saeidi 2001).

Finally, in the wake of European expansion and hegemony, most new states have, at least initially, adopted models of political authority derived from the experience of the North Atlantic region, historically including the state

socialist variant which seemed so successful from the crisis of European liberalism in the inter-war period until the collapse of the Soviet Union. So imitation appears to be the dominant mode of creating new political institutions. Such models represent successful political development, just as economic models derived from the advanced countries have represented the path of economic development. However, while the imitation of foreign examples is a powerful strategy because it involves models of success readily at hand, it is not as simple a strategy for creating new regimes as it may first appear.

Imitation may fail as a strategy for establishing new regimes as limited imitation of other states can be a substitute rather than a strategy for systematic reform. For instance, it seems clear that in the encounter between an expansionist Europe and the societies of nineteenth century Africa and Asia colonized by the Europeans, the adoption of European weapons, dress, and manners by some non-European societies was less for the purpose of reforming existing institutions in imitation of the European states than to indicate the ruler's status to subjects and outsiders by association with the symbols of European power. Consider, for instance, the adoption of European style cannons by the Chinese under the influence of the "Self-strengthening Movement." Reaction against attempts to modernize by imitating the Europeans led to the disgrace and dismissal of the reformers, and the cannons became "totems of modernity" for military commanders rather than effective field artillery (Porch 2001, 124-125).

Contrast this with King Kamehameha, who adopted gunpowder weapons, had native troops trained as gunners, adapted traditional Hawaiian tactics to the new technology, and unified the island chain as a result (Tregaskis 1973). In certain circumstances, the imitation of the accouterments of European civilization may even seem more like an attempt to attract the power of the Europeans through some sort of sympathetic magic without the nature of this power than an attempt to modernize. The cargo cults of the Pacific islands, seeking to encourage the return of the Europeans with their "cargo" by imitating

their dress and behavior without substantive content or the Herero of Namibia who began to dress in clothes modeled on the uniform of Imperial Germany's colonial in the belief that copying German dress would give them the power to defeat the Germans when they rebelled in 1906, are examples of this sort of imitation. It should be noted that this sort of interpretation is disputed in some of the current anthropological literature, which claims greater sophistication for the colonized societies than older views of the South Asian "cargo cults" and other forms of apparently fetishistic rather than effective imitation would imply (Kaplan 1995, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993).

Quite apart from these cases, however, the embrace of imitation as a strategy of creating a new regime does not necessarily simplify the tasks of creating institutions and developing legitimacy. On the contrary, competing political models found amongst the elites and counter-elites of new states frequently provoke conflict over the proper path of political development. Even when imitation is adopted as a strategy of modernization, conflicts can develop over the model to be followed, the changes required by imitation, and the reconciliation of the two sides of the task of creating a regime.

Imitation in its simplest form is "emblematic" in nature. This is the adoption of foreign ideas, institutions, forms, or values as "emblems" which symbolize power, progress, or civilization. Such imitation waxes and wanes with the apparent strength of the model as can be seen in William Glade's comments on the "mimetic system of government patterned after the norms of political liberalism" that emerged in nineteenth-century Latin America and in Juan Linz's brief discussion of the "mimetic" character of many authoritarian regimes of the inter-war period (Glade 1969; 185-186; Linz 1975, 269, 271, 275-277). Such emblems may be primarily symbolic or may actually signal normative commitments which offer a yardstick by which to measure the success of the strategy of imitation. There is a difference between the "emblems" of modernity meant to serve as window dressing or to accrue status through association with

the model and a normative commitment to the values of the model which implies a desire to fulfill an ideal (Jutkowitz 1977). But, in both cases, the underlying assumption is that there is a model of development whose features mark the achievement of or, at least, progress toward a certain status associated with those states identified as exemplars. The importance of "democracy" as a symbol of modernity in the contemporary world has often been noted. One need only consult a Cold War era political almanac and take note of the number of states that insisted on the "democratic" or "popular" nature of their regime or the enthusiasm for elections of various dictatorships and one party states to get a sense of this.

Likewise, one can point to any number of development projects in Third World countries that seem to have had no purpose other than signification of modern or industrial status. Seemingly every country wanted its own national oil company and its own steel mill, regardless of economic utility. The spread, by demonstration effect, of constitutions and constitutionalist political institutions throughout the European periphery in the nineteenth century was, by some accounts, emblematic imitation. According to this argument, a number of economically and socially "backward" states on the European periphery adopted liberal constitutions and political institutions as "emblems of modernity" to signify their claims to be counted among the leading states of Europe. Countries like Portugal, Spain, Serbia, and Romania attempted to mimic the forms of the advanced states of Europe because some segment of the national political elite believed that progress required such imitation, despite, or perhaps because of, the absence of economic conditions giving rise to the classes associated with the institutions, practices, and values of liberalism (Luebbert 1991, citing Janos 1984). Similar arguments have been made regarding the rash of constitution writing throughout the Latin America following independence and the recurrent justification of coups by appeals to constitutionalism, both related to the desire to ensure that Latin American states would be welcomed into the

community of "civilized nations" because they share formal political features (Loveman 1993; Markoff and Barretta 1988).

Such symbolic imitation often generated real, if perverse, effects on the politics and economies of the periphery. In the first place, the costs of replicating the forms of the advanced states, especially their visible institutions such as modern armies and bureaucracies, far outstripped the resources generated by the relatively primitive economic systems of these countries thus making the imitation of modernity pernicious rather than beneficial. Janos does not use the phrase "emblems of modernity" but does emphasize the spread of industrial European patterns of consumption and behavior, both material and intellectual, to the periphery of Europe as "symbols of 'civilized conduct'" (Janos 1989). This also appears true of Latin America, where far less was spent on the military in absolute terms than was the case in Europe. But the Latin American states extracted far less revenue from their populations than European states and relied on foreign loans to pay for internal and external wars with the result that Latin America had "the worst of all possible worlds: armies fought without being able to dominate and they coerced without extracting. While draining large amounts of money, the military did not provide a means with which to pay for itself" (Centeno 1997, 1,583-1,585, 1,604).

Even Brazil, which was far less affected by the destruction of the early 19th century, faced the problem that it could not afford to pay for its European veneer from internal sources alone, leading to constant indebtedness for public works on show projects as well as investment. Second, even the most basic emblematic imitation may have profound significance for regime legitimacy because of the normative commitments implied by the adoption of "emblems of modernity." In short, adopting the emblems of the more advanced states may undermine the position of the existing political elite by straining the fiscal and organizational capacity of the state and by changing the acceptable claims of legitimacy in ways unintended and even unwanted by the elite which adopts

them to buttress its rule. More substantively, models from the advanced states have been adopted in the expectation that their operations will induce desired changes in local society. This approach is similar to the first in sharing the belief that adopting certain features of the advanced states will lead to a convergence with the conditions of these states, but it is far more self-consciously a strategy of development. If only the proper institutional and constitutional arrangements can be established, then their smooth functioning will result in the transformation of society as a whole. At least in the view of some development theorists, this strategy can be seen in the writing of constitutions influenced by the U.S. and French examples, apparently by way of Spain's 1812 Cadiz Constitution by Latin American political leaders of the independence period who "assumed that the economic benefits of freedom would follow from the political form" (Apter 1967, 92-93)

Confirmation of this view can be found in the writings of Frei Caneca, who copied provisions of the French "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" directly for his "Bases for the Formation of the Social Pact" and argued that Brazil's prosperity could be assured by finding the right institutions of government (Caneca 1824 [1976]). Two generations later, the Liberal prodigy, Marcus Aurélio Tavares Bastos, put the same argument at the core of his great critique of the Empire (Tavares Bastos 1870). This belief appears, repeatedly, in nineteenth and early twentieth century political science literature. It unexpectedly appears in the belief that traditional societies could be modernized if only the right values could be encouraged through the creation of modern institutions to diffuse them (found in the supposedly non-institutional modernization theorists of the developmentalist school), only to find an uncanny echo in the recent return to institutionalism in the literature on democratization and transitions to market economy. From the institutional reforms recommended by the IMF and World Bank in their reports on transitional economies to the debates over presidentialism or parliamentarism, the emphasis

is on setting up the right institutions to encourage stability and the growth of "civil society" or "civic culture" modeled on advanced industrial states. In short, the point of imitation in this approach is to induce modernization (again, the imitation of the advanced states) through practice (Mitrany 1975, Lijphart 1992; Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Baaklini and Desfosses 1997; Weimer 1997).

Finally, imitation frequently involves the adaptation of foreign models to the specific circumstances of the new setting on the understanding that differences in conditions make simple copying impractical if the imported models are expected to produce similar results. Success requires not merely the adoption of foreign models, but their appropriation and assimilation into local conditions, a process which changes both the models and the conditions into which they are introduced.[4] At this point, political reflection on the model and reality may become part of the process and problem of development as local intellectuals and political actors seek to fit their own vision and interests into the model, comparing the functioning of the local system with their understanding of the model.

Of course, the adaptation of foreign models was a practical reality in much of the "developing" world long before it was taken up as a theme by social scientists in the "developed" world, as the experience of Latin America makes clear (Gootenberg 1993). Such was the case in 19th and early 20th century Brazil, where the liberal (but not democratic) model embraced by the elite was adapted to Brazilian conditions through various reforms, both conscious and unconscious, until it functioned in a manner that was clearly inconsistent with the principles justifying it. The equilibrium of the system could be maintained until the social changes brought about by its working generated tensions that

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[4]   Such adaptation of models to local conditions was extremely popular among advocates of the so-called "Asian Model."   Yet it was neither limited or original to observers of Asia, having been common in the literature on Latin America since the 1950s, even in the face of naive modernization theory, CheeMeow (1977), Sinha and Kao (1988), Garnaut *et al*. (1995); Veliz (1965, 1967).

found articulation in a counter-elite moved to opposition by the inconsistency. The regime then became a target of intense political criticism intended to delegitimize it in preparation for its replacement by another set of institutions which would achieve what the "dysfunctional" liberalism of the regime aimed at, but failed to do. The response to the failure of the adapted system varied between calls for purer imitation of the original model when the liberal model had been consciously adapted to Brazilian conditions in such a way as to change its operation and calls for adaptation of the model to the particularities of Brazil when attempts at closer imitation led to perverse effects.

In this way, foreign ideas were taken up, changed to fit local circumstances, and made integral parts of Brazilian political reality, only to become the object of critique. This pattern of imitation, adaptation, and assimilation which culminated in a turning back of the model on itself flowed naturally from the ambitions of the liberal model. Once a model of progress exists, there is a corresponding idea of backwardness to be overcome which shapes the reaction of progressives to the conditions of their own society as the second part of the twofold task. For those who see their own society as "backward," there is great pressure to follow the advanced model, imitating the symbols and signs of the advanced society that serves as the model and imposing the institutions and practices of model on the "backward," often resisting, society if necessary. This requires the concentration of power in a central authority capable of overcoming resistance to the modernizing model. Thus the irony of the modernizing dictatorship which forces its people to be free, at least in the sense of throwing off the shackles of tradition, as in Peter the Great's forcible shaving and legal proscriptions against traditional noble dress or Kemal Ataturk's banning of the fez and imposition of Roman script on Turkey. In both cases, authoritarian means were employed for the purpose of liberal ends. Fortunately for those who sought to modernize Brazil by adopting liberal models from Europe, there existed examples of undemocratic liberalism which

sought to force change upon unwilling societies. From José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva onward, Brazilian thinkers who sought modernization could look to the European example of Hobbes, Bentham, the Saint-Simonians in the Second Empire of Napoleon III, and the German nationalist economists.

Even where a model is implemented without serious conflict over alternatives, social conditions that differ from the home ground of the institutions created affect their functioning in new states. The interaction of new, liberal institutions and non-European (illiberal) conditions may be disheartening for the future of the states currently trying follow the model of development and establish liberal, constitutional regimes. The failings of the adopted institutions may undermine their legitimacy and, ultimately, that of the entire model of political authority they represent. Such disillusionment with western models in the Third World is, hardly, without precedent. The history of African area studies is a tale of repeated disappointments and steady disenchantment with various European models of modernity, prompting Basil Davidson to suggest that perhaps "Africa's problems need the application of Africa's solutions rather than 'the lessons of *external* culture'" (1994, 13). Ironically, this sentiment, itself, is a repetition of a common one found among Europeans and their colonial offspring, including the *criollo* nationalists of Latin America's independence period, the Slavophiles of 19th century Russia, and the nationalist and modernist movements of early twentieth century Brazil.

As a result of disillusionment with the liberal institutions copied from abroad there may also be a development of the model driven by intellectuals in the "backward" states, in which there is a rush to use existing institutions or to create institutions to fill the social, political, and economic space left empty by the "backwardness" of the country. At this point, the liberal model shifts to a goal to be achieved, rather than a plan or guide to action in the present and the political strategy may change to one of centralized, state-led authority in contrast to the liberal model. So liberalism ceases to guide the construction of institutions

and becomes the target of critique for its failure to overcome the shortcomings of the society that was to be transformed by it. This was the case in Brazil in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the reaction against liberalism under the Old Republic remained broadly grounded in liberalism as an ideal. Despite certain tendencies, anti-liberalism in Brazil became neither an anti-urban, romantic, agrarian fantasy (like Nazism or Maoism) nor a heroic, revolutionary struggle against *bourgeois* society—like Trotskyism or the later New Left. Instead, the goal of the critics of liberalism sought to achieve liberal ends economic development, political and economic integration, civil liberty, an end to rural oligarchic power through illiberal means. The fate of liberal institutions and ideas in Brazil, the responses to this fate, and the critique of liberalism (especially of the emulation of liberal institutions) that arose out of the Brazilian experience may offer valuable lessons concerning the transfer of liberal political institutions to conditions which differ greatly from those where these institutions initially developed.

The Liberal Ironies of Authoritarianism

The adoption and absorption of the North Atlantic models by Brazil took place in three stages on parallel tracks. In the first place, ideas from the North Atlantic were taken up by Brazilian intellectuals, then these ideas were adapted in the face of Brazil's particular conditions, often with widely divergent outcomes, before finally being transformed into new ideas which differed in significant respects from the originals, allowing them to be turned on the North Atlantic models as tools of critique. In the second place, with respect to institutions, there was a similar process, in which institutions were copied, then adapted to local conditions in a period of experimentation, and finally settled down into a functioning system, which resembled the original in certain respects but had its own logic in operation a logic which frequently affected the conditions underlying the system even as it reproduced them. The interaction of ideas and institutions in these linked processes was complex and not always

mutually supporting, as the different cycles led to domestic institutions becoming the target of critique or to the irrelevance of ideas which did not keep up with institutional and social transformation. But there was a clear sequence to these parallel processes of imitation, adaptation, and assimilation.

Despite the variance in the cycle of ideas and institutions, it is possible to define several periods of Brazilian history which were characterized by these cycles. The late colonial period (roughly 1780-1815) was characterized by imitation in the realm of ideas, as Enlightenment ideas were taken up and constitutional liberalism became the model for political change. The generation from the elevation of Brazil to a Kingdom within the Portuguese Empire in 1815 until the end of the Farroupilha Revolt in 1845 was a period of adaptation and experimentation, intellectually and institutionally. The Second Empire (1840-1889) saw the assimilation of liberalism in peculiarly Brazilian form into a slave economy and hierarchical society. The Republic, which succeeded the Empire, was established in imitation of the United States, but local conditions soon required the adaptation of the model of a liberal, constitutional regime to a still hierarchical society. This adaptation took the form of the *política dos governadores*, in which liberal institutions were, in effect, colonized by the state oligarchies and political bosses, whose political dominance was based on clientelistic social relations and private power. The inter-war years saw the appropriation of liberal discourse as a means of criticizing the Old Republic from within its own principles, and culminated in the assimilation of the statist model of development, dominant in continental Europe from the late nineteenth century, as the means of reaching the goal of a modern, industrial, mass society. The fit is not perfect, but the pattern seems clear: the imitation of foreign ideas and models is followed by a period of adaptation and experimentation until a degree of stability is achieved through the assimilation of the model to Brazil's social conditions. The stability of this period is temporary, however, because assimilation reproduces social structures which do not appear in the original

pattern and the discourse of the archetype is appropriated by critics to attack the failings of the Brazilian variant at its most vulnerable points.

Imitating political institutions from the advanced states was intended to make Brazil modern by making it liberal on the assumption that the existence of these institutions would promote the development of other features, thereby creating a liberal society. Curiously, this strategy of development through imitation of the liberal, constitutionalist model provided a large part of the impetus for the statist bent of Brazilian thought, both as a result of its internal logic and as a reaction against it. The strategy involved attempts to adopt the political institutions, practices, and ideas of Europe and the United States despite differences between local conditions and those of the models.

The differences were not seen as impediments to the adoption of North Atlantic forms, instead, the differences between Brazil and the models to be imitated were to be overcome precisely by the adoption and implementation of the foreign ideas. The transformation of the state was expected to precede and induce the transformation of Brazilian society. However, in the absence of a societal base for liberal politics, modernizers have repeatedly turned to illiberal means to destroy the "backwards" features of traditional society and recreate society in a new liberal form. Though not the most egregious example, Brazil repeatedly showed this pattern in the suppression of Canudos, the support offered the *Estado Novo* by traditional liberals like Francisco Campos and the postwar military theorists who justified their plotting against the civilian regime in the name of freedom and the defense of "civilization" against threats from both the Soviet Union and populist demagogues (da Cunha 1902; Campos 1941; do Couto e Silva 1981).[5] The strategy of imitation also was vulnerable to the

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[5]   Nicholas Shumway offers a similar picture of this process in Argentina, where the liberals of Buenos Aires turned to authoritarian means almost from independence, proclaiming the virtues of free trade, individual liberty, and representative government as they murdered their opponents and subjected the provinces to decades of warfare and trade embargos to "civilize" them. Shumway even notes the now notorious use of

criticism that it created a situation of extreme disjuncture between the institutions and claims of the state on one side and, on the other, the material and social conditions in which the state exists. Taken out of the conditions which gave rise to them and lacking connection with the conditions into which they were imported, the institutions and practices of the models of modern states can be portrayed as "misplaced ideas" (Schwarz 1992).

From this perspective, the mimetic system, lacking a base in actual social conditions, is incapable of formulating a programmatic response to the situation in which it is inserted. As a political matter, such disjunctures have been a perennial concern of Brazilian political and social thought; the task of resolving them has usually been ascribed to the state. The transformation of Brazil into a modern nation-state, despite the perceived absence of social conditions or features found in the models of modernity, is to take place through the development of political forms rooted in national experience, rather than imported models. The idea of seeking authentically national solutions to the problem of modernization is, however, not a simple rejection of foreign models or experiences. Rather, there is a heavy emphasis on the adaptation of the experience of others, especially since the end pursued is the condition of modernity reached by other states.

Despite the difference between imitation and the "national" solution, the desire for development led to a focus on the state as the agent of modernization, usurping social functions, even as older social features and practices remained in place, altering the new institutions, whether imported or national, in unexpected ways as Gerschenkron with respect to economic development in Eastern Europe (1962, ch. 1). The ambiguities and contradictions of the disjuncture between the

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the term "to disappear" as a euphemism for the murder of political opponents in an essay in a collection of biographies, *Galería de celebridades argentinas* (1857), edited by two leading Argentine liberals of the mid-nineteenth century, Mitre and Sarmiento. Shumway (1991, 20-45).

pais legal and *pais real*, engendered by the importation of liberal political institutions, practices, and ideas, provided the impetus for the development of a dominant political tradition which associated modernization and development with a strong state, even when this development has been explicitly linked to liberal and constitutionalist ends. Indeed, a common assumption in Brazilian political thought has been that the cultivation, preservation, and guarantee of liberty require a strong state precisely because the threat to liberty is local or private power, not the state. The product of this tradition has been a curious vision of liberty in which a powerful, centralized state is posited as a necessary prerequisite for the development of a free society. The statist element of Brazilian political thought, even in its liberal forms, is rooted in traditions of thought and in the social, political, and economic conditions of Brazil. Brazilian political thought was heavily influenced by Enlightenment and early nineteenth century scientism, in which politics was to be subordinated to the scientific understanding of society. In this tradition, exemplified by the positivist school but rooted more generally in the Enlightenment faith in the progress of knowledge, the scientific understanding of society offers definitive answers to social problems, transforming politics into the administration of a society organized according to laws of social development. The product of this Enlightenment scientism was a combination of liberalism with anti-pluralism and statism. The state becomes manager of the policies recommended by science, and politics, when not merely a distraction, is reduced to the representation of society in the discussion of how best to implement such policies, without accepting the existence of fundamental disagreement about the nature of social organization. This tendency, dubbed "objectivism" by Bolivar Lamounier in his study of authoritarian ideology in Brazil, is notable for its prevalence on both the left and the right in twentieth-century Brazil (1974, pp. 309-310, 315-323).

The most extreme version of this view may have been the "republican dictatorship" envisioned by the orthodox positivists of the *Apostolado* and the so-

called "Jacobins" who worked for the overthrow of the Empire from the military's polytechnical school. But elements of it can be found in thinkers ranging from José Bonifácio Andrada da Silva, the widely acknowledged Father of Brazilian independence, through the corporatists of the early Estado Novo, to the military intellectuals of the postwar "Sorbonne Group," who sought to systematize the setting of national political objectives through modern management training (Reis de Queiroz 1986; Viotti da Costa 1985; Love 1996; Bacchus 1990).

The consolidation of this statist emphasis in Brazilian political thinking was further advanced by the repeated failure of liberal institutions imported from the more advanced states to promote adequate modernization or to ensure stability. Add to this the fact that Brazil's most obvious gains in economic development came under Vargas' *Estado Novo* and it is, perhaps, not surprising that the strong, interventionist state became the model for national development for both left and right from the critics of the Old Republic to the height of the military government. However, under the apotheosis of state domination of society, the hard-line military government of 1967-1974, there was a retreat from statism on both left and right. During the *abertura*, when society became the arena of opposition to the state, the liberal and anti-statist possibilities of North Atlantic politics became attractive as models of political development.

In one of the great ironies of Brazilian history, the possibility of genuinely liberal politics arose as a result of the most centralized, most authoritarian regime the country has known. In 1973, at the height of the hard-line military government of General Garrastazu de Medici, Fernando Henrique Cardoso published an article that articulated a political strategy of resistance to the military government which emphasized neither armed struggle nor mass political mobilization but the development of nonpolitical social organizations. The article was a call for the creation of ties of horizontal solidarity among citizens with shared interests in a manner unthreatening to the military

government's political monopoly. Cardoso emphasized that this strategy was not aimed at challenging the regime politically, but at securing social space for the protection of rights and interests. In short, Cardoso called for the "reactivation of civil society," understood as the public space inhabited by citizens *qua* citizens. The subsequent development of independent trade unions, Church-sponsored ecclesiastical base communities, neighborhood associations, and human rights groups (not to mention the reinvigoration of and cooperation among professional association and elite interest groups) was accompanied by the forging of links between these groups and the political opposition with the *approval and encouragement* of the new military president. This process was remarkable not only for the role of the military government in encouraging the development of countervailing social pressures, but for the retreat from statism on the part of the Brazilian left.

It was an ironic effect of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime of the 1960s to 1980s that closed, technocratic decision making within the state substituted to some extent for the old clientelistic access to policymaking possessed by some key sectors of society prior to the military governments. In a curious fashion the efforts of the military regimes to insulate decision making from "political" pressures by social groups helped to create circumstances under which the organization of civil society became possible and desirable. The limitation of clientelism and personal access to the state, in effect, created a situation in which a more universalist and autonomous ethic of citizenship is possible. Furthermore, the military governments prompted (and sometimes even encouraged) the development of an active civil society in the form of political opposition and social movements which have developed the ties of horizontal solidarity that Oliveira Vianna, for instance, expected the corporatist state to develop.

Since the end of military rule, with centralization and the interventionist state in retreat, political and economic liberalism (in its European rather than North American sense) have once again been imported in the expectation that

social transformation will follow. In this context, the "instrumental authoritarian" critique of the Old Republic (with its analysis of the interaction of liberal institutions and illiberal social conditions) may serve as a warning not to allow liberal preoccupations or neo-liberal models of the minimal state to cause politics to degenerate into formalism. It is worth remembering that the state need not be viewed as the enemy of civil society. Indeed, a too pure and apolitical a view of civil society, may make the state an enemy of the universalistic and egalitarian aspects of citizenship and allow a return to clientelistic politics under the mantle of liberal democracy.

Conclusion

The dream of significant parts of the imperial and republican elites was to transform Brazil by introducing European or North American institutions. However, the process of change was a complex one and not just a matter of adaptation by Brazilians to the ideas and models they learned from Europe. While ideas and institutions adopted in imitation of the outside world changed the society into which they were introduced, they were ultimately assimilated into the political, social, and economic structures existing in Brazil and changed in the process. This assimilation was not a matter of simply copying or scavenging elements from models, but of interaction between models and conditions. As a result, even as political rhetoric, ideas, and principles espoused by 19th century Brazilians were drawn from English, North American, and French liberalism and republicanism, liberalism and republicanism in Brazil were adapted to the culture of a slave-based economy and society, much as republicanism in the American South took on peculiar features (Genovese 1994).

This adaptation of foreign ideas and models was both by conscious choice of the political thinkers and actors who sought to implement them and an inadvertent consequence of their interaction with local conditions. Through their assimilation, the imported ideas and models had effects on local conditions, both conceptually, in terms of how these conditions were understood, and practically,

in terms of local practices themselves adapting to the functioning of new institutions. Even when Brazilians reacted against the North Atlantic ideas underlying their postcolonial society, as they did against the liberal institutions of the Old Republic, insisting on Brazilian solutions to Brazilian problems, many of the alternatives proposed were also based upon foreign ideas and models. These ideas also took on local coloring that changed them substantively in various ways, giving credence to claims for their national character even as imitation proceeded apace. Thus, the whole process of imitation, adaptation, and assimilation was partly an intellectual exercise with concrete effects, but also fodder for further reflection by later Brazilian thinkers on the problems of development which, in itself, may shed light on the articulation of political ideas and their role in political development. The creative transformation of foreign ideas is of some concern to the study of political change and the Brazilian experience of it may well offer scholars of the metropolis something to learn.

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